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Contents

representation. Without falling into anachronistic thinking, it would be appropriate to see the politics of representation at play in Peter's speech. Like the question to Jesus about the restoration of Israel' reign in the world, their concern now was who would fill out the number. The disciples understood that they represented the twelve tribes of Israel. Each one of them was positioned to rule alongside of the Messiah.

Luke is not presenting to us in Peter a man moved only by political motivations. This is also a matter of faithfulness to the ministry and apostleship bestowed on the twelve. Faithfulness requires continuity. So the need was for someone who had been with them from the beginning, from baptism to the ascension of Jesus. Replacement indeed. This is a unique moment in an unrepeatable event and to find someone whose life stands between the unique and the unrepeatable is no small accomplishment. Yet here are two possible witnesses, and make no mistake, they are looking for someone worthy to give witness to Jesus. Such a weighty mantle could only fall on someone elect in the same way that the disciples themselves had been elected by Jesus, and such election demands prayer for its discernment. John Calvin was right to see the implications of this text for the awesome task of congregations choosing ministers.[10] Matthias is chosen, and it would be easy to read this selection as the completion of divine election or to read it in the oppose direction, seeing this as only a signature of the old world, the old way, rooted in the casting of lots.[11] But neither reading reaches into the risk of this moment.

Someone has been chosen for an uncertain future with the memory of betrayal still very fresh. How might anyone enlist with the way forward so utterly unclear? Matthias is called. That is now clear, but he is called to the same upper room with the other one hundred and twenty, with men and women he probably knows very well, and he is called to one work, pray and wait, wait and pray. Like the others

10. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom36.i.html Calvin, John, 2009). Commentary on Acts, vol. 1, enhanced version (Calvin's Commentaries) (Kindle location 111). Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Kindle edition.
11. Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostle: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 126–27.

he will wait for the Spirit to come and the Spirit to speak and then he will know what he must do with the others for the sake of Jesus. If he is the right one then God has done to him what God does to all those who hear the words of Jesus—sits them down, fills them with hope, and asks them to join the others in prayer.

There awaits a destiny for the twelve, but the politics of representation—finding the right "man"—is about to be interrupted. Israel, new Israel is soon to be constituted by the Spirit, constituted in the opening up of lives to the world. Whatever ideas of leadership Peter and the other apostles were imagining, they could not anticipate what God was about to do. A common thing, a selection process, has been placed in an extraordinary setting, in the upper room before Pentecost. From this moment forward every common thing of the disciples of Jesus, every administrative act, every bureaucratic gesture exists in the posture of waiting and stands in the shadow cast by the Holy Spirit and within the necessary work of prayer.

2:1–13

The Sound of Intimacy

And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out" (Isa. 6:5–7).

The Miracle of Pentecost is less in the hearing and much more in the speaking. Disciples speak in the mother tongues of others, not by their own design but by the Spirit's desire. The new wine has been poured out on those unaware of just how deeply they thirsted. This famous account from Luke is the epicenter of the revolution. Here is the unfolding moment that will define the drama of the Book of Acts. This is the beginning of the miracle of Pentecost, *the revolution of the intimate.* This is the beginning of a community broken open by the sheer act of God, and we are yet to comprehend the extent

to which God acts and is acting to break us open. Indeed it will be a community created by the Spirit precisely in the breaking open. Now Israel, the new Israel, is turned out by the Spirit. Only the gracious work of God in creation matches this moment of prevenient grace. This is God's doing: no one helped, no one assisted, everyone only tarried. The waiting in prayer has not come to an end. It has only moved forward into an action fully of God.

The similitude of the wind to the Spirit's coming suggests not only its absolute power but its absolute uncontrollability. No structure is stronger than the wind, and there is nothing beyond its touch. How much greater is the reality of the Spirit than this weak metaphor? Wind and fire speak of ancient theophany in Israel, harkening back to Moses and Israel's beginnings in miraculous displays of divine power. This moment of divine power will be used to signify the full presence of the Spirit through one crucial reality of life: language. Here we must not draw back from what is being displayed in Luke's account. This is God touching, taking hold of tongue and voice, mind, heart, and body. This is a joining, unprecedented, unanticipated, unwanted, yet complete joining. Those gathered in prayer asked for power. They may have asked for the Holy Spirit to come, but they did not ask for this. This is real grace, untamed grace. It is the grace that replaces our fantasies of power over people with God's fantasy for desire for people.

God has come to them, on them, with them. This moment echoes Mary's intimate moment. The Holy Spirit again overshadows. However this similar holy action creates something different, something startling. The Spirit creates joining. The followers of Jesus are now being connected in a way that joins them to people in the most intimate space—of voice, memory, sound, body, land, and place. It is language that runs through all these matters. It is the sinew of existence of a people. My people, our language: to speak a language is to speak a people. Speaking announces familiarity, connection, and relationality. But these people are already connected, aren't they? They are "devout Jews from every nation under heaven" (*andres eulabeis apo pantos ethnous*, v. 5). They share the same story and the same faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They share the same

hopes of Israel's restoration, even its expansion into the world freed from oppression and domination. They are diaspora, and diaspora life is already a shared obligation and hope.

God has, however, now revealed a mighty hand and an outstretched arm reaching deeply into the lives of the Son's co-travelers and pressing them along a new road into the places God seeks to be fully known. This is first a miracle of hearing. "... [E]ach of us, in our own native language" (*hameis akouomen hekastos tē idia dialektō hamōn en hē egennēthēmen*. v. 8). The homes of mothers are announced in the mouths of those who were far removed from those mother tongues. This is not generic speech, formal pronouncements, but the language of intimate spaces where peoples inside talk to one another. The hearers query a past that does not exist for these followers of Jesus. "How do they know my language and know my people? When did they gain that knowledge?" But their miraculous tongues are not about the past but about the future, a future shaped by divine desire. This is why we must see more than a miracle of hearing. Such limited seeing reveals our failure as readers to grasp God's unfolding of the divine fantasy to these early believers. It also exposes our modern failure to grasp the revolutionary intimacy that will give birth to a belonging that we will call church. This is a revolution of the Spirit always poised to unleash itself at the slightest moment of faithful waiting and yielding.

The miracles are not merely in ears. They are also in mouths and in bodies. God, like a lead dancer, is taking hold of her partners, drawing them close and saying, "Step this way and now this direction." The gesture of speaking another language is born not of the desire of the disciples but of God, and it signifies all that is essential to learning a language. It bears repeating: this is not what the disciples imagined or hoped would manifest the power of the Holy Spirit. To learn a language requires submission to a people. Even if in the person of a single teacher, the learner must submit to that single voice, learning what the words mean as they are bound to events, songs, sayings, jokes, everyday practices, habits of mind and body, all within a land and the journey of a people. Anyone who has learned a language other than their native tongue knows how humbling learning can actually be. An adult in the slow and often arduous efforts of

pronunciation may be reduced to a child, and a child at home in that language may become the teacher of an adult. There comes a crucial moment in the learning of any language, if one wishes to reach fluency, that enunciation requirements and repetition must give way to sheer wanting. Some people learn a language out of gut-wrenching determination born of necessity. Most, however, who enter a lifetime of fluency, do so because at some point in time they learn to love it.

They fall in love with the sounds. The language sounds beautiful to them. And if that love is complete, they fall in love with its original signifiers. They come to love the people—the food, the faces, the plans, the practices, the songs, the poetry, the happiness, the sadness, the ambiguity, the truth—and they love the place, that is, the circled earth those people call their land, their landscapes, their home. Speak a language, speak a people. God speaks people, fluently. And God, with all the urgency that is with the Holy Spirit, wants the disciples of his only begotten Son to speak people fluently too. This is the beginning of a revolution that the Spirit performs. Like an artist drawing on all her talent to express a new way to live, God gestures the deepest joining possible, one flesh with God, and desire made one with the Holy One.

"My Faithful Mother Tongue"

You were my native land; . . .
I believed that you would also
be a messenger
between me and some good
people

. . . . . .

not born, as yet.

—Czeslaw Milosz, "My Faithful Mother Tongue," in *New and Collected Poems, 1931–2001* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 245–46.

Yet here we can begin to see even more clearly the ancient challenge and the modern problem. The ancient challenge is a God who is way ahead of us and is calling us to catch up. The modern problem is born of the colonial enterprise where language play and use entered its most demonic displays. Imagine peoples in many places, in many conquered sites, in many tongues all being told that their languages are secondary, tertiary, and inferior to the supreme languages of the enlightened peoples. Make way for Latin, French, German, Dutch, Spanish, and English. These are the languages God speaks. These are the scholarly

languages of the transcending intellect and the holy mind. Imagine centuries of submission and internalized hatred of mother tongues and in the quiet spaces of many villages, many homes, women, men, and children practicing these new enlightened languages not by choice but by force. Imagine peoples largely from this new Western world learning native languages not out of love, but as utility for domination. Imagine mastering native languages in order to master people, making oneself their master and making them slaves. Now imagine Christianity deeply implicated in all this, in many cases riding high on the winds of this linguistic imperialism, a different sounding wind. Christianity was ripe for this tragic collaboration with colonialism because it had learned before the colonial moment began to separate a language from a people. It had learned to value, cherish, and even love the language of Jewish people found in Scripture—but hate Jewish people.

Thankfully this is not the only story of Christianity in the colonial modern. There are also the quiet stories of some translators, and the peculiar few missionaries who from time to time and place to place showed something different. They joined. They, with or without "natural language skill," sought love and found it in another voice, another speech, another way of life. They showed something in their utter helplessness in the face of difference: they were there in a new land to be changed, not just change people into believers. They were there not just to make conquered Christians but truly and deeply make themselves Christian in a new space that would mean that their names would be changed. They would become the sound of another people, speaking the wonderful works of God. However these stories remain hidden in large measure from the history of Christianity that we know so well, which means we often know so little of Christianity.

The modern problem points back to the ancient challenge. We can sense that challenge even in this first experience of Pentecost. Those listening were amazed and perplexed. They asked the right question: "What does this mean?" (v.12). The meaning is not obvious because the event is unprecedented. As Luke Timothy Johnson notes, even if other oracles had spoken in ecstatic speech, normally the hearers would not be able to understand (as these hearers did

in their most intimate language) because the words come from the gods.[12] But this need for meaning here reaches toward the future. The question bends toward its sister question: What is God doing here and now? Peter will soon speak and begin to give an answer to this question. Yet he is only at the edge of morning. The noon day of Peter is yet to unfold. The meaning of the speaking in tongues is so obvious, so powerful, that it was missed. The Holy Spirit has come. Joining has begun. This is the real meaning.

The same Spirit that was there from the beginning, hovering, brooding in the joy of creation of the universe and of each one of us, who knows us together and separately in our most intimate places, has announced the divine intention through the Son to reach into our lives and make each life a site of speaking glory. But this will require bodies that reach across massive and real boundaries, cultural, religious, and ethnic. It will require a commitment born of Israel's faith, but reaching to depths of relating beyond what any devotion to Israel's God had heretofore been recognized as requiring: devotion to peoples unknown and undesired. What God had always spoken to Israel now God speaks even more loudly in the voices of the many to the many: join them! Now love of neighbor will take on pneumatological dimensions. It will be love that builds directly out of the resurrected body of Jesus. It will be love, as Karl Barth says, that goes into the far country.[13] This is love that cannot be tamed, controlled, or planned, and once unleashed it will drive the disciples forward into the world and drive a question into their lives: Where is the Holy Spirit taking us and into whose lives?

This famous text has been the foundational text of so many churches that see themselves born of the Pentecostal experience, and rightly so, because here is the birth of the church. But *this child* was not expected. There has been in the last one hundred years in and among those churches born of the modern Pentecostal movement discussion about the importance of speaking in tongues as an essential sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit. There have also been and continue to be untold millions of Christians who claim

12. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 54.
13. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 175-298.

a charismatic experience, who believe that God has granted them holy tongues by the Spirit's uttering power. The controversy that grew up around Pentecostalism and later the charismatic movement has always been an unfortunate misplacement of focus, exposing our modern inability to grasp the desire of God revealed by the Holy Spirit. Neither concern for auditory evidence nor for linguistic authenticity brings us to the heart of the Spirit's signifying reality. The only real question is, Do we hear what the tongues mean? For this, we do not need interpreters. We need translators, people who will allow their lives to be translated, not just once, but again and again as the Spirit gives utterance.

2:14–36

Speaking in the Spirit

Peter again speaks. The only real difference in this second speech is the subject of the discourse. We have gone from Judas to Jesus and from replacement talk to talk about Israel's future. Peter's words are about Israel, in Israel, and for Israel. Our Christian readings of this text often fly past the iconic element found in verse 14 that shapes the entire speech. Immediately after the ears have heard the new, the eyes will see it. Standing in front of all those who had heard their tongues are the twelve disciples, now becoming apostles of Jesus. This is Israel speaking to Israel, calling to their own with the good news of the intensification of their election and of the personification of the free grace that shaped their existence from its beginning.

This is precisely where the scandal that was Jesus of Nazareth, Mary's baby with all the tensions he created and all the theological, social, and political contradictions that religious and civic leaders associated with his ministry, began to spread over many bodies. This is a strange image, an unappealing icon—twelve men, none with exceptional credentials, no fabulous educational pedigrees, none with reservoirs of immense cultural capital to draw from, all standing in front of Israelites with nothing more than a message. We live in times when images create and carry so much power. For us, image and word, body and text, are inseparable, merging together,

mutually constituting. Yet in this primordial moment the image standing before these gathered does not carry gravitas. It can never match its message. Nor will it ever. This is the eternal imbalance that will mark preaching, a message far more powerful than its messengers. Indeed, image emerges here fully encased in witness.

If this is the first Christian sermon, then we must take note of several of its elements. First, it exists only within the Holy Spirit. It begins only after the Spirit has come. It is a second word after the words of praise have been given by God. Before the Spirit came, Peter had little to say. His words will now and forever be only commentary on what the Spirit is doing, and what God has done for us in Jesus. Second, he does not stand alone. As he stands, the other disciples stand. As he stands and speaks, Israel's prophets are echoing in his words. It is a life-draining deception to ever believe that one preaches alone. Of course, one voice speaks in the preaching, yet at every moment, at any given moment when a preacher speaks, many preachers past and present are speaking. The preacher is always a company of preachers.

Knowing that the one is bound to the many, that this one Peter is bound to these other erect figures, will not make matters easier. Indeed it will only clarify the risk of this moment. This first Christian sermon is born in Israel and shaped for Israel. To say that Christianity began as a reform movement in Judaism is correct but horribly sterile. This moment exposes what Bonhoeffer calls the power of the weak word.[14] Peter, along with these others, will now attempt to seize control of the narrative of a people, positioning themselves as its master storytellers, and render their witness the site of Israel's real history. Luke plays in the intertextual and gives us a Peter who travels back and forth from an ancient Israel to the one gathered there with him and stamps the current moment as the last days with an end, if not in sight, certainly in mind.

The famous Joel passage noted here could never be fully captured with our conceptions of egalitarianism. It proclaims a new world order energized by the movement of the Holy Spirit, breaking through on all flesh and destroying social orders that find slavery

14. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 8 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 479.

useful, stable, capable of making fundamental differences of identity between would-be masters and would-be slaves. These slaves, men and women, prophesy. God speaks through them and they are to be obeyed. This new world order begins with collapse. God shakes foundations, especially ones that wrongly claim divine imprint. However, it is only as Peter makes the christological turn that he connects the overturning of the social order with the new order of the Spirit. Only as he speaks of Jesus does he begin really signifying the present. Now Peter sets the template through which future preachers' words will be spoken about the real God in real time who is working in the concrete histories of people.

Jesus of Nazareth is the history foretold by Joel. We must not lose sight of the storyteller at work here, because this will become the legacy for the many that will follow Peter. He presents the life of Jesus as reachable, attainable, and one who has been among us. This Jesus was murdered, and in his journey toward death, Peter declares the sameness of Jesus with all human beings. Like us he faced the powers of empire and death. But now he has risen from the dead. Through an audacious act Luke binds the story of King David to this risen ruler Jesus. This Jesus reveals not only the destiny of Israel's God, but the divine identity as well. The cosmic, the universal, the great and mighty not only has revealed in this One, but more shockingly this Jesus reveals the great and mighty, the universal, the cosmic, the God who is greater than death. The Jesus you knew—crucified, dead and buried, and now alive—is both Lord and Messiah, the bearer of the divine image and reality. This is the great contradiction.

It is the contradiction inside of which all the disciples of Jesus will live forever. Life inside this contradiction means, as Samuel Proctor said, that we may now see the world for what it is: upside down.[15] The world, seen from the site of the crucified One, moving quickly from life toward death, is the real contradiction. Only from within the declaration of a God who was crucified will any words about God in this world, the real world, make sense. Whether Luke or Peter understood it, through the Holy Spirit they had turned the story of Israel toward life everlasting and had shown us the way to

15. Samuel Proctor, *My Moral Odyssey* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1989).

turn our life stories and the stories of our peoples toward redemptive ends by drawing people to the victory of God in Jesus. Who would believe such a remarkable word coming from such unremarkable witnesses? There would be no chance of success unless the Spirit of the living God breathed on their witness. Thankfully, now the Spirit has appeared, living and breathing on and through unlikely voices, voices just like ours.

2:37–41

A New Response

A change is taking place among the people of God. Faith in Israel is taking a new direction. And it all begins with a simple but terrifying question: "What should we do?" These devotees of Israel's God have heard a message as disruptive as anything one could hear. It is a message that flows directly out of the divine propensity for interruption, first of Mary's life, then of Joseph, and then of these apostles, one by one, called away from home to a new direction in Israel. Now inside the explosion that is the coming of the Spirit, these who have heard Peter's message confront the reality of a more excellent way of faith in Israel. The question they asked Peter is indeed terrifying because it begs the question of religious necessity. Why should those who are already faithful in Israel, committed to its way of life, religious practices, and sensibilities need to ask the question, "What should we do?" Their lives already answer such a question.

The question itself is at the door of offense. Although the irenic is concealed within the question, nonetheless, it suggests a *necessary* change for those already of committed faith. We must hear in this question the astounding work of the living God who will not be relegated to Israel's past but will reveal divine faithfulness to ancient promise in the present moment. And in so doing, we see the precise way Israel's Lord alters theological frames of reference by demanding more of those who believe.

Here in Israel, God will seek after the elect, all of them. God will stand over against religious faith, as neither its friend nor its enemy, but as God. Here is the point of offense: all religious faith believes

it already has God in its sight. It knows and seeks after; it tirelessly devotes time, energy, and resources to the Holy. Those who hear this message, however, encounter a difference born of the body of Jesus. He is a difference in Israel that will yield an intensification and alteration of the faith received. But he must be chosen. He will not destroy faith in God, only fulfill it. But he must be chosen. Thus Peter's response to the question instructs moving in a fresh direction. His response reveals language internal to the culture and theology of Israel. Repentance, forgiveness, and gift are all themes that flow through the streams of Israel's historical consciousness. Yet now a new point of entry and departure has emerged through a new stream that flows in a new direction. All must be baptized in the new stream, baptized into Jesus.

Baptism in his name signifies this new point. Indeed Jesus has seized baptism in Israel and merged it with the divine life. Just as he turned water into wine, he will now bring water into service to the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit, water will become a steady voice calling for the renewal of creation. Each baptism in the name of Jesus will say loudly and clearly, "Come, Holy Spirit, claim yet another part of your creation, claim yet another child of God." There continue to be churches that believe baptism in Jesus' name is the only legitimate form of baptism, and they would draw our attention to this crucial text as the beginning of this new ritual. I would suggest that they have correctly captured the newness, but where they envisage restriction and limitation, it would be more helpful to see expansion and openness. The trajectory of the text is not toward formula but formation. From this moment forward, life with God will be through Jesus, and this moment of baptism will yield life in a body turned toward the renewal of creation. The story of Israel has opened up, and God's body has been joined to Israel's body and will be joined to all who will come to the water. Luke signifies a redeemer who would bring all of Israel from death to life through these holy waters and draw them more deeply into divine desire.

Now divine hunger will be revealed. God is calling to Israel and its children and other children and their children. This calling will be *contra mundi*, against the world's calling, the world's desire for the children. It will be against this "corrupt generation" (v. 40). This will

be the difference bound to a decision, God's calling or the world's calling, and at this moment the new word reveals the old tension for God's people between listening and thus obeying the voice of the world or hearing the *dabarim* of *Adonai*, the word of the Lord. Luke draws us into a pleasant result, a welcomed message and converts in large numbers. But even in this exuberant account we still see a shadow that will grow as the story moves on. Some did not welcome the message, even in the presence of the Spirit of God. We read past this reality at our own peril. The offensiveness of the message of Jesus, the message about Jesus, is a real problem for some, and they will not have their religious sensibilities challenged, even if the challenge is a word of good news that the God who created them seeks after them in Jesus. For such folks, God's real body will not be allowed to eclipse their vision of the Holy.

For those, however, who heard this message a new social reality begins to take hold of them moving between three wonderful points of reference, the apostles' teaching and communion, the sharing in meals, and prayer. As Jaroslav Pelikan notes, the emergence of these characteristics will mark this new community and create the lens through which such communities may be identified and even judged.[16] Equally significantly for us, the marks of divine disruption are witnessed in these actions. These actions mark those baptized as having entered a contrast society, as Gerhard Lohfink calls it, a radical cell bound to the ministry of Jesus through his disciples.[17] The words of Jesus that defined those disciples' lives will now give direction to these who have been filled with the Spirit: follow me as I follow my Father. What follows from this moment is neither utopian nor unrealistic, but a clear trajectory born of the sure exposure to the divine life.

2:42–47

A New Reality of Giving

Life with Jesus must give shape to life in the Spirit. The Apostles were yet caught in the echo of a life fully dependent on God, a life yielded

16. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 58.
17. Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 31–60.

to the Spirit, and one that did not reject the weakness of flesh. As such they carried forward the reality of divine power clothed in the common and the miraculous flowing through weathered hands. It would makes sense therefore to see in this moment the power of Jesus' life pressing into the normal, the daily, the routine and drawing God's people into the new. Now at this moment they were together and "had all things in common" (*kai eichon hapanta koina*, v. 44).

The space of this common was where life stories, life projects, plans, and purposes were being intercepted by a new orientation. This common is created by the Spirit. How could the things they held dear not be drawn toward the common, this new gathering, this *ekklēsia*? Time, talent, and treasures, the trinity of possessions we know so well, would feel the pull of this holy vortex. We could certainly imagine that Luke is painting a sunny picture at this moment not because these things did not occur but because they were indeed tentative and fleeting due to the immense implications of living according to the life of Jesus. The real questions are not whether this holy communalism, this sacred sociality, could or would be operative, be practical in this ancient world or any world, but what must it have been like to feel the powerful pull of the life of our savior, and what energy did it take to resist the Holy Spirit, to slow down this pull enough to withhold themselves and their possessions from divine desire.

It is not a new thing that people would offer up their possessions to a noble or religious cause, nor withhold their possessions from such causes. A different order of sacrifice is being performed here, one that reaches back to the very beginnings of Israel. Their God does not need possessions and has never been impressed by their donation. The divine One wants people and draws us into that wanting. This is intensified giving, feverish giving that feels not only the urgent need but the divine wanting. A new kind of giving is exposed at this moment, one that binds bodies together as the first reciprocal donation where the followers will give themselves to one another. The possessions will follow. What was at stake here was not the giving up of all possessions but the giving up of each one, one by one as the Spirit gave direction, and as the ministry of Jesus made demand. Thus anything they had that might be used to bring people into sight and sound of the incarnate life, anything they had that might be used

to draw people to life together and life itself and away from death and end the reign of poverty, hunger, and despair—such things were subject to being given up to God. The giving is for the sole purpose of announcing the reign of the Father's love through the Son in the bonds of communion together with the Spirit.

Luke gives us sight of a holy wind blowing through structured and settled ways of living and possessing and pulling things apart. People caught up in the love of God not only began to give thanks for their daily bread, but daily offered to God whatever they had that might speak that gracious love to others. What is far more dangerous than any plan of shared wealth or fair distribution of goods and services is a God who dares impose on us divine love. Such love will not play fair. In the moment we think something is ours, or our people's, that same God will demand we sell it, give it away, or offer more of it in order to feed the hungry, cloth the naked, or shelter the homeless, using it to create the bonds of shared life. This will be the new direction born of this moment. The salvation of Israel is sure and now intensified through the Spirit, who tightens God's claim on them by announcing a new order of things that will not pass away.

3:1–11

A New Gaze

The gate of the temple becomes the entrance to a new future. Peter and John have entered that future, and now they perform it. There is absolutely nothing wrong about this religious practice of temple and prayer, almsgiving and worship. This scene shows us the faithful following life-giving tradition. There is, however, also here present the repetition of pain, the sight of suffering. There is a man "lame from birth" (v. 2); from the womb of his mother he has carried this wound. And he is carried again and again to the temple's gate. This is unanticipated infirmity that resists the cause and effect, thinking of sin and then suffering. The scene reminds us of the episode of Jesus in the presence of the man born blind (in John 9). There in John's Gospel, Jesus bring the disciples to a place where their questions about suffering flesh and infirmed bodies

collapse in the face of a single encounter, Jesus and his disciples with this man, the blind man.

At the temple gate this collapse happens again. No questions about the how, who, when, or why of this infirmity survive in this space where inexplicable hurt meets faithful witness. The only thing that matters is the meeting. At the doorway to worship are those whose very presence should discipline praise and guide hope. Before praises go up to God the poor and lame, sick and pained must be seen. This lame man lay in the path toward praise which is also the path of the disciples. This route was established by Jesus. This man is precisely the person Jesus will see and demands his disciples see. Peter and John find themselves without an option: time to see with the eyes of Jesus.

This man was a daily reminder of the need of Israel itself, for miraculous healing, and for yet another moment of divine revealing. Before we turn to the many of Israel we must see the one moment unfolding. As this man follows his desperate pattern of begging, it is interrupted with the words of Peter, "Look at us." Eyes meet at this moment. Peter and John gaze at this man (v. 4) and the man looks attentively back at them. This man anticipates receiving the signs of an economic relation, the symbols that indicate that ever-present imbalance between the haves and the have-nots. This gaze between them suggests the usual, but its intensity soon opens to something much more. Here the poor and needy will not be overlooked. Here at the beginning of the post-Pentecost ministry of the followers of Jesus, people will be seen fully, strongly, clearly. Equally important, Peter speaks a necessary optical reciprocity. Disciples are watched, especially by those in need. Disciples must be seen, especially by those in need. Even more fantastic, disciples must call attention to themselves, not as an act of religious hubris, but as the absolute mandate of a witness. As all eyes were fixed on Jesus in the synagogue (Luke 4:20), so in this scene the gaze invites fresh anticipation, unexpected by the lame man but imagined by those of faith: God will move and God will speak.

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Only such divine action could