

*Today's reading Acts 3. 1-13*

As you may have realised from previous 'thoughts' from me, I have been really privileged to visit 'the Land we like to call Holy' (the title given by John Tidy, Dean of Jerusalem on two of my visits) and those visits to the places of the Bible and conversations with Christians in the Land have reshaped my understanding of various parts of the Biblical narrative.

Each time that I have been to Jerusalem we have visited several of the gates to the city and to the Temple area, but no-one can be absolutely which, if any, of the gates currently existence is the place referred to in this story. However, the gates that we visit provide the guides with the opportunity to remind us of this story and always, in my experience, the focus has been on the miracle of healing that takes place in it.

The episode as Luke tells it in the Acts, has the typical features of a well-formed miracle story: setting (v1) description of the affliction (vv 2-3), encounter with the healers (vv4-5), the healing word (v6), healing gesture (v7a), act of healing itself(v7b), visible proof of healing ((v8) and then the effects on the audience or observers. Usually the reflection on the story focuses on the healing itself or on the responses afterwards, but they weren't the things that caught my attention today!

My attention was caught by the simple phrase at the beginning of the narrative 'Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the time of prayer.'

It's something that most Christians are quite used to doing. At the advertised time, we turn up at Church for prayer and worship each Sunday – until now, that is! Now, we can turn up in our living room, in our pyjamas if we wish) to join in worship at the advertised time or some time later, as it suits us. Worship no longer takes place in the Church, but in our homes! And yet, the value of a regular time for prayer remains – I am struck by the number of ministers that I know who are now sharing their own daily prayers with the congregation online, as I am at 9.30 most mornings on our Alderley Edge Methodist Church Facebook page – and I'm grateful that Robin leads those prayers on Fridays, my usual day off.

Over the weeks that I have been sharing prayers online the community of people sharing in that time of prayer has grown and I hope that it will continue to grow when we move into our new normal. Now that we are present online we can't lose that.

There is enormous value in a daily routine of regular prayer, of consciously coming before God in prayer for our world, our nation, our village, and those we know and love who need our prayers. So,, part of a prayer written by our District Chari, Rev. Dr. Andrew Lunn, for our prayer handbook:

*Gracious God, draw us towards yourself, that in our busyness we may find space to be still in your presence, and in your presence be touched and transformed by our glory.*

*Amen*

