

Grace and peace to you from God Our Father and from the healer of the world, Jesus Christ our Savior and our Lord, amen.

Have any of you experienced a healing miracle in your lives? Don't worry, I'm not going to ask you to stand up and testify... Just hold up your hand or give me a nod... I have experienced both large and small miracles and have learned because of those signs to trust in God and to trust in my Savior Jesus no matter how tough times get. From healing Melanie's heart when she was struggling to survive as a baby, to making a wrong turn into the exact place Jesus wanted me to be, I've learned to see the healing and miraculous in God's world every day.

In today's Gospel reading from John, we have two stories of miraculous healings. The first is the healing of the official's son. Jesus has returned to Cana and the official is from Capernaum. I noticed a couple of things that stand out in this miracle story. Jesus does heal the boy, but first He makes the observation that unless people receive signs and wonders we will not believe. Jesus isn't rebuking the official. The "you" in that sentence is a plural "y'all," so it's merely an observation based on Jesus encounters with the people of the region. We're no better. We are constantly asking for Jesus to do some sign or wonder. Our prayer requests on any given Sunday are mostly requests for healing of some kind. If we're not asking for ourselves, we're asking for a loved one. If we're not asking for a loved one we asking for healing of the planet or the nations. Most of the time

we sound like a spoiled child to their parents saying, “Gimmy, gimmy, gimmy...”

Don’t misunderstand me, we’re told in the Bible to ask for these things, but the problem is we tend to make blessings from God the basis for our faith. John, the author of this Gospel wants us to know that true faith comes through faith in Jesus. Our faith is a gift that comes straight from the heart of God. Even though Jesus makes this stinging observation about humankind, he still does heal the official’s son. So, it’s not as if he’s refusing the request. Jesus is lamenting that it takes signs and wonders to convince people who He is.

This week I wrestled with the question, why does Jesus chose to heal one person, but not another, or why not heal everyone with any type of infirmity? First off, I flunked mind reading in seminary. I think you all know that already. If I can’t read your minds, I certainly can’t read the mind of Jesus... Having said that I do know there are a couple of words in the Greek that might shed some light on these particular miracles. The Greek language has two different words for life. One is the word Bios. Everything that is alive has bios. We get the science of Biology from that word. When Jesus heals the official’s son, he tells the man, “Go, your son will live.” The word Jesus used was not the word that means biologically alive, as in breathing and with a heartbeat. Jesus uses the other Greek word for life, ZoA. This is a different kind of living. This is what Jesus was talking about at the well in the story from last week. It’s life that is whole and full.

It's a life that gushes up to eternity. This is the life Jesus came to bring to all people who would trust in him and in the promises of God Almighty. From the miracle healings of Jesus in John's Gospel we know they were done as signs. The Royal Official's Son was the second of the signs Jesus did. The first was changing water into wine at the wedding in Cana. So, the miracles that Jesus apparently wishes weren't necessary are signs that point to something. That's what signs do. In John's Gospel there are seven named signs. The result of the signs is that people came to believe in, to trust in, and to have faith in Jesus. They come to know Jesus is first of all a human being. He's a normal man who hurts, who bleeds, and who even cries. They also come to know Jesus as the long awaited Messiah. Israel had been waiting for the Messiah for over 500 years. Longer if you want to go all the way back to King David, when God promised David an heir that would sit on the throne forever. The third thing the signs help us understand about Jesus is that He is God's Son. Without signs and wonders I don't know how these three facts about Jesus can be believed. We still need signs to trust in Jesus.

I have no idea why Jesus chose that one man at the pool of Bethesda to be healed that day. I know he had compassion on all people who suffer, but why did he pick that particular person over all the others. Maybe he was the only one there waiting for the healing waters who literally had nobody to help him get to the water before the Angel departed. I try not to spend too much time troubling myself

over things I can't answer. For me, a better question is; now that I believe and trust in the Zoa Jesus has freely given to me, what should I do now?

We have these and other miraculous stories of how Jesus healed people. We've all heard about someone who had terminal cancer one day and then it was gone the next. I mean the day after this congregation prayed over a quilt for my daughter Melanie, her Kidney stone disappeared. We hear about these miracles, but they are still pretty rare. Every person who received one of our prayer quilts wasn't miraculously healed, at least physically. The plain truth is our biological bodies are perishable. They grow old and decay. I thank God every day that Jesus didn't come to heal me biologically. The true miracle is the spiritual healing, the Zoa life Jesus came to open up for all people. The real healing is that my sin is gone and I am now counted among the sons and daughters, all the Children of God who have ZoA eternally.

Another thing I noticed about these healing stories, especially the one at the Bethesda Pool... I'm really glad we don't operate on the same system that was in place at that pool in Jerusalem. I mean even among the blind, deaf, and lame only the fittest stood a chance of being physically healed. When the water stirred, you better strike while the iron is hot or your chance is gone until the Angel returns. PJ and I were fortunate to have tickets to see the play Hamilton last week. One of the theme that Alexander Hamilton kept repeating over and over in the style of many

modern Rap artists was “I’m not gonna waste my shot.” I’ll tell you right now many people are wasting their shot by looking for physical miracles all the while missing the true miracle for God’s never-ending mercy and His Grace. I’m not gonna waste my one shot at this life worrying about my past or what might have been. I’m not gonna waste my shot by looking inward and wondering why Jesus hasn’t given me the same blessing as someone else. I’m not gonna waste my shot at loving Jesus by coveting someone else’s miracle, when Jesus has already given me everything he had, right up there on that cross. Jesus Healed as a sign - not only to bless one person - but to demonstrate to all who He really was. When we read these stories of healings in the Bible or hear about a miraculous healing today don’t miss your shot to come to know who Jesus is. He is the one sent from God our Father to show us God’s love. That’s why Jesus came to earth, to demonstrate God’s unfailing love for this world.

One final observation about these stories. The religious leaders totally missed the point of the miraculous healing of the man at the pool. All they could see was that Jesus did work on the Sabbath. They lacked the compassion to think maybe they should rejoice with the healed man or maybe they should have helped him at some time during the previous 38 years into that pool to receive the healing he longed for. Instead their hearts were hardened and they began to plot the death of the one person who embodied the very love of God... Before we get too high

and mighty though, isn't that pretty much the same way many Christians behave?

We're so preoccupied with the many things in our lives that we might not even notice the miraculous things happening every day all around us. We look for the huge things like God curing our loved one that we fail to see the miraculous happening every day.

May you learn the lesson from these healing stories that Jesus can miraculously heal, physically, but the most important healing is the bridging of the chasm between humankind and God Almighty caused by our sin and unbelief. May we begin to see with our eyes of faith all the miraculous things God is doing in our lives every day. May we respond to these signs and wonders in faith and in love for our neighbors. Thanks be to Jesus Christ for demonstrating God's love for us and through His faith bringing us true life, ZoA in abundance. Amen.