

Faith Healing

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[0 : 0 0] Well, you'll remember not long ago in the news, if you followed it, there was a controversy surrounding a faith healer in Limpopo province who used cans of doom to heal his congregation's illness.

Do you remember that? It was quite a controversy and there was lawsuits put up against him and he was on the news. I think he loved the publicity. That's probably why he did it in the first place.

But what struck me is despite the sheer stupidity of it, how many people flocked to this guy to have him spray a can of doom in their face?

I mean, it seems ridiculous and yet they were so desperate that they came and hoped that this nut job could solve their problems.

But you see it all over, don't you? It's not just in Limpopo. Faith healing is big business. In our world, every week, millions of desperate people attend faith healing services around the world in hopes that their particular problems can be solved by some guy wearing a white suit and flashy shoes with elaborate promises of healing.

[1 : 1 1] All you need, of course, is enough faith and enough money to prove that you have enough faith. Of course, that's how you demonstrate your faith.

That's how the con works. If you're not healed at a faith healing service, it's obviously because you didn't have enough faith. And how do you demonstrate you have more faith? Well, you pay more money.

That's apparently how faith healing works. Of course, you wonder why that's needed at all. If these guys actually could heal people, if they had real power. In fact, I've always wondered why you don't see them at hospitals.

Have you ever seen a faith healer at a hospital? No, except if they could really heal people, you would expect that's the first place they would go to where all the really sick people are.

But they don't because that would expose them as the frauds they are. Well, as we turn to this morning's passage, John chapter 5, we find a healing that is completely different to the bogus faith healings we hear about today.

[2 : 1 4] Because here, we find Jesus deliberately going to where all the sick people are. Picking out a man in the most hopeless situation, a man who had been crippled for 38 years.

And in an instant, without any elaborate rituals, with only a word, Jesus fully restores him to health. And what's even more striking about this particular miracle is that it had nothing to do with the man who was healed.

It had nothing to do with how much faith he had. He didn't have any faith, in fact. He didn't even know who Jesus was. He didn't seek Jesus out to heal him. And yet, despite nothing from him, he was completely healed.

Because, you see, this miracle, this healing that we're looking at this morning, is not meant to be an example of faith. Yes, some others are in Scripture. But this particular miracle, this healing, is not meant to teach us about faith at all.

It's meant to teach us something about God. And more specifically, God's work in the world. Which is a theme that we've been seeing over and over in John. Jesus claiming that God is working in this world and he has come to do that work.

[3 : 25] And so this miracle has a very important message for us to understand what that work is. And so what we're going to do is we're going to look at the miracle itself. And then we're going to look at the meaning behind the miracle.

So let's have a look at the miracle first. So Jesus finds this man at a famous place in Jerusalem where all the sick people used to gather. It was pretty much the closest thing you could get to a hospital in those days.

It was a pool fed by a natural spring called the Pool of Bethesda. And it was reputed to have healing properties. In fact, the tradition went that when the water was stirred, it was an angel of God who was there.

And then if you got into the water first, you'd be healed. That was the superstition. But of course, it was only a superstition. And yet people would flock to this place day after day because they were desperate.

They needed something. They were there in the hope that they would experience some kind of miracle. Well, it just so happened that this particular day, this man did experience a miracle, but not the way he expected.

[4 : 33] Jesus comes and simply tells him to pick up his mat and walk. And in an instant, 38 years of muscle degeneration is completely reversed.

This man's legs are all of a sudden strengthened in a way that he's never felt. And he is able to do what he hasn't been able to do for 38 years.

Imagine. Imagine that. You've not been able to walk. You've been crawling around, depending on people to carry you around. For 38 years, it's just part of life.

And then all of a sudden, you feel strength in your legs and you can walk. And you don't even know where to go, but you know you can walk around.

You've just never had this ability before. Imagine what it would have been like. It's an astounding miracle, this. And by itself, it just shows us the raw power of this man, Jesus.

[5 : 29] Again, like all his miracles do. Just how easy it is for him to restore this man back to full health. But then as we read on in this passage, we discover that there's something more to this miracle.

It's not just here to show us about the power of Jesus. It's here to teach us something more. It's a sign. Like all of John's miracles in the Gospel of John, they're called signs because they point us to a reality that lies behind them.

And then as we read on and we read the story, we discover just what this sign is pointing us towards. Because it turns out that Jesus did this miracle on the Jewish Sabbath.

A day when traditionally you weren't allowed to do any work. And the Jewish religious leaders took this very seriously as we go on to see. So if you look on in your passage, basically this man, astounded that he can walk.

He picks up his mat like Jesus told him to. And he starts walking around to the first time. Probably just, you know, in circles. Just testing it out. And the people looking on, absolutely astounded.

[6 : 31] And this is just amazing. People are flabbergasted by what's happened. And along come the Pharisees, the religious leaders. And you know the first thing they say?

They say, hey, you're not allowed to carry a mat on the Sabbath. I mean, come on. How short-sighted is that? How much their legalism has blinded them?

Objecting to this technicality when this amazing thing has happened in front of their eyes. See, if people don't want to see Jesus for who he is, they won't.

They'll come up with any reason to deny who Jesus really is. We see it then and we see it today. Just like these Pharisees did. They were blinded to admitting who Jesus is because they don't want to.

Rather, they used this miracle which should have pointed them towards Jesus. Should have made them submit to Jesus. They use it as an excuse to oppose him. To persecute him.

[7 : 32] But you know what? In classic Jesus style, he knows exactly that they're going to do this. He knew this would happen. And I think he planned for this to happen.

I think part of the reason he told this man to pick up his mat, not just leave it there, is because he wanted to have this conversation with the Jewish leaders. He wanted this confrontation to come because it gave him the opportunity to say what he says to them, which is the very point that he wants to teach them and us through this miracle.

And we find it in verse 16 and 17. Have a look in your Bibles. So because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him.

In his defense, Jesus said to them, My father is always at work to this very day, and I too am working. So that was his response to this accusation of working on the Sabbath.

Of course, he could have actually taken them back to Exodus and Leviticus and Deuteronomy and said, actually, you've got the Sabbath wrong. It's not about this man carrying his mat. It's about not doing your regular work. It's about resting.

[8 : 39] But he doesn't. He could have, but he doesn't. But he rather uses it as an opportunity to tell them, to make this massive claim about himself. He says, my father, firstly, my father is always at his work.

So let's just stop there and think about that. This is the first part of his defense. He says, my father is always at his work. In other words, God doesn't take a day off.

Because he doesn't need to. The Sabbath law was made for people to rest. It was meant for us to take time off our providing for ourselves so that we can remember that it's ultimately God who provides for us.

We need rest. God made us to need rest and to need food and to need oxygen. He made us to be dependent creatures. And yet we think we're independent. But God reminds us over and over again that we need what he provides us.

He made us to be dependent on him. And that's why we need rest regularly. That's why we need to rest not just physically, but we need a rest in God.

[9 : 43] We need to find our provision and security in God. That's what the Sabbath commandment is actually all about. But of course, that doesn't apply to God himself. He doesn't need rest like we do.

And it's just as well for us. Because imagine God decided to take a day off from sustaining the universe. Imagine he decided to sleep late in the morning.

I mean, the sun wouldn't rise. The stars would fall out of the sky. And the universe would collapse in on itself. And so the Sabbath doesn't apply to God.

And it's just as well that it doesn't. Jesus says, my father is always at work. But then, look what he does next. By saying God is at work, he then goes on to say, and so I too am working.

And by saying that, he's making an incredible claim. Because what he's doing is he's aligning himself, not with man who needs the Sabbath, but with God who doesn't.

[10 : 49] You see, when they ask him, why are you doing these things in the Sabbath? He's saying, because I'm with God doing his work. And we never stop working. And so what is that work?

God is at work, not just sustaining the universe. He's doing something else. And Jesus, his son, came to earth to do that work. What is the work that Jesus and the father never stopped doing?

Well, we see it here in this healing miracle. Their work, in a nutshell, is to restore what is broken. Just like Jesus did with this man.

Their work, the work that God the father and his son Jesus Christ are busy doing right now, is fixing this broken world. Back to how it should be.

That is the work that Jesus came to earth to do. And that is the work that he is still doing today, right now, as he works in people's lives. In fact, I would hope and pray that he is doing that work right this moment in this church, as we open his word and as his spirit works in our lives.

[11 : 55] He is working to restore what was broken. And he does that not necessarily by healing people physically, because physical healing can only ever be temporary.

All of his miracles, his physical healings, they were only ever temporary. They were meant to point to something better. You see, Jesus didn't come to give us temporary healing from our temporary physical ailments.

He came to give us eternal healing. Eternal healing. Healing to restore us into eternity, so we can be part of a restored creation in eternity. And he did that, we see in John as we read on, by dying on the cross for sins.

Because sin is the very thing that broke us in the first place. Sin is the very thing that separated us from any hope of a restored creation. Jesus comes to undo that.

Just as he undid this man's paralysis, he comes to undo the sins of those who trust in him, so that we can be restored in eternity. He came to this earth to restore us.

[13 : 00] But that starts now. The restoration process. Preparing us for a restored creation in eternity starts now in our lives.

That's why he's busy doing it now. He came and he is working now to restore your brokenness and mine.

A brokenness that we all feel. I mean, we can't deny that we are broken. Because we all feel the brokenness of this world, don't we? In some way or another. This man felt that brokenness in his legs not working.

Others might feel that brokenness in a chronic illness. Or in broken relationships. Or in emotional turmoil. Or in financial difficulties.

Whoever you are, you can't escape the brokenness of this world. And you, right now, are feeling that brokenness somehow in your life. I don't know what it is. But you do. The question I want to ask you this morning is, Who do you look to to alleviate that brokenness in your life?

[14 : 05] What do you look to to alleviate that brokenness? Because we all have some kind of self-medication, don't we? We all find ways to ease the brokenness in our lives.

This man here had his magic pool in Bethesda that he went to. That's what he pinned his hopes on to escape from his brokenness. That's what he went to day after day. That's what he focused on.

He woke up thinking, I need to get to the magic pool. Because that somehow, hopefully, is going to restore my brokenness. Well, I want to ask you this morning, what is your magic pool?

What do you wake up and look to and chase after to heal your brokenness? Drink? Entertainment? Money?

What is it for you? What is your self-medication for the brokenness that you feel? You see, the challenge of this miracle is to realize that our magic pools won't work.

[15 : 09] We can chase after them, but they won't work. They'll only ever be vain hopes. But there is someone who can truly heal our brokenness, and that is Jesus Christ. So the question is, is that who you look to every day to restore you?

To alleviate your brokenness? To reverse the brokenness in your life? Do you look to Jesus? Because he has proven here, he is the one who can do it. But I guess there's another question I've got to ask you first, and that is, do you really want to be restored?

Did you notice Jesus asked this man, do you want to be healed? Verse 6 there. Do you want to get well? Now, it seems like a stupid question, doesn't it?

It seems, oh, of course this guy wants to be healed. That's why he comes to this place in the first place. And yet, it's a very good question, because I think he asked that question less for the benefit of that man and more for the benefit of us who are reading it today.

Do you want to be restored? Do you want to get well? Do you actually want to change? Do you want the brokenness of your life to be reversed? Or are you too attached to this broken world and the things of this world to want to change?

[16 : 27] You see, because part of being restored back to who we should be, back to who Jesus came to make us, part of that is putting aside our self-medication. And rather listening to what Jesus says and doing what he says.

And so our desire to be restored from the brokenness of this world will be seen in how we respond to Jesus in our lives.

Which leads us to the real deeper meaning of this miracle, which I now want to look at. You see, Jesus uses this miracle as an opportunity to teach us something about God's work in this world, which we've seen.

But not only that, he also uses it as an opportunity to teach us something about himself. Because the implication of what he says here about God working and therefore him working can't be missed.

And they didn't miss it then. Have a look from verse 18. For this reason, they tried all the more to kill him. This is the first time that we read in John the intention, the true intention of the religious leaders to kill Jesus.

[17 : 36] Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, and this is why they wanted to kill him. But he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. That was the last straw for them.

And it's the last straw for many people today. You see, this idea that Jesus is equal with God. That Jesus is God in the flesh.

Is one of the biggest stumbling blocks people have with Christianity. How can we see this man who walked on this planet. Who walked in places that we can walk.

This man who became a human. And how can we see him as the God who created everything. Without being polytheists. That's a fancy word. It just means people who worship multiple gods.

Like Hindus, for example. How can we worship Jesus and the Father and not be polytheists? That's, by the way, what the Muslims and the Jews will accuse Christians of being. Worshipping multiple gods.

[18 : 39] It's a good question, though. Do we worship multiple gods by worshipping Jesus and worshipping the Father? Well, it's here that Jesus explains how this can be.

How it can be that we worship one God. And yet, Jesus is God. And the Father is God. And the Holy Spirit is God. Because he describes the kind of relationship that they have.

And it's very important we understand it. Verse 19. Jesus gave them this answer. Very truly, I tell you. The Son can do nothing by himself. He can only do what he sees his Father doing.

Because whatever the Father does, the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. And so, you see, what he's saying is, yes. Jesus is God's Son.

A distinct person from God the Father. And yet, he so perfectly submits to the Father's will that he has no separate will of his own. And so, while there are different persons in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they all share the exact same will.

[19 : 46] And so, they work so seamlessly together that they are, in every respect, one God. Not separate gods. And that's what Jesus is trying to say to these Jews.

He's saying he's not putting himself up as a competing God in opposition to the God that they have always worshipped. He's not come to do something different to what God has been doing up until now.

No, he's claiming that what he does is exactly what the Father is doing. And so, if you want to know what God is up to in this world, you look to Jesus.

Jesus makes the unseen will and intentions of God seen, visible for us. So that we can finally know what God is up to.

We can know what is on God's heart. We can see the unseen. Think of it kind of like how a polygraph test works. You know a polygraph test?

[20 : 44] Otherwise known as a lie detector test. So, the idea is that they'll hook someone up to these wires and then they'll ask them questions. And the polygraph machine can actually tell whether they're lying or telling the truth.

So, a polygraph is able to show you what you wouldn't be able to see without it. Normally, someone's will and true intentions are hidden. And yet, the polygraph exposes them, makes them visible to you.

Well, you see, in a similar way, Jesus came to earth to show us what we wouldn't be able to see otherwise. The will and intention of God himself.

The work of God's own mind. What God is doing behind the scenes. What God wants. What God is passionate about. Jesus came in his life and his words and his works to expose that to us.

Jesus is the visual representation of God's will and God's heart. And so, if you want to know your creator. If you want to know God intimately.

[21 : 47] You look at Jesus. There is no other way to know God. You can read all the ancient texts and religious books you want to.

You can look at God's creation until you're blue in the face. But to really know him. To really know his heart. You need to look to Jesus. You need to listen to Jesus.

There is no other way to know God and who he really is. Except by knowing Jesus. That's what he's saying here. But that's not all.

There is another, more serious implication. Of his claim. Look at verse 22. Moreover, the father judges no one. But he has entrusted all judgment to the son.

That all may honor the son. Just as they honor the father. Whoever does not honor the son. Does not honor the father who sent him. So, what Jesus is saying here.

[22 : 41] Is that not only do you look to Jesus if you want to know God. But how you end up treating Jesus in your life. Is how you treat God. And that is what you'll be judged for at the end of your life.

What will condemn or justify you on the last day. Is not primarily the sins you've committed. Or the righteous acts you've done. But your attitude to Jesus Christ. That's what will count.

That's what it comes down to. You see, the ultimate sin. The ultimate sin is not murder. Or theft. Or abortion. Or abortion. All are sins.

Because they're against God's law. But those aren't the ultimate sin. The ultimate sin. Is to ignore God in the world that he's made. To turn your back on the giver of life.

And ignore him. And live your life without reference to him. And all the other sins actually come from that one ultimate sin. And so, if Jesus is the perfect representation of God.

[23 : 43] Ignoring him in your life. Is the ultimate sin against God. You see, this changes our view on what sin really is, doesn't it? Sin is not just doing bad stuff.

Sin is ignoring the Son of God in your life. Putting him on the back seat. Treating his words as nothing more than you would treat the words in some You Magazine advice column.

No, we have to give Jesus a much higher place in our life than we tend to. If he is who he claims to be here. Because when we stand before him one day.

Which he goes on to talk about. One thing and one thing alone will determine whether we face God's terrible judgment. Or are given eternal life in a restored creation.

And that is how we treated Jesus in our lives on earth. But here's the good news. Those who have put their faith in Jesus. Those who do honor Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

[24 : 44] Don't have to worry about the outcome of that judgment one day. Because look what Jesus says. Verse 24. He says, those people have already crossed over from death to life.

You see, that's how you honor Jesus. You trust in him. You trust in his death on the cross. And you follow him as the Lord. The Son of God as he truly is.

And you live your life in reference to him and what he's done. And if you have done that. You have already crossed over from death to life. You can already determine what is going to happen on judgment day.

You can know the final verdict on judgment day. Simply by asking yourself what Jesus means to you today. How you treat him in your life.

If you treat him as your Savior and Lord. Who he truly is. Then the outcome of that judgment is already secure. Because of what Jesus has done for you on the cross. But if you don't.

[25 : 42] If Jesus doesn't form a big part of your life at all. If his words are no more to you than occasional advice. Once a week on Sunday. If you are still calling the shots in your life and not him.

Well then you need to take this warning from verse 23 deadly seriously. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. You see you need to examine how you treat Jesus in your life.

And you need to give him the honor he deserves. What's one way that you do that? How do you give him the honor that he deserves? Well what did he tell this healed man to do?

After he met him again. Stop sinning. Otherwise something worse might happen to you. See he's saying to this man. That's how you demonstrate that you honor Jesus in your life.

You take sin seriously. Because sin is what he died on the cross for. Sin is what he suffered for. If you don't take it seriously in your life. You are not honoring the Son. That's one way. There are many other ways to honor Jesus.

[26 : 49] Honoring him by putting your reputation on the line to tell other people about him. That's another way to honor Jesus. And so we need to make sure we are honoring the Son. Because by honoring the Son we honor the Father.

And so you giving him the honor that he deserves. Is the only one who is able to restore you from your brokenness and give you eternal life. Because that is what he came to earth to do. Have you let him come in and do that for you yet?

Well I'm going to pray that we all do that. Let's pray. Yes Lord Jesus we thank you for using this miracle of this man.

As an example to us of the work that you came to do for each one of us. We thank you also for using it as a way to teach us who you truly are. And the importance of giving you the place you deserve in our lives as the Son of God.

We pray that you would help each of us to do that. As we go into a new week would you help us to take our sins seriously. To stop sinning. To honor you in our lives as our Lord and Savior.

[27 : 52] Help us Lord not to try self-medicate. And look to other things to heal our brokenness. But to look to you as our only restorer. As our only healer.

Help us to put our trust in you this week. And to honor you as you deserve. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.