"Healing" (God Sightings: When GOD Shows Up – Pt. 4)

(2 Kings 5:14-15, Matt. 8:1-4)

- **Does God Still Heal Today?**
  - Today, we're talking about, probably, the most *personal* kind of miracle or "**God Sighting**"—and that is, ***Healing***. I think many Christians wrestle with the question, ***Does God still heal today?*** *Does He?* What should we expect? Believe it or not, there is a spectrum of how different branches of the Church answer this question, based on their theology, and how different people answer this question, based on their experiences. It ranges from Christians who believe most miracles ceased after the time of the Apostles, to Christians who are open but cautious, to Christians who believe it should be the right and expectation of every single believer.
    - I'm here to tell you that I believe we *do* have more than enough teaching in Scripture, and more than enough evidence globally, to have confidence that *God is a healer* and *God is still healing people today*—and I think most of us agree in principle. But how we live it out, how we apply to our lives, what expectations we have, depends a lot on what we've been taught and what we've been through. Some of us can say *I know God still heals people today* because I've seen it with my own eyes—praise God! Some of us would say I'm open, but skeptical, because I've seen it be abused and manipulated. Some of us would say, I stopped looking for it, because my heart's been broken and I'm not sure if my faith can handle more disappointment. What I would say to every single one of us is: Jesus has something to teach each of us, and He is always in the business of coming alongside us to renew our sight—of who He is, what He can do, and how He's at work. Do you want a God sighting? Let's talk about *Healing*. First, we'll pray…
- **Jesus' Ministry**
  - You know, out of all the miracles recorded in Scripture, between 30-50% can be categorized as *miracles of healing*. In Jesus' ministry specifically, up to *70%* of His recorded miracles are healings. It's a major theme. And we shouldn't be

surprised, because if the Bible is the True Story of how God is saving a broken world, then healing is a big part of that. I often come back to Luke 4 when Jesus describes His ministry with the words of the prophet Isaiah: ***"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor..."*** **(Isa. 61:1-2, Luke 4:16-20)** A little later, He says: ***"The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor."*** **(Isa. 35:5-6 Luke 7:22)** Jesus is a healer. God is a healer. *God wants to heal His people, and His creation.* It's part of His plan.

- **<u>2 Lepers, One God</u>**
  - But there's a lot to unpack. Let's just compare 2 stories of healing in the O.T. and N.T. One is a leper who gets healed through the prophet Elisha, another is a leper who gets healed by Jesus. These men could not be more different in their character and their attitude, but their plight leads them to the same place: humbled and desperate for healing.
  - In 2 Kings 5 we hear the story of Naaman, a Gentile, a mighty warrior for a nation that was enemies with Israel. Naaman was highly regarded but he had a problem: he had leprosy. Leprosy in the Bible describes a variety of skin diseases that were terrible not just because of the discomfort and contagiousness, but because of the social and religious *ostracization* that came with it. For many, it was a plight worse than death. It just so happened that there was a young servant in Namaan's house who was taken captive from Israel long ago, and even though she was a victim of human trafficking and a stranger in a strange land, she did not lose her faith in the saving presence of God. She saw his suffering and she told them there was a prophet in Israel who could help. So, Namaan travels to Israel in pomp and circumstance, ready to pay lots of money for this miracle worker to work his magic. When he gets there, the prophet doesn't even come out to greet him: ***Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself***

***seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."* (2 Kings 5:10)** Naaman is indignant. *I traveled all this way for the servant of some Hebrew prophet to tell me to take a bath in this puny river? I could do this any time back home, in much better rivers!* But his servants convince him to stay: *If the prophet told you to do some great thing, wouldn't you have listened? So, why not do this little thing?* And this mighty man, this arrogant soldier, this enemy, humbles himself, goes down to the river, and dips himself in the muddy water 7 times just like the man of God told him to*…1, 2, 3, 4*…and go figure! He comes up after no. 7, and his skin is totally restored. He says: ***"Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel…your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord."* (5:15, 17)** He came to the water *sick, arrogant, filthy outside and in, an idol worshipper, an enemy of God and His people—he leaves the water healed, humbled, clean, and a worshipper of the living God.*

- Fast-forward to Matt. 8 in the N.T. and you meet a man with the same sickness, but a very different character. Jesus has just preached *the Sermon on the Mount*, the greatest teaching of all time—He's like a new and greater Moses, coming down the Mt. And as He's coming down, surrounded by crowds, they get a shock: a man approaches Him who is *supposed to be untouchable.* According to the Law of Moses, this man is to remain far away from the community, he is supposed to warn everyone to stay away from his presence, he is supposed to refrain from touching *anyone* because his touch could cause other people to get his sickness and his touch would also make them ritually unclean. *But this man is about to experience the touch of Jesus Christ.* You can be sure that many people recoiled in disgust and horror as he kneels before the Healer and says: ***"Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."* (Matt. 8:2)** The leper is so desperate in his condition and so confident in the goodness of Jesus that he's willing to risk every social rule and expose his brokenness to the Holy One. And watch this. Before saying anything, ***"Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man."* (8:3)** The Law saws when the unclean touches the clean, the clean becomes unclean—but now, the One who fulfills the Law and brings a new, better way *touches the*

unclean and makes it clean! And after giving the man what he hadn't received for who knows how long—the compassion of human touch—Jesus says these words: ***"I am willing…be clean!"*** **(8:3)** And he is healed. Immediately Jesus tells him not to make a spectacle of it, don't run around telling everyone, but go and do the next faithful thing: show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices the law commands for this circumstance *as a testimony to them.* To testify that Jesus didn't come to do away with the law to fulfill it, to testify that Jesus came to bring good news to the poor and healing to the sick, to testify that the God of Israel has come down to be with His people and save the world He loves. And the man walked away, free.

- **Temporary Sign, Eternal Promise**
  - We tend to focus on the problem, God sees the whole person. We tend to focus on the situation, God sees the whole picture. One of these men was a Gentile, one was a Jew. One was a warrior, one was an outcast. One was arrogant, one was dejected. But both got healed by God. Not because of how good they were, or how bad they were. But because God showed up, willing to heal—and they showed up, willing to humble themselves and believe Him. The hard thing for us is, sometimes God shows up, and we see the miracle, and other times God shows up, and we don't see the miracle. And we don't know what to do with that.
  - Here's what we need to understand: the miracles, the healings, are *signs*. Temporary signs, pointing to an eternal promise. When Jesus came to the world, His primary mission was to tell people that the Kingdom of God is now open to everyone who believes, and to redeem the world through His death and resurrection. In His compassion, He healed everyone who came near in faith, as a sign, as a witness, that the Kingdom of Heaven was breaking through. And now that He is risen and reigning, we still live in this broken world, but we're living *for His Kingdom.* And we're waiting for the Day He returns, and the Kingdom of Heaven and earth become one again—and He makes *all things new.* The miracles, the healings in this life, *are temporary*—they point to the *eternal promise* that soon, *God is going to make all things new.*
- **How God Heals Today**

- Dr. Steve Seamands wrote a book called *Follow the Healer*. He outlines the 5 general ways that Jesus still works to bring healing to people today—this is so helpful. These are the primary ways *God shows up in our sickness and suffering* with His power and grace. **1) Supernatural Healings:** He still works miracles today. There is extensive documentation of eye-witness accounts and medically verified events, all over the world—not all of us witness that, but all of us can enjoy the testimonies if we want to (for more on that, read Dr. Craig Keener's 2021 book *Miracles Today*). **2) Medical Science:** It is the grace of God that even in this broken world, He has made it possible for us to develop natural sciences that help make people well—that's God's gift. It's sacred work, it's a calling, Christians have been engaged in this kind of service for God's glory since the beginning (for more on that, listen to the song "Miracle Drug" by U2!). **3) The Body's Built-In Healing Process:** It is also the grace of God that our bodies, to a great extent, have the capacity to heal themselves—it's a wonder of creation, and God works through it, God answers prayers in response to it, this is another way He brings healing. **4) Sustaining Grace in the Midst of Suffering:** Paul has a famous testimony in 2 Cor. where he asks God to take away an affliction and the Lord told him, *my grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness.* God had a purpose for it, but God sustained him through it. It's amazing to see God's supernatural power through a miracle, but it's profound to see God's supernatural power through a persevering saint—and let me ask you this: which one is a greater reflection of the glory of Christ? The one who receives a miracle through faith, or the one who suffers patiently through faith? I don't think you can pick—you see Jesus powerfully in both, and that's the point. **5) Victorious Dying:** God's supernatural power shows up in our suffering through triumphant dying into eternal life. All of us will die (unless Jesus returns first). And if we die of affliction, or sickness, we do not die in defeat—*we die in victory*. Some of the most powerful signs of God's Kingdom are saints who face the end of this life *in peace, in hope, with the glory of God shining on their face*—because they know it's the beginning of *the Life that never ends, where every affliction is healed*.

- And that's the biggest perspective I want us to grasp today, wherever we are at with the reality of God's healing: whether we see a miracle of healing in this life or not, whether God says *yes* to that prayer, or not—*we will all receive our healing in Christ! Because He lives, we will live!*
  - The possibility of miracles in God's Kingdom does not negate the reality of suffering in this life. But no matter what blessings and what burdens we carry, *in the life to come we will all be healed*—everything else is just a sign pointing to the real thing that's on the way.
- So, when it comes to *Healing*, I want you to stand strong *on 2 feet, on solid ground*. I think this is what Christian maturity looks like in this area: *On 1 foot, you stand with the radical expectation that God is a healer and He can do anything! On the other foot, you stand with the radical submission to God's sovereign will* (like Jesus, not my will, but Thy will). And with your 2 feet, you stand on the solid ground of the Gospel: *That one day, everyone in Christ will be totally restored*. It's like this: *(1) God can do anything, (2) I'm willing to accept anything*, and underneath it all, *God is going to make all things new.*
  - When you stand like this on two feet, on solid ground, you can seek God in faith for any situation, and you will see God show up in every situation. It's a promise.