**Calvary Fellowship 7.10.2022 Matthew 8:1-27 “What to Do When You Need a Miracle”**

* **So about 4 years ago we went to the Boardwalk at at Disney**
* At the Boardwalk, they have these Coney Island type of games where U can win prizes & being the competitive person I am, I put $5 down to play
* There was this basketball game where if U have 1 shot U get a small basketball, 2 for a medium, & 3 for a large - they give U 7 shots
* I made 4 of the 7 shots b/c I’ve got game & I got Livi a large princess basketball & Xander & Mia wanted a volleyball, so they got it - they thought I was amazing
* **Then we went to this other game where U have to put these rubber lobsters into a spinning pot & U use a hammer to launch them**
* So I’ve just come off a big victory & I put $10 down b/c Livi wants this ninja penguin & I’m ready to show off my skills
* I’m given 12 lobsters & I only have to put in 2 to get the ninja penguin
* So I channel my inner Thor - people say we look alike so I think it’s easy to do
* But I strike out on all 12, so I put $5 more down b/c I’m failing in front of my kids
* I strike out again - then Mia says, “Can I try?” - I say, “Ok.” - I put $5 down & I ask the kid for lobsters so the kids can try
* I know it’s not going to happen, but it’s the price of having fun
* My son Xander puts a lobster in on his 2nd try & he says, “I’m not doing this for me. I’m doing this for Livi b/c she wants the ninja penguin.”
* The girls strike out on their quest, but the kid keeps putting lobsters in front of them so they’ll keep trying & doesn’t charge us any more
* After about 15 minutes of lobsters flying, the kid says, “I see 2 lobsters in the pot.” - My wife says, “No. Xander only got 1 in.” - He says, “Well, I see 2.”
* So he gives Livi the Ninja Penguin - But then he gives Xander a Ninja Penguin & gives Mia a prize as well - Livi asks his name - He says, “It’s Noah.”
* And Livi says, “Then I’m naming my penguin Noah.” (pic of Penguin & Livi)
* **My kids were proclaiming the experience a Disney miracle**
* I’m not sure it was a miracle - I think it was a really nice who wanted to help a dad not look like a complete loser in the eyes of his children
* B/c let’s be honest, the only miracle that happens at Disney is how quickly your money disappears & how U spend 4 days walking for 12 hours & still gain 5 pounds when U get home
* But…there’s something about the idea of a miracle that’s so powerful that even those who don’t believe say that if they saw a miracle they would believe
* Others try to explain away miracles as over-exaggerations of an event
* **So let’s define a miracle - a miracle is God intervening in the natural order by overpowering natural laws**
* So the natural law of gravity would cause this Bible to fall on the ground
* Then my holding it up is me intervening in the natural order - However, that’s still natural b/c I’m using force to prevent gravity from taking hold
* But what if I was holding it up w/ my mind or I was doing some kind of Obi-Wan Kenobi thing & I held it up using The Force? We’d call that a miracle
* Why? B/c we were overpowering natural laws w/ a force that is outside of natural order
* But if the 1st verse of the Bible is true, that God created everything, it stands to reason that miracles are very possible
* But that’s not our issue for those of us who are believers
* Our problem w/ miracles as Christians is that God doesn’t follow a pattern
* In fact, when U read the Gospels, Jesus performs around 40 miracles, but Jesus never does a miracle the same way twice
* 1 time he touches a guy’s face & heals him - another time he just gives the word - another time he spits on the ground & puts mud on a guy’s face
* **So I want to take U on a journey in Jesus’ ministry right after the sermon on the mount - Jesus is growing in popularity & big crowds are following**
* It’s a time when He’s calling His disciples & preaching in different cities
* But there’s 5 different miracles that happen & they all point to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah & give us a glimpse into the heart of God for those of us who might be in need of a miracle today
* U may need a miracle for healing, a financial miracle, a miracle for God to bring someone into your life or out of your life, or some other supernatural miracle
* I want U to know that God hasn’t forgotten U - He’s at work & He is going to do something through the situation you’re in…

**———(v. 1-4)———**

**#1 - Miracles Reveal God’s Power**

* **How many of U have ever had chicken pox? I had it in the 3rd grade**
* In fact, I’m the only person I’ve ever known who wanted to get Chickenpox
* Why? I was desperate to get out of school - My friends who got the chickenpox said they just sat around watching TV - 1 of my favorite things to do
* So when someone I knew had chicken pox, I’d go visit them
* People would think, “Wow, look at how he sacrifices himself.”
* But in reality, I was looking for a vacation from school
* But my desire changed once I got the chicken pox - It was horrible!
* Weird spots all over your body - An insatiable desire to itch - everyone telling U not to itch, then when U do, it leaves a scar
* So U have to put on a cream that makes U look like U have polkadots
* Plus, when U have chickenpox, U get quarantined & are cut off from the outside world - This is the closest most of us will get to leprosy
* **Let me explain what leprosy is - leprosy isn’t the rotting of the flesh as it was once thought, it’s the deadening of the pain center of the body**
* Leprosy starts small – under the skin – below the surface
* But it grows & spreads very quickly – A person w/ it would immediately notice 1st symptom: deadening of the nerves & a loss of feeling
* That’s why lepers were disfigured - they couldn’t feel when they were burning themselves or hit their hand w/ a hammer
* Ever hit their thumb w/ a hammer? How many were ever thankful to God? Some invoke God’s name, but rarely to give thanks
* **The language that Luke records here is very powerful & we can miss it if we aren’t careful - b/c this leper doesn’t asked to be healed**
* He asked to be made clean - why is that? B/c being unclean was his life
* Lepers were forbidden to come within six feet of a healthy person (150 feet if the wind was blowing from the direction of the leper)
* 1 rabbi said it was totally acceptable to throw stones at lepers to force them to keep their distance from those who were clean
* When a person contracted leprosy, they were kicked out of the city they lived in
* They lived in uninhabited areas or near the garbage heaps outside the walls of the city & if anyone came near, they were to shout, “Unclean! Unclean!”
* Unclean was this man’s life & there was no future b/c there was no cure
* **Now here’s my favorite part of this story - verse 13 says Jesus touched him w/ His hand - that was the 1st physical touch he had felt in years**
* And He said, “I’m willing. Be cleansed.” - and then Jesus commands the man to go to Jerusalem & offer a sacrifice as a testimony to them - to who?
* The priests & religious leaders - there’s a reason for this
* All the way back in the law of Moses - in Leviticus 13, it talks about how to identify & separate a leper when they contract leprosy
* This was to protection of the rest of the nation to keep others from getting it
* But then Leviticus 14 has this amazing possibility in it
* “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,**‘**This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest.’” (Leviticus 14:1-2)
* It goes on to describe the offering that the person should offer
* This healing was to show the leaders in Jerusalem that the Messiah had arrived & it was their opportunity to believe
* This man was healed & his life became a billboard for what God had done in his life & as a result of it multitudes came to hear & see Jesus
* This man didn’t asked to be healed - he asked to be cleansed - he came to Jesus b/c he believe Jesus could give him his life back
* His life became a reflection of the grace & power of God in his life
* So why are we asking for a miracle? Is it b/c we want God to bail us out or b/c we want to completely change & be a trophy of God’s grace?
* This man’s healing brought thousands to Jesus & it brought the very people that Jesus sent the man to see - the religious leaders

**———(v. 5-12)———**

**#2 - Miracles Affirm Jesus’ Authority**

* **So let me give U some background that helps us understand the story**
* A centurion is a Roman officer that is in charge of 100 soldiers
* Generally, Roman soldiers were hated by the Jews, but this centurion was loved by the Jews b/c he was a God-fearing Gentile
* Whenever U read about someone who was a God-fearing person, it means they believe in the God of Israel & kept the feasts, but had not gone through the rite of circumcision - that’s where U make the cut or don’t make the cut
* “And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, **‘**for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.’” (Luke 7:2-5)
* Now in the story we read, Jesus marvels over this centurion’s faith, b/c not even being Jewish, he has greater faith that the Jews who knew the Scriptures
* All b/c he understood authority - He heard about what Jesus was doing & knew that someone who can heal people has authority
* So he says, “All U have to do is say the word & desire for it to be done & it will be done.” - this is what makes Jesus marvel at this soldier
* But if we’re honest, sometimes this is the place where we falter b/c we aren’t sure of what God wants, so we don’t ask or we give up in prayer
* **When Mia was 5, she asked me what a miracle was & I explained it to her**
* That it's when God does something our abilities & our resources
* So I talked about Jesus feeding the 5,000 or parting the Red Sea
* We were eating breakfast & we ran out of cereal - so I said, "Mia, we'll buy more at the store this said, "Don't worry Dad, I've got this. God, we're asking U to do a miracle & refill our cereal in Jesus' name."
* I had to explain that miracles aren't a delivery service
* But I told her to keep that heart - the heart that believes God for the miraculous
* **Can I be honest w/ U? There have been moments when even as a Pastor, I have lacked faith in this area of my life**
* Years ago, when I was a young pastor I was visiting a woman in the hospital who was very ill - I walked into the room & what I saw floored me
* She as hooked up to so many tubes & machines & when I spoke to her, she said she was in the most pain she had ever been in
* I determined that this was it for the woman - I went to pray for her & said to myself, “Bob, don’t even bother anointing her, it’s over.” But I did
* The next day another Pastor went to see her & told me that she looked great - all the tubes were out & she was sitting up eating
* She was healed & I was floored - I wasn’t prepared for God to answer
* Listen, it’s impossible to predict or force a miracle to take place
* This is solely the work of God - but w**hile U can’t force a miracle, U can prepare for a miracle - why does that mean? It means trusting**
* In Exodus 14, there’s 1 of the most powerful scenes in all the Bible, the parting of the Red Sea - but there’s a part that the movies never show
* They show Moses saying, “Stand back & see the salvation of the Lord”
* I love that part - but there’s something that happens before the sea parts
* “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.’” (Exodus 14:15-16)
* B/c sometimes the miracle is totally supernatural & other times the miracle is God providing a way
* To put it another way, if you’re praying for God to provide a hold in the ground, He’s probably going to provide U w/ a shovel
* **Listen - that challenge you’re facing in our life should be the thing that’s drawing U closer to God b/c U want God to work in your life**
* a lot of times we think, “Oh, God is going to take care of it” & “I’m just waiting on the Lord” & we’re using that as an excuse for being lazy
* Whatever you’re praying about - act in alignment w/ what you’re asking God for
* If you’re a single guy & you’re praying for God to bring U a wife - buy yourself a new shirt & a new pair of jeans - that He-Man t-shirt isn’t going to cut it
* Bring your Bible to church - mark that thing up, so that when U open it, people see ink on those pages
* Then the kind of girl that you’d be interested in will look on & say, “This is a man of God. This guy loves the Lord. This is the kind of man I want to marry.”
* God is the 1 who’s going do it, but sitting in your room playing Fortnite won’t
* I can promise U, there’s no girl who is impressed that you’re a level 90 garden gnome- but she will be impressed if you’re committed to walking w/ God
* And while I’m on the subject - Listen, Carey & I have a friend who refused to wear make-up (it’s a girl, by the way) or dress nice
* her standard answer was, “I want a man who love me for me, not for what I wear or for my make-up.” - sounds good, but she’s still single
* It reminds me of what 1 of my professors in college said when a girl in my class asked him what he thought about girls wearing make-up
* He said, “If the barn needs painting, paint it.”
* 1 Samuel 16:7 - 2 truths - Man looks on the appearance/ God looks the heart
* Here’s my point: few good things in life happen by accident - Instead, it’s only when we’re intentional that what we want to see happen happens
* **Too often we think “seeking the Lord” means praying once & then sitting on our hands - God wants to partner w/ us**
* Seeking the Lord isn’t a spiritual code for being lazy - it’s a call to live God’s way - it’s us doing our part so God can do His part
* “How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had surrendered them?” (Deuteronomy 32:30)
* **Think about the audacity of that statement - that 1 man is able to chase a thousand - that’s saying that 1 man can put 1,000 on the run**
* This is a statement that’s used throughout the Bible as a statement of what a person can do when the favor of God is on them
* God is telling the people we can accomplish exponentially more when God is w/ us - that’s why the favor of God is so indispensable
* **Here’s the thing that people mess up on - they think that when the blessing of God is on U, that things are supposed to be easy**
* So they give up b/c things aren’t easy & they erroneously believe everything that God wants us to do is supposed to be easy
* I hear Christians all the time who give up b/c “God didn’t open a door” - have U ever thought God wants U to crash through the window?
* The fingerprint of God’s favor is not that it’s easy - it’s that God has a way of exponentially blessing our effort & doing more than we ever could

**———(v. 23-27)———**

**#3 - Miracles Display Jesus’ Care**

* **So I don’t know about U, but I like to go to the mall at Christmas time**
* I know it’s easier to order everything online & we do most of our shopping online, but there’s something about the hustle & bustle of Christmas
* Well, 1 Christmas Carey & I went to the mall to get a few things & what happens to me is that I love the idea of Christmas shopping… for 30 minutes
* Then I’m totally over it & want to get out of there
* So we get some stuff & I’m carrying big bags in each hand & Carey says, “Look, I’ll go into the last 2 stores. U sit on this bench.”
* So I sit on this bench w/ other husbands who are also holding bags
* Then my wife starts pushing me & I say, “What are U doing?” - She says, “Bob, you’ve been asleep for 1/2 an hour w/ these bags in your hands.”
* How could U possibly be asleep in a loud mall w/ bags in you’re hands?
* I remember 1 time when I was in a band that I fell asleep on a couch at a club we were playing at w/ blisteringly loud music - our singer had to wake me up
* **But Jesus apparently had that ability - He could fall asleep anywhere**
* There’s a major storm on the sea of Galilee & the disciples think they’re going to do - now remember, 1/2 of these guys were fisherman & grew up on boats
* So how bad did this storm have to be for them to think they were going to die?
* So why even allow it to happen? Better yet, why does Jesus allow any storm to come into our lives? Why can’t my life be smooth sailing?
* Listen, if U don’t get this, you’ll miss what God wants to do in your life
* I wish this wasn’t true, but it is - that we don’t grow in smooth sailing
* Have U noticed that U don’t grow spiritually at Disney World? No is riding Splash Mountain saying, “This is where I was baptized.”
* Why b/c human being generally don’t grow most when things are going well
* We grow in the storm & the reason God brings the storm is to grow us so we can handle what’s coming next
* If you’re married, U know this - U went through a difficult season & afterward it prepared U for the next challenge that came your way
* These disciples are going to an area they wouldn’t spend much time in & they are going to see something pretty scary
* So Jesus puts them in the place where they felt the most comfortable & challenged them & they learned who He really is
* And that’s what a trial always does - it reveals something about your own growth & it reveals something about who God is that propels your faith
* But there’s 1 other thing that’s important to note: In Mark’s Gospel we get this important detail that Matthew doesn’t mention
* “On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side.’” (Mark 4:35)
* Jesus told them, we’re goin to the other side - that’s why He tells them that they’re lacking faith - b/c they didn’t trust His Word
* Listen, they believed Jesu was the Messiah & they wanted to see Jesus do amazing things & when they get to the other side, there’s 2 demon possessed guys waiting for Him & He’s going to heal then & deal w/ the demons
* He’s going to send them into a herd of pigs - it’s the first instance in history of deviled ham
* But here’s what happened w/ them & what happens w/ us - we want to God to take us where we want to go, but we don’t like the way He’s taking us
* I’m telling U that the storm is the only way to get where they’re going b/c there’s some heavy stuff over there & U better settle your trust before we get to shore
* B/c 1 of the things spiritual maturity will teach U is the nothing is happening to U, but everything is happening for U
* “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.” (Romans 8:28-29)
* Everything that God is doing in your life is for the purpose of making U more like Jesus -
* Here’s what God is trying to show U in all these things - that He is FOR U
* And He will even use everything that the enemy & this world try to use against us & that we even do against ourselves - He will use it FOR our ultimate good
* **Chocolate chip cookies consist of 6 ingredients: butter, sugar, eggs, flour, baking soda, & chocolate chips**
* Have U ever tasted those things separately? It’s disgusting
* Imagine I gave all of these ingredients to my kids separately & said, “Kids, enjoy. You’ve just eaten a chocolate chip cookie.”
* It’s not going to work - why? B/c separately, not everything is good
* But in its time, God is working everything to be beautiful in its time
* Sometimes the sweet is too sweet & it needs a little bitter flavor to round it out
* The promise that we have is that nothing is our lives is meaningless - God is using everything for His greater purpose for our lives
* **About 3 years ago, we got a call & Carey’s doctor told us that my wife had a mass that they believed was cancer**
* So we went in & they took a sample & sent it off to a lab & said, “Come back in 2 weeks & we’ll let U know.”
* Maybe you’ve experienced something like this - I hope not - it’s horrible
* It was 2 weeks of waiting & trying to not let your mind wander
* And praying together & crying together & trying to be strong & trying harder to not let your mind wander b/c those are the hardest moments
* And the people who knew had a hard time talking to me b/c they didn’t want to mention it, so they didn’t know what to say - so they kind of avoided me
* The people who did talk to me were people who had gone through something like this & understood where I was living
* And I’m so grateful for those people - they just encouraged me & said, “It’s 10 more days. It’s 7 more days. It’s 3 more days. Don’t get ahead of this moment. There’s something that God wants to do in U in this moment.”
* B/c we have a challenge living in the present - some live in the past & can’t move forward - I, like many people, tend to live in the future
* The downside of that is we creates a future in our minds that have no correlation to reality - But God was doing something good in me
* My life came into focus like never before over those 2 weeks of uncertainty
* All of these little things that bothered me became non-existent
* The things I was chasing weren’t that important anymore
* I had a wife who needed me & 3 kids who needed their dad & the rest of it would figure itself out
* And we got the news that she didn’t have cancer & we were all crying & rejoicing - but in those 2 weeks God was working our good in me
* And we were confident that she was going to be OK b/c when my daughter Mia was in the hospital at age 3 & we thought she was going to die, God gave my wife this vision of her holding Mia’s daughter in the future
* And we held on to that b/c that was our “Let’s go to the other side” promise
* **What was happening wasn’t good & what we were going through wasn’t good, but God was working something good in us**
* And maybe what you’re going through isn’t good - maybe what you’re experiencing isn’t good - maybe what you’re feeling isn’t good
* But U & I can know, for sure, that God is working everything together for good
* B/c He’s FOR U & He’s going to work it all out for good...