



## **Gifts of the Spirit**

### **#5 Faith, Miracles, Healing**

**Courage Church, Detroit, MI**

**Sunday March 4, 2018**

**scriptures:** 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 Mark 10:46-52, Acts 3, Acts 4, Matthew 19:26, Matthew 9:27-31, Matthew 15, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 17:11-20, James 5:14, James 1:6-7, 2 Corinthians 4, Luke 5:13, Luke 6:6-10

Today, we are going to teach about what a lot of people refer to as “the power gifts” - the Spiritual Gift of Faith, Miracles, and Healing. Yet again, very controversial topics in the church.

I want to start by reminding you the significance of the fact that Spiritual Gifts are BY DEFINITION, gifts of grace. The word “*charisma*” literally means “a grace gift” - something given not because of anything that you have done, or that I have done.

and I believe that with these gifts especially, we have to really understand that, because if we aren’t careful we can become so skeptical about these things, and FORGET that they are a gift given to us by Jesus on account of NOTHING THAT WE DO...

it is ALWAYS GOD’S POWER WORKING THROUGH US. Its not our power.

If you went to a huge healing tent crusade and you were healed, it was NOT the evangelist who had the power, IT WAS THE POWER OF GOD WORKING THROUGH THE PERSON.

When Peter and John heal the man at the beautiful gate... it was not their power... IT WAS THE POWER OF GOD WORKING THROUGH THEM.

and I KNOW that our church may seem, to many like just a little church in our little hidden corner of Detroit, and if we aren't careful we can diminish what God wants to do in our community because we aren't as big as another church, or the experience isn't as EMOTIONAL as it sometimes can be...

And what we tend to do is, we see the human condition so evident in our own lives... so evident in each others lives... because one of the things about the size of our church, which I believe is healthy, is there is not a lot of places to hide... so we get a pretty clear glimpse of each others humanity and our flaws...

and it can be easy to, in our minds, subtly disqualify each other, and think "God can't work through that person" and the reason that we do that is because deep down in our hearts we still haven't comprehended the grace of God... we think that someone pray over someone else and they get healed... that the person who prayed for them must have an anointing and we want that, and unless it is THAT PERSON PRAYING, then it won't happen... so we discredit others while seeking out someone specific.

but listen... the biggest, most famous healing revival pastor guy on the planet has just as many skeletons in his closet as you do and I do... and at the core of the entire thing is that God works THROUGH BROKEN PEOPLE to heal and restore hope to, and to BUILD UP... BROKEN PEOPLE.

God is no respecter of persons... and WE MUST approach the Gifts of the Spirit knowing that God WANTS to MOVE in this way in our community.

But God responds to the FAITH of the people, not the NEEDS of the people, and NOT BASED ON THE MERIT of the people.

Which blows most of our views of God right out of the water.

It is By GRACE, through FAITH. When we see miracles... it is the grace of God... if I pray for the sick, and they are made well... its not because of how Holy I am... it is BECAUSE OF HOW HOLY JESUS IS.

we have to be careful of saying things like: I have the gift of \_\_\_\_\_

Paul clearly says "it is the same SPIRIT who empowers the gifts" - so even if you do have a gift, its useless if it isn't empowered by God.

and I am telling you, the moment that you get this thought in your head:

"oh, its me... I prayed for them and they were healed... I prophesied and it came to pass... its me its me its me its me..."

its gone.

Grace can ALWAYS work through brokenness but it cannot work through pride.

and honestly, that is for your benefit. Think about it... we are going to talk about healing in a few minutes... and IF you pray for the sick, and then you put all of this pressure on yourself for what the result of that prayer is going to be... and then that person, for whatever unexplainable reason DOES NOT GET HEALED... the person who thinks going into that moment that it is THEM... that THEY have a gift... that THEY have an anointing...

they are going to beat themselves up... they are going to let their lives become filled with doubts and uncertainties and they are not going to want to keep praying for people... they will disqualify themselves, but that is not God. The job of the church has never been results, the whole purpose of faith is that we place the results in the hands of the one who actually CAN fix the problems. Our whole job is to believe... to believe that God will do it... to believe that God is bigger than the sickness or struggle...

to believe that God WILL show up in this place... and in our homes, our church and in our lives.

I say all that to say, I am the most imperfect person imaginable to be up here encouraging the Spiritual Gifts, and yet I believe so much in the POWER of the cross and the POWER of the Holy Spirit that even through a broken and imperfect vessel like me, God can speak to peoples hearts, and he can heal their diseases, and bring miracles that utterly change their experiences. and to be honest, I have so much anticipation for what God is going to do in our community this year.

So lets dive into this.

Lets open our Bibles to 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. “

*Let's Pray.*

Sometimes when I am really bored I play those dumb quizzes on Facebook that show you how much you know... the Bible ones are fun because I figure I should always stay sharp... some people take Bible classes and go through discipleship tracks and seek mentors to pour into them... as for me... I keep myself sharp by playing Facebook Bible quizzes.

Joking. Sort of. I do really play them sometimes...

so I go through them and usually I get 100%... so I am like... great, I am in the right profession...

but a few weeks ago I saw one, it was about the movie "Steel Magnolias" - now, I have NEVER seen this movie... I have no idea about it at all... but the person who posted the link was like "I got 100%!!!" and then a couple people commented "I got 100% too! and they would screen grab their results... and sure enough, 100%... and I was like, "wow, those people are really smart, lets see how I do on this trivia about a movie I have never seen"

So I decided I would play the trivia... and not only had I not seen the movie... but I intentionally answered the questions with the absolute MOST ABSURD answer on the list... what just totally would be NOT the answer... that was my answer... and sure enough... I submitted it... and apparently I am a master of the film, because I got 100%.

So either that movie is the most absurd thing to ever have existed and makes absolutely no sense (which is possible)... or there is something fishy going on with those quizzes.

so now I am questioning how well I know the Bible.

and I know that you all have tried those things, you know what I am talking about... you take those dumb quizzes and you look at the thread of like 20 people on Facebook all saying that they got 100% and you start to think... there is no way that this is real.

and you probably have a decent idea as to where I am going with that... because most of us, in all of our skepticism, we just think that "just like there is no way that every person could get 100% on the quiz" we think "there is no way that the Holy Spirit really fell on all of these people... on 100% of them... that they all speak in tongues and that non of it is people just making it up.

We hear about healing's taking place, people being healed of cancer, and people who are crippled standing up and walking and we shrug it off and try and figure out a way to explain it away, AS IF it is just an online game that

is built to give people a false sense of their intelligence about 1980's movies.

But in a broken world that has REAL challenges, many of which REALLY ARE bigger than we are... we need something that is more powerful than ourselves, and that is the Holy Spirit... and OF ALL of the gifts of the Spirit, the power gifts are the ones that have the biggest potential to change someones entire situation in a matter of moments... but they are also the gifts that we hear about being used the least in our world today.

And though we are going to combine these three, the majority of our time will be spent on healing...

We will talk briefly about miracles, because there ARE miracles that not NOT healing's (but all healing would also be considered a miracle) -- and we will see the ways that faith plays a central role in BOTH throughout...

without faith, there can be no healing... and there can be no miracles.

The gift of faith is essentially the empowering of the Holy Spirit, when you are faced with an impossible situation... it is something that rises up in you and gives you peace beyond all understanding and confidence to know that God is bigger than even your biggest obstacle...

it is different than just having faith...

JUST HAVING FAITH is a crucial part of seeing healing and miracles take place...

but the Gift of Faith is different than the daily faith that we are all called to have... like faith that Jesus Christ died for your sins, or faith that God indeed created the whole world.

Faith as a Spiritually gift is something that empowers you to have confidence when reality says that you shouldn't.

It is faith for a moment.

the Gift of Faith paves the way for miracles and healings, and we will learn more about what it does, and what FAITH IN GENERAL does, when partnered with these other gifts.

But remember, the Gifts of the Spirit are for what?

THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY... it should make the body stronger...

Jesus is in the people business... not the feelings business.

Sometimes we get feelings, and they are not bad, but when a miracle takes place, it is not there to make us feel good, it is there to point people to the one who is greater than we are... the one who holds the world in His hand.

So just take for instance miracles... there are a LOT of definitions out there for miracles, but lets say it this way:

They are: extraordinary observable events, things that are not reasonably explained, and they are things that make God very obvious to people.

they point people to God.

another way to say it would be they are "divine interventions that ALTERS circumstances."

a Biblical example of a miracle is when Paul and Silas are in prison in Acts 16:25-30, and they are singing hymns and praising God from their prison cell, and suddenly there was an earthquake and the whole prison opens up... and right away the guard, freaking out thinking that everyone escaped gets out his sword to kill himself, but Paul stops him... He shouts "do NOT harm yourself... for we are all here!" and the guard calls for the lights and he comes running in and in seeing such an incredible miracle, yet sandwiched by such love that these prisoners would NOT take the opportunity to escape because they knew it would have cost that guard his life...

and the guard is so blown away by this that he says to Paul and Silas:

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? (Acts 16:30)

And once again, we see that when the gift is operated in, IN LOVE... the result is the greater good of the church... they added a member to the church that day...

Mary becoming pregnant while still a virgin... a miracle. Acts 6:8 said that Stephen was filled with power and performed miraculous signs among the people... he often would operate in the gift of miracles.

and obviously there are many miracles recorded that Jesus was able to do, like when he multiplied a couple of fish and loaves of bread and ended up feeding 5,000 people with it... or the time that the fishermen fished all NIGHT, which was when you fished back then because fish can see the giant nets they used for fishing if it was day time.... So they HAD TO FISH AT NIGHT... but even in the dark that night they caught nothing... then Jesus shows up, makes them get their nets back out and then in broad daylight has them throw the nets overboard and all these fish swim right into nets that they can SEE! they catch so many fish that the boat can't even stay afloat...

that was what Peter needed to see to realize "I need to drop everything in my life and follow this guy... because there is no way that what just happened SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED." it added to the church. it added Peter.

those are miracles.

And every one of them lead to people being added to the church... people leaving everything they had to follow Jesus...

If there is an unexplainable healing... something divine obviously takes place... thats a miracle.

You all know, there are some situations of healing taking place where we can explain it away with human logic, and there are other instances when we just can't... when there is no explanation besides that something miraculous took place.



Like when Peter and John heal the man at the beautiful gate and afterwards they have to stand before the council, this is what is said of them in Acts 4... first, it is observed that they are UNEDUCATED MEN... so they aren't doctors, they hadn't found some new cure... but yet this man who had been crippled from birth had been healed, which is obviously a miracle... so the council said "we don't have a clue what to do with these men, because this is obviously a miracle that took place through them. There is no denying the miracle (4:16)

Miracles put proof to the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:26 when the disciples ask Jesus "who then can be saved?"

and He says "with man... its impossible... but with God, all things are possible."

Salvation is without a doubt the greatest miracle of all.

"That I would be found innocent on *that* day, as guilty as I am."

It is impossible... but WITH GOD, all things are possible... with God, there is divine intervention that can alter any set of circumstances and turn them around forever.

and that brings us to **Healing**.

healing is that same divine empowerment that we get with miracles, but it is given *specifically* to **restore** our health.

and I am going to show you lots of Biblical examples, but first I want to make this very clear... WE BELIEVE THAT GOD STILL HEALS TODAY.

At the church in Lansing, there is an amazing building on their campus called "the Gilead Healing Center" - a place that mixes natural medicines and medical practices with prayer and faith, and the moment you walk into that place, you feel the presence of God. It is just amazing. And there are CONSTANTLY testimonies coming out of there of ways that people have been healed... people who left their wheel chair behind and went home...

people healed of cancer. People you can physically have conversations with that will tell you what God did in their life.

I have not been able to find anything in the Bible that would indicate that healing stopped after the first century church, And it is so obviously present in our world I honestly don't understand how anyone could deny its existence today.

Healing still takes place today, but there are some things components that seem to be consistent in healing that we need to understand, in order to effectively walk in it.

We all know that FAITH is a crucial component of healing, but I want to show you another component that I believe we often overlook, but that does seem to play a consistent role throughout the many cases of healing throughout the New Testament, especially those of Jesus, and that is MERCY... and then I will show you why I believe it matters.

In Matthew 9:27-31 there are two blind men who come up to Jesus, and they say to him "Have mercy on us! Son of David" and Jesus looks at them and asks "Do you BELIEVE that I am able to do this?" and they answer yes... and then he says "ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH, BE IT DONE FOR YOU."

Mercy... and Faith.

In Matthew 15 a Canaanite Woman approaches Jesus and says the same thing: "Have mercy on me, Son of David! My daughter is oppressed by a demon!"

and this is actually one of the only instances where for a moment it seems like Jesus ISN'T going to heal...

it actually is one of the few situations where Jesus really seems to respond in a pretty MEAN way toward the woman, he basically calls her a dog and says no to healing her daughter. Another indication, God doesn't respond to us having needs...

But he does respond to our faith...

the woman persists - she won't give up because she knows that Jesus has the power to heal her, and even though she isn't a Jew, she believed He would do it...

And its so interesting, because it seems like when it came to reaching Jews, Jesus did everything He could to make it as obvious as possible that He is Messiah... He healed them all... he fulfilled all of their prophecies... yet they were the ones who constantly were testing him, trying to trick him, and even ultimately called for his crucifixion... yet here you have a Gentile, and nothing can convince her that Jesus is NOT going to heal her daughter.

and finally Jesus says "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." (Matthew 15:28)

Mercy... Faith.

You see it again in Mark 10, when Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus.

Mercy... Faith.

We will never stop coming back to this because it is the key to everything... The Gifts of the Spirit are for the common good... for the building up of the church... for showing people what Jesus is really, truly like... and if you think that you have them for yourself, they are ultimately worthless. If you are gifted with this gift and you think it is for you and your own upbuilding... it is worthless.

The first step in being a conduit of healing IS MERCY.

Remember how we describe mercy around here... "*eleos*" - active compassion... it is to see the world through the eyes of the other person, and act accordingly.

Think about it like this...

we talk about faith as seeing what is not there... believing in the things that you can't see... seeing it in your mind... and, if mercy is seeing the world through the eyes of the person who needs it... think of the position that forces you to take:

How much more intently would you be on your knees in your prayer closet if you found out it was YOU who had cancer... it was YOU whose life literally depended on it?

Jesus says "love your neighbor AS YOURSELF" -

and that is the power of mercy... it does just that.

If, as a body of people we can begin to pray for one another as if our own lives depended on it, I can't help but wonder if we would see more healing take place.

Let me show you something that I hope can help you understand this... There is a story in Luke 17:11-20 about how Jesus heals these ten lepers and only one of them comes back to thank Him.

### **Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers**

On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, **have mercy on us.**" When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your **faith** has made you well."

So Jesus is between Samaria and Galilee... Galilee was where He was from, Jesus was raised in Nazareth, in Galilee... so they are between these two places, and there are ten lepers there, who all shout to Jesus "have mercy on us" - "put yourself in our shoes, Jesus..."

and this is so interesting... because its never beyond Jesus to lay his own hands on a leper and heal them, but in this instance, he sends them to the priests. And many people believe that it is priests (plural) because they aren't all from the same place, as we will see... one is from Samaria, the others are from Galilee... the others are Jewish. so they would have different priests.

but I love the way that Jesus here chooses to work through people who are empowered by His Spirit, when He just as easily could have done it himself, but if He can show himself powerful through the vessel of another, He LOVES THAT.

So they all go to the priests, and they ALL get healed... every one of them. But only one of them comes back to say thank you to Jesus. And the Bible *specifically* says that that man was a Samaritan, he even says "the only one who came back was the foreigner!" and its a known fact that Jews and Samaritans ABSOLUTELY HATED EACH OTHER.

That was part of what makes the story of the good Samaritan so powerful... Samaritans would never help Jews... but the good Samaritan does.

and here is the significance of that in the story of the ten lepers: when you are sick, you spend less time worrying about how much you hate another group of people, and what divides you...

See... a Jew can see the world through the eyes of a Samaritan when that Samaritan has the same exact disease that the Jew has. They are both outcast from their societies for being lepers, and so their pain has brought them common ground.

Divides are naturally broken when WE are broken... because we remember the things that matter. People matter. Empathy matters. The Gospel matters... Brokenness brings you together with others, it just does... In 2 Kings (7:3) you find a similar story, all of the lepers congregating together outside of the city near the gate. United on WHAT MAKES THEM THE SAME.

and if we can achieve that same kind of empathy when living in community, and praying for healing and working through things with others that without mercy we could never understand what they are going through, I believe we would see a LOT more healing coming out of our community.

In the story of the Ten Lepers, Jesus has mercy on ALL OF THEM.

He is 10 for 10.

He gives them all the same instructions that will ultimately lead all of them to receiving the same healing.

But just like the woman with the daughter who was possessed... in this story, it is the Gentile who comes back... and the Jews go back about their business showing no gratitude whatsoever.

and I want us to reflect on that, and on the state of us as a people right now... as a nation.

Because even where God is moving, sometimes I think our lives are moving so fast, that we don't even pause to recognize it. God may be intervening in absolutely miraculous ways in our lives and we just keep moving along not recognizing it.

Even the way that God has provided for my family in the last year, through circumstances that never looked like they would work out and yet they always did... If I am not careful, I can walk through that entire thing and never even realize how deeply and powerfully God showed up.

I can't help but wonder, How much of God have we missed, because we didn't slow down enough to remember that He is bigger than our brokenness.

Part of the reason we encourage people to take take mission trips to third world countries is BECAUSE OF the miracles that take place in those places... AND IT IS NOT BECAUSE GOD LOVES THEM MORE THAN US... IT IS because if we are bold enough to pray for people, they haven't been dumbed down by technology and critical thinking enough to even

doubt that a miracle can take place. And I believe it is because of their faith that they see so many miracles, still today.

but when you are well... when you have your health... how quickly we can forget.

How quickly we can go back to our divided lives, and not even take the time to thank God for just how much mercy he has shown us... from the life he delivered us from, from the sickness he healed us of...

Because 9 out of 10 of those lepers didn't even come back and say thank you for the mercy that was shown... they had their moment, and they went right back to how their lives were before they ever got sick.

We have to keep coming back, every single moment of every single day... to just HOW GREAT GOD IS. How merciful He is... how gracious He is...

because it is when we forget that, that we struggle with questions like the one I am about to talk about... the one that everyone ALWAYS asks... the one that turns people away from the gift of healing entirely in some cases.

and that is the question of JUST HOW GOOD IS THIS GOD? And is His will to heal everyone?

### **is it God's *will* to heal everyone?**

And please, show me grace as I try and navigate this... far smarter minds have had far deeper discussions trying to prove this either way, than I can possibly do... but as your Pastor, I believe that what we need to do, most of all, is set a tone for which we can experience the miracle working power of the Holy Spirit in this place and beyond.

and as hard of a theme this is, I believe that we can't talk about healing, without talking about it. Because you can't operate in the Gift of Healing, if you don't believe that it is God's will to heal... So though this answer is loaded and will take some explaining, the short answer, I believe is yes.

but right away the question then becomes: why doesn't EVERYONE who asks, receive healing? and this is where people usually get hurt... like we say "oh, that person didn't have enough faith... it must be an US problem."

And suddenly we can use people's sufferings as a weapon against them... trying to make them feel guilty as if they are sick because of something that they did, or they for a faith that they lack...

and treating people like that IS DEMONIC. and we are completely out of place to judge the amount of faith another has... though Faith is important, and we will talk in a moment of why we need to develop it in these moments, to make blanket statements like this against people is absolutely absurd.

The Bible clearly says that there is appointed for every man a time to die... and we can't cheat that and honestly we shouldn't want to... Because God has prepared a place for us, THAT IS BETTER than this world. It just is. We always say, when we have funerals, we aren't mourning FOR the person we lost to Heaven... we are gathering to unite with those of us who are left behind by them, so that we can find consolation in each other because it hurts so bad to know that we have to continue on this life WITHOUT someone who played such a significant role in our lives.

Next, we need to remember that IN THIS LIFE, God often brings healing through people...

through doctors, through natural remedies... and I know that is different than the Spiritual Gift of Healing, but if we aren't careful we can eliminate the things that could practically make a difference while we wait on a spiritual solution when the entire time the solution is right in front of you... there are a lot of really sad stories of people who have refused medicines waiting on a miracle, and they have died, and their children have died...

but I want to show you the reason why I believe it is SO important that we enter EVERY SINGLE SITUATION BELIEVING WITH ALL OF OUR HEARTS THAT GOD WANTS TO SHOW UP, whether it be a healing, a breakthrough, a miracle...



and its found at the beginning AND the end of the book of James.

James 5 (14-15), the last chapter of the Epistle, talks about healing, and in it he says:

“is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.”

Who will raise him up? The Lord. Who prays for the person? The church...

but you and your own POWER are out of the equation. All you and I do is CO-OPERATE with the Spirit... we say the prayer... the Lord raises Him up.

and the prayer we pray is one of FAITH... of partnering with God... but do you know what else James writes about faith? it is so significant, it is in the very first chapter, and he talks about wisdom, and he says that whenever you ask for something, you must ask in faith... WITH NO DOUBTING WHATSOEVER as to whether or not God will do it.

He says “let him ask WITH FAITH. and WITH NO DOUBTING” and then he says this: (v6-7) the person who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed into the wind...

James says that any person like that **must not expect** to receive ANYTHING that he asks from the Lord, because he is unstable in everything that he does...

James puts it this way... he is a “double minded man”

So if you go into a healing situation and you go into it double minded, unsure of what God wants to do, James says YOU CAN NO EXPECT A SINGLE THING TO BE ANSWERED, BECAUSE EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU IS UNSTABLE.

Now listen... this is where the Gift of Faith IS SO IMPORTANT.

because doubt is a seriously important part of the Christian Faith. Wrestling with the way that reality lines up with the belief system you hold on to is something that we all must do... God meets us in those places where we lack clarity and he gives it to us.

But when you enter these types of situations... this is why it is so important that the GIFT OF FAITH be coupled with the Gift of Healing... Because in my flesh, its very hard to see a report different than the one that the doctors give... I remember when my Mom was diagnosed with breast cancer... and there was a time in there when the Doctors thought that it looked as if that cancer had spread into her lungs which would have been a death sentence...

and when I got that news, I CRIED. and I didn't cry because I thought it was a chance for God to show up, I cried because I was afraid that my Mom was going to die.

our whole family needed some supernatural faith that goes beyond anything that could be explained in a medical report... and I believe that God gave us that faith in those moments of weakness, when at least for me, a 19 year old kid... all I could do was doubt. And then suddenly there was so much confidence that this would not be the end...

AND IT WASN'T.

if you ask, you ask in FAITH, knowing that the God that are asking is big enough, and loves you enough to meet you in that moment and do something better than you could have ever hoped or imagined...

when we are praying for the sick, we do NOT need to pray like this: "God... if it is your will... will you heal this person..."

we already know his will on this, because Jesus himself was SO WILLING to pay for your healing that he died on a cross in your place... Isaiah 53 says that Jesus was pierced for our transgressions... he was bruised for our iniquities... in other words: HE DIED FOR OUR SINS....

and BY HIS WOUNDS, we are healed.

In Exodus 15, God introduces himself by the name of Jehovah Rapha - the God WHO HEALS.

He says to Israel... "It is nice to meet you... my name is HEALER." and all of those sicknesses that the Egyptians faced... you won't have to deal with any of them... because I AM ON YOUR SIDE.

and that is the way we need to enter these situations... with confidence, THAT GOD IS ON YOUR SIDE.

So then, that of course leaves us with the biggest question... the unanswerable question... and it is: WHY ARE SOME NOT HEALED?

Because I have seen people with the biggest faith you can ever imagine get sick and sicker and sicker and never get better... Pastor Kevin sat across from me one day over lunch years ago, telling me how hard it was for him to understand a situation... where one of his youth kids when he was a youth pastor, the young man got sick, and sicker... and Pastor Kevin prayed for him... and I prayed and the whole church prayed and every single person believed he would recover...

WE BELIEVED. I never thought for a second that this kid wasn't going to be healed...

Pastor Kevin, one of the godliest men I know, he was POSITIVE that he would get healed... he had his WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF HIM.

But He wasn't.

He died. a 17 year old kid.

and I don't know why that happened. I don't know why some are not healed... but I do know this:

if we aren't careful we can grow bitter... and think "where were you on that one Jesus"

but the answer is NOT to go after God or His character or the things that His very name says that He is.

The best way that I have ever heard this explained was by Pastor Brad... so I am just going to steal what He said... partially because it involves Dawn and I, and the way we would work with him... but what Pastor Brad said was this...

at the church in New York... he said "I am the pastor" - and I have a staff... and I try my very best to let my staff know as much as I possibly can... I try my best to partner with them and have dialogues and make decisions together with them...

and guys, I will say this about Pastor Brad... he taught me the value of collaboration when doing ministry... and if he knew something was important to me, HE USUALLY MADE IT HAPPEN. and we developed the type of relationship where I had faith that if I came to him with an idea, that idea would one day take life.

but as Pastor Brad was walking us through this he then said this:

"but every now and then, I have a piece of information that my staff doesn't have. I know something that they don't know... and may NEVER KNOW... and I have to make a decision that they may never understand."

and as someone on his staff for so long... in those few and far between moments where I didn't know what was going on, I very easily could have been hurt or even bitter, by the decision that was made... in fact there have been times that I was hurt by them... but I had to learn... my boss is good... he only wants what's good... and his will is always for the betterment of the people he has charge of.

But I didn't fully understand that, until now... until I sat in the chair... and I experienced moments where suddenly, on occasion, I have a window into a situation that nobody else has, and I have to make a *different* decision than the one that everyone else wants me to make.

and if, in doing so I lose the confidence of my team, then were they with me at all?

If you lose confidence in Jesus when something in your life doesn't turn out the way that you think that it should, then you need to re-examine your view of God... YOU and I get to play a part in HIS story... its not the other way around.

and One thing we know about God, more than anything else, is that he is sovereign...

and we know that when we became Christians, we stepped into the Kingdom of light... into the Kingdom of Heaven, and its here, and its now... and we have this amazing job of bringing Heaven to earth for others which is WHY we have the Spiritual Gifts.

but there are parts of Heaven that aren't here yet... its still coming...

a day will come when there will be no more cancer... there will be no more pain... and our broken bodies WILL be healed and made whole ONCE AND FOR ALL... because just like we said at the beginning... the greatest miracle of all is that God would love us so much that he would die in our place, so that we can share eternity with him, in Heaven, with bodies that are not broken.

and in those moments when we just can't figure out, "GOD, WHY?"

"We had faith, we showed mercy... and yet nothing changed and we just don't understand..."

I think it is then that we need to remember the purpose of the gifts... the purpose of healing... the purpose of the church... it is always to point people to God... to redeem people... to show them Jesus' LOVE.....

and to say that God hasn't shown Himself worthy through suffering JUST as much as he has shown up through healing would be blaspheme.

2 Corinthians 4 says that we have the ministry that we have, because of the MERCY of God... and we carry our treasure in Jars of Clay. That no matter what may come of our temporary bodies, there is a world of things that are UNSEEN that are out there waiting for us.

God's nature is LOVE for you. And He absolutely promises wholeness. And understanding that He is God, and we are NOT, and He knows what it will take to bring true wholeness, and we do not... We must intentionally enter every situation knowing that God's name is HEALER.

and though we don't always understand in the now, we need to live with the confidence that one day we will... and live NOW in the confidence and the assurance that our God is GOOD.

when the leper in Luke 5 asked Jesus if he was willing to heal him... do you how he responded? I bet can you guess... He said:

“I am willing.”

When Jesus entered the synagogue on the sabbath (Luke 6:6-10) and saw a man there with a withered hand... and he knew that all of the religious eyes were on him because it was the sabbath and illegal to heal on the sabbath... what does Jesus do? He looks at those Pharisees, and he tells them... I willing to break your sacred law if it means saving this man's life...

and He tells the man “extend the withered hand”

and his hand was restored.

When you read the Bible, you see story after story of Jesus being willing...

So WILLING to heal you, that he went to a cross, and was utterly and completely destroyed, FOR YOU.

So even though now, we see through a mirror dimly, let us live with the hopeful expectation that the God who see's the entire picture is a God who is indeed willing, and who laid down his life, to prove it.