



Miracles of God

2021 DEVOTIONAL

Preface

An evil and adulterous generation demands a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. - Matthew 12:39, CSB

When we talk about miracles, many people tend to shrink back for a moment. We've all seen and heard of people abusing the true fact that God works miracles. God can provide for all your financial desires, God can heal anyone at any time, and God can reveal His glory in such a way that no one would have any question that He is King of the universe. But sometimes, He doesn't. In our bewilderment, we say to God, "Why do You not do these things we ask? Why do you not show us a sign and prove to us Your glory and goodness?" This is not a new struggle. Even Jesus in His ministry on Earth dealt with people who demanded to see miracles. But He knew the state of their hearts. They didn't seek miracles so that God's Kingdom would be advanced. They sought miracles so that their kingdom would be advanced. We still struggle with submitting our own kingdom to God's.

The year 2020 was defined by people advancing their kingdom. At every end of every issue, we wanted the things we wanted, and we wanted nothing else. It was also perhaps the most uniquely turbulent time we have ever endured. There were many days we didn't know what tomorrow would bring. During those times, what did we turn to? Did we seek our own security, comfort, and pleasure? Or did we turn to the One Who knows all and does all? As 2021 begins, we, as a body of Jesus followers, want to set the tone for this year by seeking His Kingdom. We want the Kingdom of Heaven to come here on Earth! We ask for great works and signs to be done here and now, for His glory to be known, bodies to be healed, and lives to be changed.

We want these not for our sake but for the glory of God. If everybody on Earth were healed at this moment, but they were still destined for the lake of fire, the healing would be for naught. Our plan would be accomplished, but His would not. So we can say with Daniel, "our God whom we serve is able...but if not," if He does not give us what we ask for, if we do not see the signs we seek, we will still serve Him and no other. Our God still sits on the throne above all thrones, even if we don't see His plan or understand what happens around us. When we allow God's Kingdom to break in, there is peace, hope, and love around us.

It is with this understanding that we begin a 40-day study on the miracles of God. We don't seek miracles for their own sake. We seek His purpose and His plan for His creation. We hope that you see not only what God has done but also why He has done it. It's our honor and privilege to join you in a communal fast for these next 40 days. May it help to bring you closer to God, and His Kingdom to Earth.

Before You Begin

BASIC HOW-TO

For each of the 40 days of this fast, we have composed a devotion for you to read. Each one was written by a different member of our team here at the church, and they cover a different miracle of God. Before reading the devotion daily, get out your Bible and read the Scripture reference at the top of the devotion. Doing so will give you the proper context for what is written in the devotion. Take time to contemplate the portion of Scripture and the devotion as you read them. Try not to rush! After you've read each devotion, take time to pray for 10 minutes. Communicate back to God what He's told you through your reading and tell Him how you feel about what you've read. Most importantly, leave room for the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Don't forget, we are doing this as a church because the Holy Spirit has led us to fast together, just as He led Jesus into the wilderness to fast for 40 days. There is power in us collectively removing distractions and focusing on God. We want to always be growing as a community, and that doesn't just mean numerically. Our community is large in number, but we want our spiritual depth to be even greater than our numerical attendance. If we devote ourselves to reading the Scripture, reading each devotion, and spending time with God in prayer, there's no limit to what God can and will do in this community!

WHAT IS FASTING?

To fast means to voluntarily abstain from certain foods, eating and/or drinking, certain activities or from items for an extended period of time. Biblical fasting is a discipline of voluntarily denying one's self in order to be available for prayer and communion with God. Since it's an ultimate act of self-denial, you are entering into an intense training in righteousness.

WHY FAST?

There are many reasons why people fasted in the Bible, and all of them are good. Some wanted wisdom and power, while others were repenting of their sins. However, there was one aspect of the fasting experience that each had in common: a personal encounter with the living God. As you begin to consider reasons for your fast, there is one that will override all other reasons and that is to have a powerful, life-changing encounter with God.

WHY GIVE UP FOOD?

What is the number one thing you trust in for your survival and existence? Jesus said in Matt. 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God." If food is a higher priority to you than Him, you are placing it as an idol in your heart.

WHY GIVE UP SECULAR MEDIA?

As followers of Christ, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Just as nothing unclean was allowed to enter the temple we should be careful with what we allow to enter our hearts through our eyes or ears. As Christians we are called to discern what we watch, what we listen to, and what we think about (Philippians 4:8).

WHAT WILL WE BE FASTING?

Besides what we are fasting as a church listed in the snapshot below, we also encourage those participating to ask and listen to the Holy Spirit about giving up other things for the duration of the fast personal to them; such as social media, caffeine, and video games, etc.

40 DAY SNAPSHOT & BASIC INFORMATION	
DAY 1-10	NO SECULAR MEDIA, MEATS OR SWEETS
DAY 11-20	NO SECULAR MEDIA / 1 MEAL A DAY
DAY 21-30	NO SECULAR MEDIA, MEATS OR SWEETS
DAY 31-40	NO SECULAR MEDIA / 1 MEAL A DAY

PREPARE SPIRITUALLY

Ask God to help you make a list of your sins. Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness. Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you as the Holy Spirit leads you.

PREPARE PHYSICALLY

Eat smaller meals before the fast and avoid high-fat / sugary foods. If you have a chronic ailment or are on prescription medication, consult your doctor and consider modifying your fast.

Practical Tips and Guidelines

EXERCISE MODERATELY

- During the days when we're fasting a meal or only eating one meal, exercise moderately if convenient and comfortable.

STAY HYDRATED

- Make sure to drink plenty of water while fasting.
- Drinking fruit juice during the fast will decrease your hunger pains and give natural energy.
- The best juices are made from fresh watermelon, lemons, grapes, apples, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery, or leafy green vegetables. In cold weather, you may enjoy a warm vegetable broth.
- Mix acidic juices (orange and tomato) with water for your stomach's sake.

REST & PREPARE MENTALLY

- Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
- Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and episodes of anxiety.
- Expect some physical discomfort, especially on the second day. You may have hunger pains and dizziness.
- Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches.
- Physical discomforts may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.

BREAKING THE FAST

- Begin ending the fast by eating certain foods gradually. Suddenly reintroducing foods to your stomach and digestive tract that you haven't eaten in 40 days will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences. Try several smaller meals or snacks each day.
- Practice moderation and wisdom in what media you introduce back into your life after the fast is over.

Four Things to Consider

1. BE CONTENT THROUGHOUT

Avoid complaining about what foods you can't eat, movies you can't watch, etc. Avoid appearing gloomy for people to feel sorry for you or think how spiritual you are. On the contrary, do what Jesus says and "anoint your head, wash your face!" Act normal and carry on. We have the privilege and honor of giving things up for Christ, knowing He gave everything up for us. Complaining seems to almost negate the very purpose of this fast. We don't have to fast, we get to.

2. AVOID VIEWING THE FAST AS A "DIET PLAN."

In the past few years, we've also been guilty of somehow seeing the chief benefits of these next 40 days as getting a little slimmer, getting off caffeine, or not taking desserts for granted. But if we look at scripture, we see it as a time set aside for deep spiritual urgency, when God's people really wanted Him to show up in a big way.

3. REPLACE SACRIFICE WITH GOD

Sometimes we can get caught up in the "whats" of fasting without thinking about the "Who." For these next 40 days, there are things we should want to give up in our lives so that we might replace them with God. As Jared Wilson says in his book *Gospel Deep*s, "the soul has a palate and a throat, else Jesus would not bid us drink." John Piper says, "It is not just our bodies that are built for enjoyment, but our spiritual senses, the insides of our insides."

The problem of course is that we are bent on thinking our insides will have joy when our outsides do. But it doesn't work that way. It's actually the other way around. Food and drink will not truly satisfy our bodies until the

bread and wine of Jesus's body satisfies our souls. For the next 40 days, we get to savor and enjoy Christ without any distractions. If we just give up food and don't replace it with the presence of God, it is of no benefit to us. We'll only be unnecessarily hungry people. Let's all take a moment to breathe in, slow down, and remember not just what we're about to do, but Who we are doing this for.

4. FASTING SUCCESSFULLY

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21).

A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. It takes time to build your spiritual fasting endurance. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. As soon as possible, undertake another fast until you do succeed. God will honor you for your faithfulness.

Christian Media Suggestions

CHRISTIAN MEDIA

For those of you who are fasting secular media, we've compiled suggestions that you may enjoy during the fast. There are plenty of other options that you may find on Netflix, Amazon, Spotify or your preferred media outlet of choice. Listen and watch media that will uplift and encourage you spiritually.

MOVIES

- Overcomer
- War Room
- Silence
- Passion of the Christ
- Prince of Egypt
- Unbroken 2: Path to Redemption
- Breakthrough
- Hacksaw Ridge

MUSIC

- Hillsong United
- Phil Wickham
- Andy Mineo
- Alert312
- Kings Kaleidoscope
- Beautiful Eulogy
- NF
- Audrey Assad
- Mosaic MSC
- Elevation Worship
- Vertical Worship
- Cory Asbury
- Jesus Culture
- Passion
- Social Club Misfits
- Lecrae
- Influence Music
- Tasha Cobbs Leonard
- The Walls Group
- Todd Dulaney
- Travis Greene

BOOKS

- Faith for Exiles - David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock
- The Explicit Gospel - Matt Chandler
- Everybody, Always - Bob Goff
- Just Do Something - Kevin DeYoung
- The Prodigal God - Tim Keller
- In the Name of Jesus - Henri Nouwen
- Spirituality for the Rest of Us - Larry Osborne
- The Cost of Discipleship - Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- How Should We Then Live - Francis Schaeffer
- The Screwtape Letters - C.S. Lewis
- The Way of the Warrior - Erwin McManus
- Simply Jesus - N.T. Wright
- Confessions - Augustine of Hippo

Vegetarian Friendly Restaurants

FAST FOOD

- Burger King
- Hardees / Carl's Jr.
- Del Taco
- McDonald's - *Breakfast / Salad No Chicken*
- Taco Bell
- Chick-Fil-A - *Salad no Chicken*
Waffle Fries
- Panda Express
- Starbucks
- Subway
- Jimmy John's
- Jersey Mike's Subs
- Dunkin' Donuts

QUICK SERVICE

- Newk's Eatery
- Panera
- Chipotle
- Blue Coast Burrito
- Koji Japanese Grill
- Juicy's
- Papa John's
- Domino's
- Mellow Mushroom
- Uncle Maddio's Pizza
- Just Love Coffee
- Moe's Southwest Grill
- McAlister's Deli
- CoreLife Eatery
- Blaze Pizza
- The Local Taco
- The Curious Kitchen

RESTAURANTS

- Marina's on the Square
- Pad Thai Cafe
- Chuy's
- The Goat
- The Alley on Main
- Carrabba's Italian Grill
- Olive Garden
- Mimi's Cafe
- The Blue Cactus Cantina
- Red Robin
- Cracker Barrel
- First Watch
- Old Chicago Pizza
- Burger Republic
- Tandoor Indian Cuisine
- Taste of Thai
- Thida Thai - Smyrna

VEGETARIAN



Apple-White Cheddar Grilled Cheese

INGREDIENTS

- 4 slices whole wheat or preferred bread
- 4 slices sharp white cheddar
- 1 small apple, thinly sliced
- 1 thin slice red onion, separated into rings
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, optional
- 1 tablespoon butter, softened

STEP 1

Layer each of bread slice with 1 slice of cheese. Top with apple and onion. If desired, sprinkle with pepper flakes. Top with the remaining cheese and bread. Spread outsides of sandwiches with butter.

STEP 2

In a large skillet, toast sandwiches over medium-low heat 3-5 minutes on each side or until golden brown and cheese is melted.

PREP 10 MIN / COOK 10 MIN
1 SERVING

- Cheese can be swapped with Daiya cheddar slices for a non-dairy option.
- Bread can be substituted with gluten-free bread.

VEGAN



Veggie Lo Mein

NOODLES

- 4-5 oz dry lo mein noodles – typically thin egg noodles

LO MEIN SAUCE

- 3 tbl soy sauce
- 1 1/2 tbl water mixed with 1/2 tsp rice vinegar and 1/2 tsp honey
- 1 tbl oyster sauce
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- 1 tsp sugar or honey
- 1/8 tsp white pepper
- 1/2 tsp sriracha (or chili)

LO MEIN STIR FRY:

- 2 tbl peanut or coconut oil
- 1/2 an onion, thinly sliced
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 tsp ginger, minced
- 1/2 red bell pepper, sliced
- 1 cup matchstick carrots
- 1 cup shredded cabbage
- 1 cup snow peas
- Other options: a handful of baby spinach, bok choy, shredded veggies like brussel sprouts, bean sprouts.
- Garnish: scallions, sliced
- Tofu optional

STEP 1

Set water to boil and cook the noodles according to directions on the package. Stir together the lo mein sauce ingredients in a small bowl. Prep any and all veggies and set near the stove.

STEP 2

In a wok or large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add the onions and mushrooms and saute for 3-4 minutes, stirring continuously. Turn heat to medium, add the garlic and ginger and saute for 2 minutes. Add the bell pepper, carrots, cabbage and snow peas and stir often, just letting them get tender, but still crisp, for 3-4 minutes. Add the noodles and give a good stir and toss a few times to incorporate.

STEP 3

Add the Lo Mein Sauce, stir and toss continuously for 2 minutes. If it gets too dry add a little splash of water to loosen. Serve in two bowls, garnish with green onion.

PREP 10 MIN / COOK 20 MIN
2 SERVINGS

Fasting, Sabbath, and "Digital Babylon"

WHAT IS "DIGITAL BABYLON?"

Near the end of 2020, our team read a book called "Faith for Exiles" by David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock. In this book, Kinnaman and Matlock describe our society's obsession with digital media. They called the effects and culture of this new way of living "Digital Babylon." Biblically, Babylon is a place where the Israelites were in exile from their home, Jerusalem, for seventy years. Whereas Jerusalem was known as a place of faith in the true God, Babylon was a pluralistic, fast-paced, hedonistic culture where anything goes, and everything always changes.

Sounds a lot like today, doesn't it? That's why Kinnaman and Matlock call today's culture Digital Babylon. But Digital Babylon isn't a place like the biblical Babylon. It's an idea, a movement, a culture. And we're all in it. Anywhere you go online, Digital Babylon is pushing its values to you. "You're perfect the way you are. Buy our product, and then you'll be happy. Only you can decide what's true and what's false." So our goal, living in the culture of Digital Babylon, is to view ourselves as exiles, not of this world but in this world.

WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?

Kinnaman and Matlock prescribe five practices for building resistance to Digital Babylon, which you can read about in their book. During this 40-day Fast though, our urge to you is simple: establish routines of digital sabbath. "Digital sabbath" means intentionally removing yourself from Digital Babylon for a set amount of time. Taking digital sabbath doesn't mean you can't even look at a screen until the end of the fast. It does mean intentionally determining the beneficial or detrimental uses of your devices and eliminating the detrimental uses.

Maybe for you, this means removing yourself from social media, the news cycle, and digital games for the next forty days. Or you could need to set aside an hour a day where you don't look at your phone and are exclusively and wholly present with your family. Whatever you need to do, do something. These forty days' whole goal is to focus our attention on God, so remove yourself from a culture doing everything it can to pull you away from Him.

Day 1

CREATION

Read Genesis 1:1

Have you ever heard of the phrase “Shelf-tember?” It’s a made-up word that merges “shelf” and “September.” According to my wife, this concocted holiday was invented to clear out the shelves and get creative with meals. What amazes me most about this is how my wife takes seemingly no food and makes something out of it. I look at the shelves and see zilch, a barren wasteland. But she sees fertile ground for a gourmet meal. She creates out of nothing and makes something amazing! This is the exact picture we get in the very first chapter and book of the Bible: Genesis.

Life miraculously bursts forth from a moment in time by a Divine Igniter. God marvelously creates out of nothing the light and dark, water and sky, plants and trees, animals and birds, and of course, the pinnacle of all God’s creation: humans. The distinction the Bible makes with humans is “God created human beings in His own image” and put them in charge over all creation. Genesis tells us that God directly and intimately addresses His image-bearers: “Look! I have given you everything that has life.” God astonishingly made humans to reign over creation on His behalf. Paradise is all about an all-powerful God empowering His image-bearers to live out His purpose and will.

Now, if you read much beyond Genesis 1, you quickly realize paradise is lost. Yet, two thousand years ago, God again created from nothing. God came to Earth in the flesh, showed us what it means to be human, and was killed. But the Father took the dark matter of death and three days later burst forth with life! With the resurrection of Jesus came life, the new creation, and paradise regained once again. When we come to believe in this good news – the Holy Spirit fills us, taking our dead nature and bursting forth new life deep within us. We are to be God’s agents that bring Heaven to Earth by living God’s Kingdom of peace, hope, kindness, patience, and love. Will you join in on His Kingdom to bring life today?

Pray for 10 Minutes

Day 2

SARA CONCEIVES

Read Genesis 21:1-7

Despite Sarah and Abraham's doubts, God was true to his promises. In Genesis 17:19, God promised Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son, even at their old age. Abraham even laughed out of doubt saying, "Can a child be born to a hundred-year-old man? Can Sarah, a ninety-year-old woman, give birth?" (Genesis 17:17) God was faithful and accomplished what He had promised by blessing them with a child.

In this passage, we see that God is gracious and faithful to those who trust in Him. Sarah tried to become pregnant for many years with no success, which was a heavy burden in her culture and time. Waiting for their son's birth required a lot of patience and trust. Then God did the impossible; the barren wife birthed the son who will inherit the promise and pass it on to give the world the twelve tribes of Israel. Abraham trusted in the Lord, and He provided blessings beyond measure. This miracle shows that God never has empty promises.

We sometimes get frustrated with God because we want God to work on our timing and not His. Like Sarah, we often get disappointed, thinking God won't provide as He promised. We must count on the truth that is God's Word, even when it seems like God has forgotten about us and all about the promises made to us. You can encourage others who might be struggling with addiction, financial problems, anxiety, and pain that God promises to provide as you trust Him. When God makes a promise to us, we must count it as something sure and true. God never breaks His promises to His people, and we are to live in active confidence in that!

Pray for 10 Minutes

Day 3

PARTING THE RED SEA

Read Exodus 14:19-31

The glory of God is something that we read about countless times in Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments. God's glory is often described with words such as radiant or light, and as something that has weight to it. God chooses to show His glory in different ways throughout Scripture, sometimes in signs and wonders, as we see in Exodus 14, and other times in a more literal sense like in Exodus 33. In Exodus 14, God is near the end of delivering His people from the Egyptians. Every event and countless years that led up to this moment further prove the glory of God and how He works things out in His own time.

I can hardly imagine what the Israelites must have been thinking as they stood on the Red Sea shore. They had come so far but ran out of road. How many times in my life have I felt that way, too? It's easy to trust God when things are going great, but the instant something seems too difficult or even impossible, God shows up. And man, He showed up for the Israelites. God shows his glory because, as humans with feeble minds, this is what we can handle. We cannot look upon God in his full splendor because we would fall dead. Instead, God reveals himself when He can, in ways that we might understand, so that we may draw closer to Him. For the Israelites, He literally made a way where there was no way, by parting a sea!

I want to encourage you to seek His glory. Don't overlook the little things because you're hyper-focused on the signs and wonders. Look for His glory every day. He might not part a sea for you, but I can promise you that He's still making a way when there seems to be no way.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 4

MANNA FROM HEAVEN

Read Exodus 16:14-36

The Lord's provision comes in many forms, but on that day in the wilderness, the Israelites received not only provision for their physical needs but also their spiritual needs. When God spoke to Moses, He told him His plan of provision: that the people of Israel would receive everything they needed from God, nothing more and nothing less. Manna fell from heaven, giving each person exactly what they needed for that day. On the sixth day a double portion of manna fell so they could rest on the seventh day, the Sabbath. Although God's plan of provision for His people was perfect, their hearts desired more than He gave them.

Through this passage in Exodus, we see just how good and faithful God is in all things. The Israelites knew God's heart and character yet still chose to store up more than what they needed, showing the distrust they had in their hearts. When they went to collect manna on the seventh day, they found nothing and were confused. They forgot the Lord's covenant and faithfulness, and He said to them, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and instructions?" God gave us the Sabbath for a reason. He knows how much we need to rest from day-to-day work and worries, and precisely what it takes to restore us.

It's easy to look at the Israelites and think, "Wow, how could they miss what God is saying to them? How could they not trust on the seventh day, when they trusted Him for the six days before that?", but how often do we do that in our everyday lives? When things get difficult, we forget just how faithful God has been and all He has provided for us. When we take time to rest in the Lord and His word, we're renewed and refreshed. We're reminded of His good and faithful character – that we can trust Him for all that we need because who He is and what He's done and will do for us never changes.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 5

THE WATERS OF MERIBAH

Read Numbers 20:7-13

Forty years after God had delivered Moses and the Israelites from Egypt, they found themselves back in Kadesh, the area where Israel's worst act of rebellion took place. Once again the Israelites were complaining about having no water and they wished they had died in Egypt. Moses and Aaron respond by falling face down, and the Lord responded by instructing Moses to "speak to that rock," and from it, God would provide water. Moses was frustrated that the people had forgotten how God provided for them. The forty years of anger and frustration reached its boiling point, and Moses exploded. Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses struck the rock twice and addressed his people with harsh words.

Despite the disobedience of Moses, God provided water for His people. Honoring God in leadership is something every Christian should attempt to do. You may be a manager, teacher, small group leader, or the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, but we can never mistake our authority for God's authority. The leadership of Moses faltered in this crucial moment when he stopped trusting God and started acting out of his impulses. We all recall times when God has continuously provided for us, but out of frustration we attempt to figure everything out ourselves. God shows us that despite fallen leaders, He always provides.

As Christians, we must reflect daily on all the things God has provided for us and ask God for patience, discernment, wisdom, and knowledge to help us lead people closer to Him. Accountability with a Life Group can help guide us. It's also vital to stay grounded by keeping a weekly Sabbath where you fill yourself up to pour out into the lives of those you lead. The task of leading a family without depending entirely on God is beyond human capability. If Moses struggled with this, so will we! By God's grace, even failure as great as this does not separate us from the fulfillment of God's promises.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 6

THE EXODUS

Read Deuteronomy 6:20-25

These verses were reminding the Israelite parents to talk to their children about a time when God was faithful to His people. In the story of the Exodus, God promised the Israelites deliverance and gave them their promised land. God used many miraculous signs and wonders to fulfill these promises. You can read about some of these miraculous signs and wonders in Exodus chapters 7 through 14. God didn't just simply bring the Israelites out of Egypt's bondage and take them straight to their promised land. They had to be patient and wait for God's timing.

I remember a time one of my children wanted to use some of their allowance money to purchase something from Amazon. That evening, we sat down, ordered it together, and made sure we saw the order confirmation page. The next day, after being dropped off by the school bus, they came charging in the front door, demanding to see the package they had ordered the night before. I had to explain to them that even though Amazon confirmed they would send the item they ordered, it would take two to three days to arrive at our house. The look my child gave was one of despair and impatience followed with, "But it's gonna take forever!" I reminded them that the company would follow through on their promise to send the item. A few days later, the package arrived as promised, and their faith in the online commerce system was restored. Their faith was so quick to waver in this seemingly small matter, but we all are like this with God at times.

Like the Israelites, we are impatient and quick to doubt in our everyday lives. We desire instant gratification and are an "I want it now or it isn't going to happen" culture. Sometimes we need to look back and be reminded of how God is faithful to His people. It may not be in our timing, but His timing is always perfect! Do you struggle to trust in God's timing?

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 7

THE WALLS OF JERICHO

Read Joshua 6:6-25

Day after day outside Jericho, Israelites circled the city blowing the ram's horn and seeing not even a crack in one wall. Day seven rolled around, and the marching began again, but still no cracks; no shifting of any foundations, nothing. Then a long trumpet blast, a shout, and walls crumbled! Now that's a miracle! But frankly, it's not the one I want to address today. By the command of the Lord, everything within the walls of that city was to be put to death everything and everyone, except for a prostitute named Rahab and her family. I want us to consider another miracle God was doing in her.

What God had begun with Rahab in chapter two He was about to bring to completion in chapter six. In chapter two, Rahab received two Israelite spies, sheltered them, and then lied to leaders from her city regarding their whereabouts. Talk about risky! She took what she knew about the Israelites and their God and turned it into a faith of her own. A Canaanite prostitute trusted God and followed the instructions of two spies, and He spared her. Rahab experienced God's mercy and became part of God's chosen nation. Furthermore, Rahab became part of the lineage of Christ! Was it hard for her to watch her city be destroyed? I'm sure. Was it difficult to leave all of her past and everything she'd ever known behind? You bet. But God's plan was unfolding in her life.

I've read this story many times, and never have I ever thought of that being part of the miracle. Why is that? Is Rahab so bad that she's beyond the reach of God's love and mercy? I like to compare myself to Rahab and think I'm much better than she. But the truth is, I need the same grace and mercy, so do you. What walls are crashing down all around you? Are you looking at them from the right perspective? Maybe they're coming down so God can get to you.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 8

SUN & MOON STAND STILL

Read Joshua 10:12-14

In Joshua chapter 9, the Gibeonites made a treaty with the Israelites by deception. And they called on Joshua when their enemies attacked them. Even though Joshua had just finished one of his wars, and was tired and exhausted, he honored his word to them and went to their defense, but not before inquiring of God and hearing His approval. God sent a massive hailstorm to help Joshua, and he was winning, but he needed a little more daylight to finish accomplishing his task and destroy the five armies he fought. So, in the Israelites' presence, he asked God to make the day longer by stopping the sun and the moon. God literally stops time as the day gets longer so that Joshua could accomplish the task that was set before him.

You might wonder, "Was it necessary for Joshua to ask God to stop the sun and the moon if he was already winning the war?" I believe it took great faith and courage to ask God in front of all his people. Joshua shows us that if we are on God's plan and His mission when we go about God's business and carry His commands, He will guide our steps and move the mountains which stand before us. He will not only do what he promises, but He will go above and beyond our expectations. Remember, Joshua was not asking for something for himself, but rather a request that would further the kingdom of God.

Today, especially in North American Christianity, we seek God half-heartedly. Sometimes this is because we don't know our identity in Him, and other times it is because we seek Him for our selfish ambition. We have to be like Joshua: bold, courageous, and obedient - knowing that Jesus is the same today as ever before. We should seek His plan, His purposes, and align our desires with God's desires. Only then will we see those mountains of addiction, family issues, depression, and illnesses dissipate and disappear. Some of them might need a lot of chiseling to make a little dent, but at the end of the day, Jesus is always faithful.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 9

DAGON FALLS

Read 1 Samuel 5:1-5

A season of war had come upon Israel, and the nation went out to battle without the Lord's presence. They battled the Philistines and lost, but very soon after, the elders assembled and realized they needed to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the battle to ensure their victory. Briefly, the Philistines were fearful. But after mustering up enough courage, they routed Israel's army and took the Ark to their city, Ashdod. What we see next is nothing short of a miracle and display of God's glory. After placing the Ark in the house of their god Dagon, he was found face down in front of the Ark. After resetting Dagon the very next day, he was found not only fallen but broken and dismembered. In a display of His Glory and Majesty, Yahweh made known to the people that there is no god but Himself.

The Philistines had no desire to honor the Hebrew God as the one true god. They had their own religion, their own culture, and their own way of living they identified with. But our God makes His glory known, whether we want to see it or not. The Philistines' worldview was rocked when their idol, Dagon, could not stand to be in the presence of even the Ark. Though they did not humble themselves and submit to the Hebrew God, they were greatly fearful of His power.

Today we live in a culture much like the Philistines. We have our own way that we do things, and we can't be rocked off our preconceived notions. We follow our own idols, no matter the power that's displayed to us. But one day every person on Earth will stand before God and recognize Him for Who He is. None of us will have any excuse to have waited until that day to recognize Him as Lord, because He makes his power known today. Maybe we don't have a massive statue falling down nightly, but God shows His glory in every one of our lives. Let us be humble and follow Christ not just because He is Savior, but because He is also Lord.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 10

SACRIFICE ON MT CARMEL

Read 1 Kings 18:20-39

At Mount Carmel, Elijah challenges all those who followed an idol, Baal, to prove whose god is real. He does this by telling each side to call on their god to set fire to a cut-up bull on wood. To prove that Baal is a false god, the one true God, Yahweh, takes the opportunity to show all who are present that He is both real and can defy our human logic with His power. He consumes Elijah's stones, wood, bull, and water with His mighty fire.

The followers of Baal called out to their god for hours, but their sacrifice was unlit. Elijah used this opportunity to show the followers of other gods that their idols are not real. We only have one true God. Elijah went overboard, setting up his fire so that there would be no question in how it was lit. He dug a trench around it and filled it with more than enough water. Elijah called on God to light the fire, and God showed up. The fire was so hot that it consumed everything he placed there, even the stones were gone! Elijah wanted to make sure there could be no question that God completed this miracle.

Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek God first before anything else, and He will take care of all our needs. This means getting rid of the idols in our lives that take up the time we should be spending with God. We do this because we know our God is mightier than any idol on Earth. If we have confidence in our relationship with our Lord and Savior and put Him first in our lives, He will consume our hearts. Let's be active in our relationship with God, be intentional about spending time with Him, and keep Him first in our lives.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 11

THE WIDOW'S OIL

Read 2 Kings 4:1-7

A widow came to the prophet Elisha in desperation when her husband died and left her in debt. When Elisha asked what she had in her home to sell, she said she only had a tiny amount of oil. When Elisha told her to gather jars from her neighbors and fill them all with oil, she easily could have dismissed the prophet's words. Instead, she followed Elisha's instructions exactly, and when she began filling the jars, oil flowed freely. When she returned to Elisha, he told her to sell the oil to pay back the debt and use the rest to take care of her family. Can you imagine what it was like for this widow to see God's provision in such a miraculous way? God took a small amount of oil and multiplied it right in front of her eyes.

This miracle was a declaration of God's love for each of us and His willingness to use the smallest things to do great works. Luke 12:6-7 says, "Aren't five sparrows sold for two pennies? But God does not forget even one of them. He even counts every hair on your head! So don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows."

If you know anything about investing, then you know that a little bit of money can turn into a lot of money later on. So many of us trust our future lives to the idea that if we have a little, we can have enough later. But investments are a human institution, and we can lose our money and be left with nothing. If we place so much hope and faith into the stock market, a fallible and erratic system, why do we have difficulty trusting that God can use what little we have to offer? This isn't just about having enough for ourselves, this is about having enough for His kingdom! I encourage you to look at whatever God has given you, a house, an apartment, a car, and not only see it as sufficient, but ask, "How can God use this through me for His kingdom?"

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 12

THE FIERY FURNACE

Read Daniel 3:16-27

The fiery furnace is one of God's miracles that demonstrates His constant faithfulness in the lives of those who trust Him. In this story, King Nebuchadnezzar commands the people to turn away from God and instead worship an image of gold. He says that anyone unwilling to worship as he has commanded will be thrown into a blazing furnace (Daniel 3:6). This story shows us three men- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego- who stand firm in their faith and God protects them.

There was no earthly way that these three men were going to survive the fire, as Nebuchadnezzar had commanded that the fire be heated seven times hotter than usual. These men had complete faith that God could protect them from harm because of His goodness and faithfulness. They practiced such strong faith that even when threatened with death, they still would only worship God and God alone. They demonstrate unwavering faith in verse 18, where they state that even if God does not deliver them from the furnace, they still refuse to worship other gods. While they know that God can deliver them from any harm, they are at a place of surrender by accepting the idea that God may not save them. However, God enters the fire with them and brings them out completely unharmed. What a miracle of protection and faithfulness!

We all walk through situations and circumstances that can bring destruction and suffering to our lives. Like these three men, God calls us to place our faith and hope in Him, knowing that He can protect us. While God can save us from anything, our faith must rest in His sovereign will, trusting that He will work in our lives the way He sees fit. Even when fires arise around us, we can rest in the promise that God can protect those who remain faithful. While we may not know what His protection looks like, steadfast faith will reveal His excellent and just provision over our lives.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 13

WRITING ON THE WALL

Read Daniel 5:22-31

Have you ever wondered where the phrase “the writing on the wall” comes from? It’s a reference to a miracle God performed in the Kingdom of Babylon. When Daniel had become an older man, the new king had lost sight of the lessons his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar had learned. One night, he threw a massive party for the nobles of the kingdom, and they used the cups that had been taken from the temple of the Lord to drink wine in excess. In their drunkenness, they praised the idols they worshiped, which were made of metals, wood, and stone. In the middle of the party, a hand appeared and began writing words on the wall opposite the king.

Daniel was the only one around with the knowledge and wisdom to interpret the writing, and as he gave the king the interpretation, he explained why God had brought about this miracle. All three of the words sounded like words for weights, but they also seemed like other words in Aramaic: numbered, weighed, and divided. Daniel tells Belshazzar that because he and his kingdom had dishonored God, and gone so far as to use the Lord’s sacred dishes in the worship of their gods, his life and reign had been numbered and weighed, and the kingdom would be divided. That very night, Belshazzar was killed, and an outside king overtook Babylon.

We see in this story an example of God using His servant to warn the unrighteous. Belshazzar was far from God, so God did something dramatic to get his attention and provided his servant to explain what was happening. God will do the same kinds of things for us today. Something we don’t understand will come along to stop us in the tracks of our sin, and at that moment we need to seek Godly counsel to help us understand what God’s trying to say to us. Surround yourself with people fervently seeking the Lord, and anytime you begin to stray, they’ll be around to help point you back to God.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 14

DANIEL IS DELIVERED

Read Daniel 6:16-23

King Darius's chief rulers were jealous of Daniel and wanted to find some fault in him to get rid of him. They found none, so they thought of a way to make a fault in him. They convinced Darius to order everyone to pray to him, and no other god, or else be thrown in the lion's den. Daniel, being faithful to his God alone, refused. King Darius was distraught when his chief rulers came to him about Daniel. The King was so upset he fasted till morning in hopes that Daniel would be found unharmed.

We often focus on the faith and dedication of Daniel as the main point of this miracle. To be sure, verse 23 affirms that Daniel was unharmed, "for he [Daniel] trusted in his God." But we shouldn't neglect another aspect of his being saved. Darius, wrought with distress that Daniel might not survive the night, fasted. The King must have seen something in Daniel that made him believe in God because he stayed up fasting until he could check on Daniel the next morning. It's unclear whether Darius prayed to God, but judging from his decree in verses 25 through 27, I think it's a safe bet. Rather than drown his sorrows in food, drink, and music, Darius kept to himself and fasted.

I believe God's deliverance of Daniel from the lion's den was not only a result of Daniel's faith, but also the new found faith of King Darius. While he didn't have the calm confidence of Daniel, he was desperate for Daniel's safety. In his affliction he turned to fasting rather than distractions and diversions. During these 40 days I hope you're learning to see the power of fasting, and how it is available to us at any time. If at any point during this year you're desperate for a solution to a situation, consider fasting like Darius. God may not work it out like you think He will, but He rewards humility expressed through fasting.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 15

JONAH & THE FISH

Read Jonah 1:17

In Jonah's four short chapters, we see an incredible arc. God commands Jonah to minister to Nineveh, he disobeys, ends up in a fish for three days and nights, repents, eventually obeys, Nineveh repents and turns to God, and Jonah sulks about it.

The truly miraculous part of the whole narrative isn't the fact that Jonah was in the belly of a sea creature for three days and nights, as amazing as that is! What is astounding is the divine interplay between the Creator and His creation. God planned to destroy Nineveh because of their utter wickedness and violence – trying to be gods themselves. However, because Nineveh repented, God "changed His mind and did not carry out the destruction He had threatened." God changed His mind? And yet, that's precisely why Jonah disobeyed God. Jonah says, "That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love." Jonah claimed to be "a Hebrew who worshipped the God of Heaven," but he actually didn't know or trust God, and therefore didn't live into God's mission: to help the lost find their way back to God.

Jesus refers to the prophet Jonah saying, "Nineveh will stand up against [the disobedient Israelite] generation on judgment day and condemn it, for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now someone greater than Jonah is here – but you refuse to repent" (Matthew 12:41). Jesus' mission is clear: "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Jesus spent three days and nights in the ground as the ultimate act of atonement, and once and for all made possible a new way of life. This is the miraculous part: like Jonah, He wants to use us to help bring that life! Yet, two things stand in the way. One, some of you think you are destined for destruction because of your own terrible decisions and evil. Two, some of you might be religious, born and raised in the church, yet you are not living the mission. Despite everything, you can get up, repent, and live out the mission today!

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 16

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Read Luke 1:26-38

What do you think of when you think about Jesus' birth? Do images of manger scenes, barn animals, and wise men come to mind? Sometimes we get so caught up in the actual delivery of Jesus that we overlook how it started: a virgin, one who could not have possibly had a child, conceived a child.

Mary isn't the first woman in the Bible we've seen who shouldn't have been able to have a child, only to then give birth. In the Old Testament, Sarah conceived Isaac even though she was older. Right before this passage in Luke, Elizabeth conceived John the Baptist, and she too was an older woman. But never before had a virgin, someone who had not "known a man," conceived. It's difficult to overstate the difference between these miracles. With Sarah and Elizabeth, God did something that shouldn't have been able to happen, but it was still possible. It's hard to imagine an older woman giving birth, but not impossible. With Mary, God did what physically could not be done. According to every biological principle, Mary couldn't be a mother. But not only would Mary become a mother, she would be the mother of the One Who would redeem humanity from all its sin and brokenness. She lacked what was necessary for this to happen, but this one thing she had: faith in God.

In your day-to-day life, how often have you thought, "But that can't happen?" Has God ever called you to something for His kingdom, but you didn't have the means to make it happen? It can feel discouraging, like a dream you can't achieve. But if God has indeed called you to it, if it will glorify Him and advance His kingdom, then the One who created everything out of nothing will provide a way. His power is beyond what we can imagine, and more than enough to provide a means for His glory. We only need to say, "I am the Lord's servant." We need to have faith in His power and submission to His plan.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 17

TURNING WATER INTO WINE

Read John 2:1-11

Weddings at this time were a big deal. They were way bigger than weddings we throw today. Preparations for weddings were critical. It was the family's responsibility to cater to the guests during the reception which lasted several days. So, imagine you buying wine and food for your whole family all week! If you had too little, the guests saw it as an insult to themselves.

When Jesus turned the water into wine, it wasn't a small feat. These stone jars held somewhere between 20 to 30 gallons per container, adding up to around 120 gallons! Then the water was brought to the master of the banquet, which was a very public thing. It wasn't as if no one saw it. Think of the master of the banquet as the bridegroom at a wedding. All eyes were on him. Jesus's provision was literally keeping the party going. Stakes were high for the people involved. In this, we see that when we have troubles, and we entrust them to Christ and let Him take control, His outcome is always better than ours! His answers may not make sense at the moment; for example, "fill the jars with water." However, when we are faithful and follow Jesus, the best is yet to come. With wine, it is common to start with the good stuff first and then go down in quality from there. But as the bridegroom takes a drink of the wine, he refers to it as "the good wine." In this, we see that God knows what is best. Eventually, what we have runs out. But the provisions of Christ last forever. The best part, though, is that it doesn't stop there. God saves his best blessings for last.

We should be giving everything we have to Jesus. Not only does He deserve it, but it's in our best interest. It may not make sense to give more than 10% of your finances or give more of your time to help others grow in their faith. But, when we give more to Jesus, He makes it better than anything we could do ourselves.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 18

HEALING PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Read Luke 4:38-39

This passage is saying we desire for those we love to be healed. That's apparent when the people asked Jesus about the ill woman, who turns out to be Peter's mother-in-law. I know what you're thinking, "obviously, Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law." And yes, it is a physical healing from a fever (which in ancient times would have been deadly), but what about the emotional and spiritual wounds of those we love? Certainly, Jesus cares about those battles too, right? Peter and his family were interested in a different outcome than this current pain of their family member, as we all are when it comes to our hurting family members.

The reason why they asked Jesus about her was because they loved her, and she was their family. This passage shows how impactful our intercession to God on someone else's behalf can be. It literally can change someone's life. We want what is best for others because we love them. That's what love is, wanting the absolute best for someone. That's the love God has for us. That love compels us to pray for our family members emotional, physical, and spiritual needs.

We need to be lifting one another up in prayer, interceding for our family. Whether that is a sick relative, a family member far from God, spiritual family at church, or your own children. Interceding means that we go out of our way to be intentional in prayer for one another. It means sending a text and asking, "how can I be praying for you," and then carving out that time to make that a priority every day. When is the last time you talked to God on behalf of your family? God has the power to heal the sick, the addicted, the depressed, the broken-hearted, and the lost, even in your family. We all have someone in our family that needs someone interceding on their behalf. Take time today and listen to who it is in your family that God wants you to intervene for.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 19

THE FIRST MIRACULOUS CATCH

Read Luke 5:1-11

The rabbinic system in which Jesus structured His ministry is fascinating. Jesus, as a Rabbi, would take disciples (Talmidim) and teach them so that they might, in turn, spread His message. Typically Talmidim would be very well versed in the Torah (first five books of Moses) and very intellectual individuals. They would usually approach a Rabbi and ask to follow in their footsteps. Now Jesus wasn't after the typical Talmid, he instead chose twelve "unqualified" men for the job. In Luke 5:1-11, we learn how Jesus first calls three of them; Peter, James, and John.

He tells them to "put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Simon Peter responds with, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word, I will let down the nets." Of course, when they let out their nets, they were so full of fish that the nets started to break. Upon experiencing the miracle Jesus had just done, Peter falls at Jesus' feet and says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

The beautiful truth about this passage is how Peter first addresses what Jesus tells him to do. He first explains the hard work that they had put into fishing the night before with no results. He quickly follows with, "but at your word, I will let down the nets." Peter's obedience is what led to the miracle taking place. Jesus wants to and is working miracles around us all the time. In the extravagant and plain things, Jesus is asking us to be obedient. Peter's repentance of the small amount of hesitancy he had is something to be learned from as well. We should strive for humility towards others and obviously to our Master. Jesus wants to give good things to his followers, but we cannot receive them with a proud heart. Jesus truly believes his disciples can become like Him, even when we feel tired, fallen, or incapable. The first twelve disciples were ordinary people, but with God's power, some obedience, and humility, they transformed the world.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 20

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

Read Matthew 8:5-13

In Matthew 8, Jesus is traveling back from teaching the Sermon on the Mount. As He enters Capernaum (the town in which He lived), Jesus is approached by a centurion who asks Him to heal his sick servant. The centurion shows great faith in the authority and power of Jesus, and the words of Jesus heal his servant.

A centurion was an officer in the Roman army. He had authority over men. He knew who answered to him, and who he answered to. As we see in this passage, the centurion also recognized that Jesus also had authority, and His influence wasn't only over men. The centurion knew that Jesus' authority was higher than his own, and He reigned over everything, including sickness. He knew at the command of Jesus, his servant's illness would have to go where Christ said. The centurion knew his servant needed help that could only come from someone with the authority and power of Jesus. In faith, the centurion humbly came to Jesus and asked Jesus to do what he could not.

The healing of the servant is the miracle, but the centurion's submission is miraculous. Imagine believing that your highest earthly ruler, the Caesar, was also a god. This was the official religion of the Roman Empire at the time. Then think of the submission to Christ's ultimate authority over civil rulers required to seek out Him above your culture's idols. What if we, as followers of Christ, lived with the same reverence and humility this centurion shows Jesus? When we put our faith in Christ, we are trusting that He is greater than our circumstances and our culture. True faith allows us to recognize that we can do nothing on our own; it is Christ who has all authority, and it is only through Him that miraculous things happen.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 21

HEALING A PARALYTIC

Read Mark 2:1-12

Jesus has just returned home from traveling, and it didn't take long for the crowds to overflow from the house where He was staying. Jesus performs a miracle in response to the faith of five men. Though it is doubtful that these men had any clue that they were seeking out the Messiah, they did have faith that Jesus was the person that could affect change.

It would have been easy for these men to get discouraged and to turn back. Instead, they continued to take whatever steps necessary to get their friend to Jesus. They pursued Jesus regardless of how crazy they seemed to the onlookers. Jesus recognized this collective effort, and Mark tells us that Jesus saw their faith. It is from this statement that we learn that bringing people to God is a joint effort. To be clear, only Jesus has the authority to forgive, but He has asked us to participate in this miracle of forgiveness. We have a vital role in "carrying" others when they can't get through the chaos of life, and at times we must be willing to go the extra, extra mile.

We too often confuse "carrying" people to Jesus as merely an invitation to church. The motive behind this is pure, but it is not the same as picking up the corner of a mat and feeling the weight of helping someone get to Jesus. The simple truth is you have a unique ability to bring people right up to Jesus, where they have a clear option to choose to trust in Him or to reject Him as Savior. You do this by asking God, "what can I share with them that will help them see the truth of who You are?" Sharing the Bible will move them closer, but sharing the Bible through the lens of your life will move them miles closer! We all have people in our lives that are hungry for God, and they need you to pick up a corner and participate in their redemption story. The only question you have to ask is, "am I willing?"

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 22

CALMING THE STORM

Read Mark 4:35-41

Jesus tells the disciples to get on a boat with Him and cross the sea. Later, while out at sea, they find themselves caught in a fierce storm. Several of the disciples were fishermen, so they knew how dangerous this storm was. But Jesus wasn't worried. Instead, He was sleeping in the stern. The disciples wake Jesus, and He calms the storm immediately and miraculously.

After Jesus calmed the storm, He challenged the disciples asking, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Jesus used this miracle to teach the disciples that He is in control of everything--even the wind and the waves--and that the disciples should trust Him. What storm are you facing in your life right now? Jesus is greater than any storm you could ever face, and He's in control even over the storm you're facing now. He's the Creator of the universe, and everything in it, including the wind and the waves, obeys Him. Imagine for a moment Jesus speaking to you as He did to the disciples: "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" If you have a relationship with Jesus, you can have peace in any storm you face. Even death itself cannot separate you from the peace that you have in Jesus if you are God's child. Rather than focusing on Jesus, the disciples focused on the storm around them. As you're in the midst of a fierce life storm, decide to focus on Jesus and not the storm around you.

Spend time meditating on Jesus calming the storm of your life around you. See that He is not worried about the wind and the waves crashing around you. See that He is the Creator of the universe, and everything in this universe obeys Him. Know that He cares for you and trust Him with your storm.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 23

THE BLEEDING WOMAN

Read Matthew 9:20-22

In Jewish culture, when a woman was bleeding she was deemed unclean for the duration of the bleeding, and so was everything she touched. The woman we read about in Matthew 9 had been bleeding for 12 years. Talk about isolation! The very act of her being in a crowd of people would not have been accepted, but she was desperate. This woman had spent all she had on doctors and lost hope in finding healing (Luke 8:43-44). When she heard about Jesus, she was filled with hope again and sought to get close to Him. When she touched Him, the woman did not make Jesus unclean, but instead, He made her clean!

Jesus was on His way to heal a little girl (Matthew 9:18-19), and yet when this woman touched Him, He welcomed the interruption. Perhaps that is the most remarkable aspect of this story, that Jesus acknowledged the woman. He stopped, turned, and looked her right in the eyes. He recognized that she had a desire to be healed, had faith that He could make her well, and took a step of faith to reach out to Him. He stopped what He was doing and met her where she was.

Jesus does the same for us today. Whenever you choose to reach out to the loving Father, He will be there. He is never too busy for you, yet we often allow ourselves to think we are too busy for Him. You may be in a season of desperation right now. Maybe you need God to do something big in your life. Get alone with the Lord. Seek His face, not just His hand in the miracle you need. Are you reaching for Jesus in your desperation? Maybe you are not in that place right now, but chances are you have been. Are you still reaching for Jesus?

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 24

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

Read Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

In this famous miracle from the book of Mark, Jesus raises a little girl from the dead. A local synagogue leader, Jairus, comes to Jesus as He is teaching and begs Him to save his daughter. As He is speaking, a man comes and informs Jairus that his daughter is dead. Jesus assures him, "Don't be afraid. Only believe" (Mark 5:36). Jesus goes to Jairus' house and finds his daughter there, dead. Jesus took her hand and told her to get up, and immediately she did.

Jesus did not have to raise this little girl from the dead. He could have continued teaching or comforted the man without performing a miracle. But He saw an opportunity to teach an important lesson. A leader of the synagogue had come to Him for help. Many synagogue leaders at this time were also Pharisees, who were among Jesus' staunchest enemies. The humility and desperation required for Jairus to approach Jesus with a request as important as healing his daughter were immense. So Jesus made a display of His power beyond what even the highest religious leaders could perform.

On Day 20's devotional, we saw how Jesus was superior to our civil authorities. Now we see his superiority to the religious authorities as well. We see how even those who led the people spiritually needed to rely on a higher power for works to be performed. From this we learn that only Jesus has the authority to save us, no other religious authority can do so, and for that we give Him all glory and honor. We respect all the authorities He has placed over us, but we know that all true religious authority belongs to Him.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 25

THE HEALING AT BETHESDA

Read John 5:1-15

The healing at Bethesda took place when Jesus went to a Jewish festival and needed to go to Jerusalem. Bethesda was a pool located in the corner of Jerusalem, typically for people known to be disabled, blind, and paralyzed. While Jesus was there, He asked a man who was disabled an essential question, “Do you want to get well?”

When Jesus healed the man, He told him to “pick up your mat and walk.” With this, we learn that Jesus wants to heal the man. We can see that Jesus decided to heal the man in a particular and purposeful way, showing the man abundant grace in the time frame that Jesus saw fit.

We can learn from this miracle that how long we have been suffering is irrelevant to God's healing. In our culture today, we want healing to be a short term, fast-paced process. Through this, we see that Jesus is sovereign. Jesus heals who He chooses to in a way He chooses to. In our lives, we may believe that if Jesus isn't improving our situation in the time frame and how we want Him to heal, He isn't sovereign. We are often led to believe that the longer a person has sinned, the less likely they will get to know God, or the longer our situation continues in a way that we wouldn't have chosen, the longer hope for Jesus to heal us will never happen. We should remember that passing time doesn't have to produce hopelessness. Jesus is still sovereign, gracious, and mighty regardless of when or how He decides to heal us.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 26

FEEDING THE 5,000 MEN

Read Mark 6:30-44

The feeding of the 5,000 men is one of Jesus' most famous miracles. After His disciples performed their short mission (Mark 6:7-13), they returned exhausted to Jesus. He knew they needed rest, but He also knew that without them, the people were "without a shepherd." So He used them for one more work before they rested. These twelve men were to feed 5,000 men, besides the women and children!

Though it is ultimately Christ who miraculously multiplies the five loaves and two fish into enough food for the entire crowd, twice He makes clear that the apostles are the ones acting out the miracle. After they respond with confusion to His first command to feed the masses, He instructs them to gather what little food the crowd has. So we see here that Jesus uses them to begin the miracle. He has them bring the humble beginnings of what will be a great work. Then after Jesus blesses the humble beginning of five loaves and two fish, He uses the apostles again. He uses them to distribute the food to the crowd. Imagine that! Ten minutes ago, one person could easily carry all the food, and now it takes twelve men multiple trips to bring it all to the crowds!

We Christians are sometimes guilty of "God's got it"-ism. We convince ourselves that if something is really in God's will, He'll do it Himself or get someone else to do it. We think that either God can't use us, or He doesn't need to use us. Indeed, He doesn't need us. He's perfectly capable of doing everything Himself. But in this miracle, Jesus shows us that He uses us anyway, that we are the instruments He uses to perform His will. So consider how God can use you. You can comfort your grieving coworker. You can help your neighbor through financial hardship. You can bring your unbelieving friend to faith. You can do these things by His strength because God has called you to them.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 27

WALKING ON WATER

Read Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus tests His disciples' faith in one of the most remarkable miracles, walking on water. Jesus had just performed one of His first miracles, feeding the 5,000. Needing His time of solitude, Jesus sent his disciples to go before him across the lake to their next destination (Matthew 14:22). The disciples had not demonstrated confidence in Jesus' ability to feed the 5,000 people. That miracle should have been remarkable in growing their faith. Yet, they still had questions of doubt. Jesus was about to present another lesson that would bring them closer to knowing and understanding who He was.

Several hours into their journey, the disciples encounter stormy conditions. They certainly didn't expect to see Jesus coming towards them walking on water and were fearful of this ghostly image approaching them. They were tired, filled with suspicion, and were lacking in faith. So their response was one of terror and wonder. Terror about what was happening and wonder about how this could be happening. Peter tests this ghostly figure's authenticity by asking Jesus to bring him out on the water as well. He does, but Peter quickly loses faith and begins to sink. In just this brief period of time that Peter spent on the water, we find an incredible lesson we all should learn.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 28

THE GENTILE'S DAUGHTER

Read Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus delivering a Gentile's daughter from demonic oppression is one of the many miracles found in Matthew's gospel. The purpose of this writing is to demonstrate Christ's concern for every type of person, not only the Jewish people but the Gentiles too. In this passage, a Canaanite woman begs for mercy as her daughter was suffering from demon-possession. Jesus finally answered her by saying, in other words, that God wanted the Jews (the children) to present the message of salvation (the bread) to the rest of the world by offering them the first opportunity to accept Him as Messiah. The woman replied by agreeing with Him. She was fine taking second place just as long as she could receive God's blessing for her daughter. Jesus granted her request because she had great faith and recognized Jesus' authority as the Creator. Jesus used this opportunity to teach us that faith is available to all people.

There were a lot of cultural reasons Jesus "shouldn't" have had this interaction. Tyre and Sidon were seen by the Jews as hedonistic cities, ancient equivalents of Las Vegas and Los Angeles. Gentiles, non-Jewish people, were people that Jews just didn't interact with. Canaanites, like this woman, were seen as especially common and lowly. They were pagans who didn't have a relationship with the true God. He did this with a purpose, to show that even those who are on the fringes of "acceptable" culture can be reached for His kingdom.

In every one of our lives, there are certain kinds of people that we're more comfortable with than others. If you're a creative type, you feel more at home with the art community. If you're a business type, you'll feel the same about other business types. What Jesus tears down here is the idea that it's okay to only talk with people we're comfortable around. This woman did not fit into any group Jesus was in, yet He still commended her on her faith and healed her daughter. Shouldn't we extend the same grace to those we aren't comfortable with?

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 29

JESUS HEALS A BLIND MAN

Read John 9:1-12

The healing of the blind man is a significant picture of how people in Jesus' day view sickness. Sickness was often associated with sin, but the blind man in this miracle is revealed to be blind for an entirely different reason.

The disciples look at the blind man and attempt to blame his blindness not only from the man's sin but maybe even the sin of his parents. Their culture assumed that God had cursed people who were born sick. People blamed the parents for their child's condition. Today we do the same thing, but differently. If a person's life is devoid of wealth, health, or success, we think there is something wrong with that person's walk with God. We call this belief the "prosperity gospel," and many have believed that their walk with God is based around their success.

The condition of the blind man reflects a truth that we also learn from Job that many are unwilling to accept: sometimes, we can be in the middle of suffering and calamity and be precisely in the center of God's will. God has never declared that we would be exempt from suffering in our lives, but the Bible does reveal that suffering has meaning. In suffering, we may turn from sin as a persecuted Israel did. We may learn that this world isn't fair like Joseph did, or we may see Jesus like Paul did when he was blinded on the road to Damascus. Whether it is a blinded Paul or a blind man with mud in his eyes, suffering led these men to the feet of their Savior. The context changes the heart of a person. Rather than settling for something to live with, these men discovered something greater they could live for. God offers the same invitation to everyone in their suffering, and we can choose what suffering accomplishes in our life.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 30

THE DEMONIAK SON

Read Matthew 17:14-20

Jesus has just been transfigured in the presence of Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17:1-13), a literal highpoint to Jesus's earthly ministry before His crucifixion and resurrection. Coming down from the mountain, the four of them encounter a father, his demon-possessed son, and the nine other disciples and their failure to cast the demon out of the boy. In the failure of the nine, Jesus sees what begins many shortcomings in our walk with Him, unbelief.

In His humanity, unbelief was a jarring reminder to Jesus of the fickleness of the human heart and our constant need to be reminded of His power, mercy, and grace. Jesus's frustration with an "unbelieving and perverse generation" continues to this day. Jesus reminds us that even tiny faith, a mustard seed size, can do amazing things if the object of our faith is Him. The question Jesus, and the unbelieving world, is asking of us is, "What do you believe about Him?" And to our shame, the church continues to fall short. Jesus has given us everything we need, His Spirit and His Word, to fuel our faith in Him and in all He can do for His glory and our good. And yet, we continue to ask, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" "Why didn't we see a victory?" "Why don't we see mighty works of God in our midst?" The problem isn't Jesus. It's us.

How do we become people of faith, believing that God can heal? The answer is given in the parallel passage in Mark 9:29, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer." Prayer reminds us that there is no power to heal that we bring in and of ourselves. If healing is to be done, God alone, through His indwelling Spirit, will do it. So, if we aren't crying out to God for His power, we demonstrate our faith is in everything but Him. And that is unbelief. Your belief in God's ability to heal will grow exponentially as you cry out to Him in prayer. A person of prayer can't help but be a person of faith.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 31

TAX IN THE FISH

Read Matthew 17:24-27

At the beginning of this chapter, we see Jesus invited Peter to see Who He is at the transfiguration. A few verses down, Peter was asked if Jesus pays the temple tax, and, of course, He said yes. Jesus explained that while Peter and Himself are exempt from paying the tax because they are children of the King (i.e. God), they will forfeit their rights and follow the rules, believing that God Himself will provide for all our needs.

In the passage, Jesus explains three things to Peter. First, Jesus points out that they are exempt from paying the Temple Tax because both of them are children of the King (i.e. God). Second, and arguably the most important, Jesus did not want to offend the people by arguing or contesting His rights. Finally, Jesus is asking Peter to trust that God will provide, even in ways we never thought of, like coins in the mouth of a fish.

Today, we live in extraordinary and unique times, where we prioritize ourselves and our own "rights." However, if we are followers of Jesus Christ, we must first recognize that our identity is not rooted in the world, but rather in Jesus, who even being God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his advantage. Instead, He humbled Himself even to death on the cross (Philippians 2:6-11). Not everything permissible is good and beneficial to the greater good (1 Corinthians 6:12). Therefore, if we, as Christians, desire to be disciples of Jesus, we must be imitators of Jesus. Rather than flaunting our royal birth and rights before the world, we should replicate Jesus' humility and surrender ourselves for the greater good of the people.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 32

HEALING A DISABLED WOMAN

Read Luke 13:10-17

Here Luke gives an account of a miracle Jesus did while teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath. With just one touch from Jesus, a woman who was physically disabled for over 18 years instantly experienced complete physical healing. Jesus lovingly noticed her suffering in a crowd of people and stopped His teaching to restore her to wholeness immediately.

This woman's encounter with Jesus seems brief, but this short miracle serves a big purpose. The healed woman's immediate response was to praise God. The reaction of the leader of the synagogue, however, stands in stark contrast. Perhaps he was bitter that Jesus was stealing his spotlight, but his response to the miracle was indignant. Indignance is anger at what is perceived as unfair treatment – the religious leader makes this scene all about him and what is "fair" to him: keeping his power and position. He accuses Jesus of breaking the Sabbath by "working" and accuses the crowd of breaking the Sabbath by coming to be healed. Jesus points out that even the religious leaders untie their animals on the Sabbath to relieve their thirst – so how much more important is it to untie a human being, made in God's image, from her spiritual bondage and alleviate her suffering? The crowd responds by joining in with joyful praise to God.

This miracle, like all of Jesus' miracles, shows His power and divinity, but perhaps the more important lesson is in revealing the hearts and attitudes of people. Any of us can fall into the trap of the religious leader by thinking we are doing so much for God that we miss seeing what God is doing. We may think we have a heart for God, but if we don't also have a heart for the people He created, we are missing the point. We can get caught up in what we think is "unfair," but what was genuinely unfair was a perfect Savior dying on the cross for humans who didn't deserve it. Each day we have to ask God to remove any prideful religiousness in us so we can humbly join Him in His work.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 33

THE TEN LEPERS

Read Luke 17:11-19

Passing between Samaria and Galilee, Jesus meets a group of lepers composed of Jews and Samaritans. These lepers had heard of other miracles of Jesus and cried to Him in desperation. Jesus, aware of their suffering, would heal them physically, but only one would return to praise Him for this blessing.

Here we see an example of people coming to Jesus when they are in a time of need, even receiving healing when they were obedient to Jesus' command. But once they got what they wanted, they no longer had a "need" for Jesus and left. They completed their religious checklist and went about their day. Jesus exposes the sick hearts of the nine who did not return by pointing out their absence as the one Samaritan returns. He had already been physically healed, but the real miracle of these verses is God's cleansing of the Samaritan's heart.

Just like the Samaritan leper, we are all called to praise God. We are to be thankful for all of the blessings which He abundantly gives us. This praise does not necessarily lead to more blessings but instead makes God's beauty known. It reminds us of our desperation and need for His presence in our lives. It also makes the world around us aware of all that Jesus has done for us. Imagine when the Samaritan leper returned, cleansed from his leprosy, falling on his knees, praising "with a loud voice." How that would have looked to those around him! As you go about your day, look for the blessings that God has enacted in your life and take time to thank Him by speaking the thankfulness out loud. When others come to you in praise of your success at work, take that time to acknowledge God and His hand in your work. By humbling yourself, and recognizing the impact God has on your life, you can help the world know the glory of Christ Jesus.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 34

THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS

Read John 11

As you read this chapter, you'll notice the intense love between Jesus and the family of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, whom He often visited. Mary and Martha run to tell Jesus that their brother Lazarus has died. Any crisis that we experience can be used for God's glory. But the question is when we go through trials, how do we respond? Martha, Mary, and all these Jewish mourners responded humanly to death: sorrow, defeat, and abandonment. They treated death as the end of life, as the final defeat, a sign that God had deserted them.

How did Jesus respond to their doubts, weeping, and mourning? When Lazarus died, "Jesus wept." It is the shortest yet arguably the most potent verse when it comes to Jesus modeling the vulnerability of tears and strength in a natural response to great heartache. Yet Christ did it knowing He would soon raise His friend from the grave. Have you ever been hurting so much that no words would help? Maybe you've experienced unimaginable pain and grief. In those moments, it's rarely the right words that fix our broken hearts. It's usually someone sitting with us in our suffering that makes the difference.

Jesus understands us because He became human. Jesus experienced pain, loss, grief, and sorrow. Even though Jesus knew how the story would end, He still wept in the middle of it. Raising Lazarus is a miracle that reminds us God can resurrect our souls from disappointment, grief, and pain. He can take what's lost and make it whole again. When we experience sorrow, we don't have to push it aside. The end of the story for all believers is victory and eternity with Jesus. What do we do in this lifetime? It's okay to weep in the middle because weeping can still be worship when we invite God into it. Invite God into our present pain. Ask Him to experience His joy during trials. God is near the brokenhearted. When we weep, Jesus is with us. He understands us. He sees us. He meets us in our pain and disappointment.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 35

BARTIMAEUS SEES

Read Mark 10:46-52

There was a road from Jericho to Jerusalem, which would have been very well-traveled for people to attend the Passover festival. Because it was so well-traveled, it would have been a prime location for begging along the road. In the verse before (Mark 10:45), Jesus explained to the disciples the importance of servant-hood and that He did not come to be served but to give His life and serve others. While Jesus and His disciples passed by, Bartimaeus cried out "Son of David" and "Rabbi," which was messianic language and deeply respectful. When Jesus called him to come, Bartimaeus threw off his garment.

This would have been very unusual, especially for a beggar at this time. These garments were precious to them and not something a lot of beggars would have owned. Jesus asked him what he wanted. This was also a strange detail! Of course, Bartimaeus was blind, but Jesus wanted him to admit his need. His faith and conviction of who Jesus was ultimately healed him and saved his soul.

Bartimaeus may have cast aside his cloak, but he gained a new life and sight! Jesus is showing through this miracle that we must seek first the kingdom of God, and all things will be added on to us. He was demonstrating that our humility and faith is what opens the door for healing. And lastly, he was being an example of a servant loving a beggar on the side of the road when He had the world on His shoulders. The "garments" of this life sometimes prevent us from reaching Jesus. What "garments" are you clinging to that are preventing you from running after Him? Take note of those things that are getting in the way and be persistent, like Bartimaeus, in your pursuit of Christ.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 36

WITHERING THE TREE

Read Mark 11:12-21

There is an expectation from God to His professing followers. There's no expectation for our salvation, minus our faith in Jesus, but because of the gracious and undeserving salvation we receive by His grace and His work on the Cross, there is an expectation of how to demonstrate and live out that salvation. Jesus often refers to this demonstration of our receiving grace and salvation as "fruit." We are to produce the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5), good works that point others to God (Matthew 5), and live in a way that is holy similar to His holiness (1 Peter 1). Jesus holds people who have been exposed to the truth of His Word to a higher standard: His standard.

We witness the collision of God's expectations and fruitless religious elites in Mark 11. Before Jesus goes into the corrupt and fruitless temple, He foreshadows the impending judgment that will fall on religious people that fail to bear the fruit of God in their lives by making a non-fruit-producing fig tree wither and die. We see a physical example of the negligence of bearing spiritual fruit in Jesus' cursing of the fig tree. The result of not producing fruit is death, and the religious leaders in the temple were about to get a first-hand lesson. As Jesus walked into the temple, He saw that there was activity, but not the kind that God expects from His people. Jesus tells us in Luke 6 that "a tree will be known by its fruit," and this particular temple was not producing good things.

It is imperative that we ask ourselves, "What are the fruits of my life?" Do we know the expectations that God places on those saved by His grace? Do we strive to live in a way that honors God and others? Does love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, and goodness resonate from us? Do we demonstrate a saved and changed life, purchased by the mercy and sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Because Jesus has freed us from much, we are called upon by Him to live a life that demonstrates that freedom.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 37

HEALING A SERVANT'S EAR

Read Luke 22:49-53

Jesus has just prayed, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done." Shortly after, to the surprise of His disciples, they are suddenly toe to toe with their former leaders and now enemies. Or so it seems. In a fit of rage, an over-zealous disciple decides to act nobly and protect his King. Wouldn't you after you have just walked out the last three years of your life with the Man that you now know to be God Himself? But Jesus says, "Enough." He is tired of bloodshed, evil, and vengeance. So, He reaches out, touches the man's ear, and heals the same enemy who has come to capture Him. In a move of pure compassion, regardless of the circumstances, Jesus is willing to heal the sinner despite his opposition to Christ's mission.

With confidence and compassion, Jesus uses this miracle to make His point clear. We are not at war with flesh and blood, or political party against political party, we are under attack, sinner and saint alike, from the power of darkness. The high priest's servant was Jesus' enemy, but the servant's body had no relation to His ministry. So it made no sense to maim him. What made sense was to show him the mercy and power of God. That is exactly what Christ exemplified to us through healing that servant's ear. He healed His enemy so that we would not see them as enemies, but opportunities.

There are bound to be people in our lives who believe differently from us. There might even be those who think our ideas are dangerous, much like the mob in this story did. Regardless of their opposition to our mission, they can and should be ministered to. Think of people in your life you can be a light to, and then be that light. We are called to be ambassadors of Christ, showing mercy to those around us, non-believer and our Christian family alike, to show God's glory to the power of darkness and watch it flee.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 38

THE RESURRECTION

Read Luke 24:1-8

In Luke 24:1-8, we read about the miracle that is the most instrumental to the Christian faith: the resurrection of Jesus. Those who profess Christianity know that the resurrection is the pinnacle of the entire Gospel. The Gospel, or Good News, is that death and the powers of darkness that rule this world were conquered. When the angelic messengers declared to the women at the tomb, "He isn't here! He is risen from the dead!," it was a declaration of a victory. It's a good feeling when we get to announce a victory.

The start of the Bible tells us we were supposed to live life on God's behalf, and not our own. Paradise was about a sovereign God, lovingly creating humanity to be connected with God. But, we chose to diminish God's position and power to be godlike ourselves (Genesis 3:1-8). God came to Earth in order to reconcile this disastrous error. Being fully human and fully divine (Philippians 2:6-8), Jesus brought Heaven and Earth together once again. Through the conquering of death, Jesus enabled humanity to live as we were created. When the original sin took place, humanity was subjected to the power of sin and death, not just physical, but also spiritual. When Jesus was crucified, He took on the sin and iniquity of humanity and was buried with Him. He declared that those things had been conquered, and through Him, there is a new way to live.

The reason that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so vitally crucial to the Christian is that it is the defining moment in Jesus' ministry to declare who He is, what He had done, and, most importantly, to invite us to join in bringing forth the Kingdom of God. The resurrection is that staple that holds the Gospel story together, a story that we are invited to participate in. How will you join in the resurrection of Jesus today? The powers of sin and death no longer control us because of the resurrection. And through God's Spirit, we can live the Kingdom of Heaven once again.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 39

THE SECOND MIRACULOUS CATCH

Read John 21:4-11

The second miraculous catch, sometimes referred to as the “catch of the 153 fish,” was the final miracle Jesus would perform. Jesus had just been resurrected, and I’m sure Peter and the other disciples were feeling a broad range of emotions. I can imagine fishing would be somewhat of an escape from all that they had been feeling. However, they had fished all night and hadn’t caught anything until Jesus shows up.

Jesus instructs them to cast their nets on the opposite side, and although they can’t immediately identify the man on the shore, they still obey and haul in 153 fish without a single net breaking. Peter is now convinced he knows the voice and jumps off the boat to meet Jesus onshore. This second miraculous catch is significant because it took a blind act of obedience for Jesus to pour out a blessing. They had to trust and obey even when they couldn’t see their Savior standing right in front of them.

How many times in our walk as “believers” have we struggled with blind faith? We fall victim to a faith crisis. In our hearts, we believe that God will fulfill every promise He has given us, but we struggle with the things we can’t see. Our human eyes can’t catch up to our spiritual eyes. Hebrews 11:1 says faith shows us the reality of what we hope for. It is the evidence of things we cannot see. We have to remind ourselves that God’s ways are not our ways, and if we could figure out the path to our victory, we probably wouldn’t need Him. That’s where trust and surrender come in. Those are the two keys required for blind faith in our Creator, expressed in obedience. We all have our prayers or “nets” in our life we cast daily. Maybe yours is a physical healing, restoration in your marriage, or possibly a spiritual breakthrough. Whatever your “net” is, perhaps you’ve been casting on your terms and not trusting God’s plan. Let’s trust and obey and learn to cast on the other side of the boat.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 40

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

Read Revelation 19:11-21

At this point in the book of Revelation, the apostle John had already seen Jesus portrayed in two other visions. Now he sees Jesus as the rider on the white horse. The only other time in Scripture that Jesus had ever ridden an animal was on a donkey to enter Jerusalem shortly before His death. But in this vision, Jesus is seen riding the traditional white horse that victorious Roman generals would ride through the streets of Rome in triumphal procession. The weapon of choice the Rider uses is His Word (the "sharp sword," verse 15). Just as God spoke the universe into existence, He will, with His Word, vanquish His enemies forever. This scene is a fulfillment of the central theme of Revelation- that Jesus is returning as King to conquer death and Satan forever.

Describing this scene as miraculous is a bit of an understatement. In our lives, we see the effects of death and Satan everywhere we go. In fact, everything that goes wrong in life is a result of our fallen state. The pain, heartache, dysfunction, disease, disasters, violence, war, deceptions, and perversions of this present age are simply symptoms of a world under the curse of sin and the leadership of Satan, "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Our lives in this fallen, broken world involve dealing with these symptoms each and every day. But the great hope of the Christian faith is that a day is coming when the root causes of these symptoms are dealt with once and for all by King Jesus. No more cancer. No more tornadoes. No more sexual abuse. No more tears or broken hearts. In His grand finale of miracles, Jesus will conquer them all.

How should that reality shape our lives now? As those marked by the Rider on the white horse, we are to live as people of hope. We know because our lives are hidden in Him (Colossians 3:3) that our future is secure. If we are in Christ, whatever comes against us in this life cannot change the reality of our eternity.

Pray for 10 minutes

