

Let's pray. Father in heaven, many are the pictures of Your love for us in Your word. And we are grateful for all of them. And Lord we think of you as a Shepard and us as your sheep. And today, we are comforted to know that we will have no want because You watch over us. Thank you for that. Lord we pray that as we open Your word, that You will lead us to that green pasture where we can just fill upon Your presence and upon Your word. We pray that You will take us to the still waters which we can refresh ourselves through Your Holy Spirit, Lord we are asking for You to Shepard us through Your word now. We pray that You will speak to us. Speak to our vary hearts; speak to our needs, where we are at, where we need to be, how to get there. We pray our Heavenly Father that this would be such a powerful encounter with You that we will be changed for eternity. Please Heavenly Father now we ask that You would do a mighty work here in our midst; we pray this in Jesus name, Amen.

It was an amazing day; by all accounts it was an amazing day. Peter and John were just going to pray at the temple. It was about the ninth hour, three in the afternoon that's the time that they had the evening sacrifices. They were walking past the Beautiful Gate as it was called, and there sat a man who had been there for years, and years and years. He was carried there every day by his family, he was over 40 yrs. old, he was a cripple from birth, he called out to the people, he was a part of the scenery there, he was a part of the noise, so much a part probably people even never saw him anymore, and didn't even hear him. But Peter and John are on their way to the temple. And on the way there they stop, they see the man, he gets excited. Peter approaches the man, and he says: "look, silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I am going to give it to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And he reaches down, pulls the man up, the man's ankles and feet are made sound, and the guy is so excited he goes walking, and leaping and praising God.

What an amazing experience. It was a miracle. And today we are going to continue our study about that story, and we are going to call it "A greater miracle." Let's continue in Acts chapter 3. Please turn there in your Bibles. We are going to read verses 11-16. I have the New King James Version, and after we've read that, then we will double back and see what we can learn. Acts 3 verse 11: "Now, as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

Now it is my purpose week after week when I stand here to be a teacher. I want to help you to understand the Word of God. I want you to learn how to read the Word of God. I believe that the power to live a Christian life is found in the Word of God. And as you engage God through His word, He will strengthen your experience. And so we are going to spend time looking at the Word of God. And when you look at the Word of God, when you read it, you want to look for nuances, you want to look for repetition, you want to look for phrases, you just kind of read carefully through it and see, well why would he use that word, and so forth, and so on. There is a word that is used here, we referred to it last week, and we are going to study it in a little more detail this week. It's found in chapter 3, verse 10 and in chapter 3, verse 11. It says in verse 10: "Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him." Verse 11: "Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's greatly amazed."

The word amazed is used twice. Now I want to show you where it is used by Luke in his gospel. Please turn to Luke, chapter 5. Luke as you know is the author of the book of Acts; he is also the author of the Gospel of Luke. Luke chapter 5, verses 25 and 26 we will see that word used here. It says: "Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been laying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!" They glorified God, they were filled with fear, they were amazed at what God had done.

Well let's just rehearse a little bit about what God had done here. Now if you are familiar with your Bible, you will realize that chapter 5 beginning with verse 16 and on is a story of a man who is paralyzed. And he has friends who bring him to the house where Jesus is preaching. They can't get in because of the crowd, so they remove the roof, and they lower the man through the roof, right into the presence of Jesus. And for us, the story begins in verse 20. It says: "When He saw their faith, Jesus said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'?" "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins," He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Well immediately, he rose up and the others were all amazed. They are all amazed.

Now the word "amazed" in the Greek, you will recognize, we have an English word from there. The root of an English word comes from this Greek word, ekstasis. What English word does that sound like? Ecstasy! In the Greek it means a displacement of the mind, it means bewilderment, it is beyond reason, you can not explain it, and it kind of means that as well, ecstasy, it's beyond the norm. This people are amazed. They are amazed here in the story of the paralytic that is healed, they are amazed in the story of the man who was a cripple from birth, they are amazed. There is something that God has done, this is a God

thing. It's not a man thing, God did it, they know God did it; they are amazed in the presence of God. It is beyond reason. They are in bewilderment, they can not explain it.

Now let's go back to Luke's account in Acts please. Chapter 3 of Acts beginning with verse 12; these people are amazed, and they are going to come to Peter, and Peter is going to ask two questions. Verse 12: "So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: 'Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?'" Why are you looking at us like this? Why are you surprised? Why are you surprised and wondering and especially, why do you stare at us, as if by our own power or godliness this man was made well?

Well, it was a great miracle. And the people were amazed. So Peter is going to take advantage of the situation, he is going to preach a sermon. The sermon will go from verse 13, all the way down to verse 26. Now, here is a little clue in reading the Bible. The Bible was not written for you to read quietly. The Bible was written to a culture that was not a literary culture like ours is. The Bible was written to be read a loud to people who would listen. So if you really want to catch the Scriptures, read them out loud. You will sense more then by just reading it out quietly. It is written in the form of speech. It is good writing, but it is written as a speech, it is written to be read out loud. So when I take this passage, verse 13 -26 it is fantastic sermon of Peter, I am trying to think, all right, how do I look this in? What the other parts we can preach about, do we take the thing in haul? So I read it, read it, read it, read it, out loud, different versions, I probably read this passage close to 50 times. I rewrote it in easy English, which is my version, and I rewrote it, trying to understand it, and trying to get a handle on it, and so then I said: 'here is the test,' I said, 'Karen, I am going to read this to you.' So I read it out loud to her, and about half way through the sermon, I could tell, half way through what Peter writes is the sermon here, I could tell her eyes were glassing over. And I realize too much information; can't get it all in. So we will get all of the sermon at some point, but we are going to take just a section of it here today. So that you have something you can handle. Something that you can say, "ah, I got one thing; I can hold on to that, I'll hold on to that through this coming week."

So Peter begins the sermon. Verse 13: "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Son Jesus," now if you are like me, word like glorified, I am really not sure what that means. So, I look it up. I did some studying, I looked around, looked in different versions of the Bible. Here is what I found out. God honored his Servant, Jesus Christ. I can handle that. I get that. He honored Jesus Christ. God honored His Son. Peter says: "...whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go." Peter is saying, look you delivered up and denied the One whom God was honoring. You disowned the One whom God was honoring, "But you denied the Holy One" verse 14, "you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you," so you see, a murderer on one side, the Holy One and the Just One, and he goes on to say, "and you even killed the Prince of Life."

So in essence, we can rewrite this, that you chose a taker of life, and killed the Giver of life, then he goes on, “But God raised Him from the dead, and we are witnesses to that.” Wow! Then verse 16: “And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.”

Well, I just had to wrestle with that. That’s just a mouth full. It just doesn’t grab me. So I’ve rewritten it for you, so I can understand it. Here is how it goes. By faith in the name of Jesus this man was made whole. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes thorough Him that has made this man completely well. Now I can manage that. I understand that. The man was made completely well by the name of Jesus and through faith in that Name. It was a great miracle. There is no question that the healing of this man was a great miracle. It got everyone’s attention. They were out of their minds, they were beyond reason, they were experiencing “extasas” and they came together.

Now brothers and sisters, let’s be honest. We have prayed here for people to be healed, and we’ve seen people healed. You have had in your family people healed when you’ve prayed for them. You have seen in other settings, in other churches, people being healed. That is a great miracle. Would anybody agree with me? Amen! It is great miracle. But I am telling you right now, this guy who was healed, died later. He’s been dead a long time. We had a miracle healing in my wife’s family with her father, but he ultimately died. And anyone of us who have been miraculously healed, should Jesus detain or stay away long enough, we all will be dead too. So why is that such a great miracle? Why does God even do it? Why does He heal us so we can live a few more years, be they good or bad?

Well I think the reason is simple. He wants to teach us about a greater miracle. The greater miracle is this: that the God who rules the heavens, who created the earth, who formed man on the dust of the ground, knows every cell in our body, and He can heal us here; and that’s a little miracle to show us of the greater miracle when resurrection morning comes, and we are made whole for eternity.

But I want to talk to you about a different miracle then that. A greater miracle in this vary story. Peter and John go to this man who’s been laying for over 40 years; they heal the guy, and man, what a story! What an amazing experience, the people are out of their minds! But that’s not a greater miracle. The greater miracle in this story is Peter himself. Let’s look at that, let’s just look at a few texts regarding Peter. Please turn to Matthew, chapter 16. Fascinating story, Matthew 16 beginning with verse 13: “When Jesus came into the region to Caesarea Philippi,” now if you have a Bible that has a map in the back, Caesarea Philippi is way up north; north of the Sea of Galilee. Sometimes in the Bible it’s written as “Panias.” Panias is where the Pantheon of Greek gods were. They had all the statues carved right in the stone there, and you can go there today and see them there.

Jesus took his disciples to the place of worship for the Greek gods, in Panias, Caesarea Philippi. And while He is there, He asked a question. And He says: “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” “So they said” verse 14, “Some say John the Baptist, some

Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Jesus said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Here is Peter; “Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Now notice what Jesus says. Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”

Jesus is excited, and He says: “Peter, you got it boy, you heard my Father speaking to you, and you have reflected correctly back what my Father impressed upon you. You got it! Peter, you are the man.” That’s what He is saying. Now, the same day, probably within an hour, you have another experience at the same place. Look at verse 21. “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside.” Now, how do you take somebody aside? I’ll tell you how it works. A person, who thinks they have authority over another person, takes that person aside. In other words, if I was a chief executive officer of some corporation, and people worked for me, and I had an issue, I could take them aside, but nobody is taking me aside. Not in that company.

Peter presents himself as an authority over Christ. He takes Him aside, he says: “God let me help you out here.” Then it goes on, it’s even more fascinating, verse 22: “Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him! Far be it from You Lord; this shall not happen to You!” Peter is taking God to the woodshed. He takes Him aside and he rebukes Him. Finger in the face, “That’s not going to happen to You, I don’t want to ever hear that around here again, that’s just not going to happen,” he is telling God, what for? Now, Jesus has a message for Peter, verse 23: “Get behind Me Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” Poor Peter! I mean just a minute ago, “Peter, you blessed by God, you have heard God, you are speaking God’s words, Peter, you are the Devil.” Now what’s wrong with Peter? I know what you are thinking. He is a sanguine, that’s his problem. Don’t get down on sanguines. I’ll tell you what his problem is. He was born a human being. And that’s your problem too, and that’s my problem. We were born human beings. And up and down, successful, and failure, that’s the experience.

And you know the story of Peter. Jesus says, you are going to deny Me, and Peter says vehemently, they might all deny You, but I am not going to deny You. In essence he is saying, “Jesus You are a liar.” They might, but I won’t. If I have to die for You, I’ll die for You. Peter! Resurrection morning, Jesus has a special message. He says to Mary, “Mary, go tell my disciples and Peter, that I’ve risen from the dead.” Later, on the shore, they’ll recognize Jesus throughout their fishing, and Peter dives in and swims ashore. Jesus will say, “Peter do you love me?” Yes, “do you love me?” yes, “do you love me,” yes, “feed my sheep.” Day of Pentecost, Holy Spirit poured out, Peter is the one, he speaks for the church, he speaks on behalf of God. Three thousand people accept Jesus Christ as their Savior that day. They are baptized and join the church.

Peter, as we continue the story of this man being healed, Peter will be the one who will stand in front of the Sanhedrin council. It was a servant woman; just a few weeks before

this, who said “aren’t you one of them” no don’t bother me. “Aren’t’ you one of them,” no, don’t bother me. “I thought I saw you with Him.” Leave me alone woman, and he begins to curse, and he doesn’t just use bad language, he curses Jesus!

But now, empowered by God, he is willing to stand in front of Sanhedrin council and testify for God. He is imprisoned, he is miraculously delivered, and he stands before that council again. Peter will be the first one to go the Gentiles in the story of Cornelius. And in Acts 15 when they all gathered together to debate theology, and whether Paul is doing the right thing with Gentiles, it will be Peter who stands up and gives the story of Cornelius, and he says: “Look, the preaching that saves is salvation by grace and faith in Jesus Christ, grace alone!” It is Peter! That’s a greater miracle.

Now, let me ask you something. Don’t you wish the Christian life could be like Peter? I mean really; all right, you get ding up a little bit in the beginning, but you learn a few things, and you kind of arrive, and when you hit that point, you just click it on cruise control and you make it from here right to heaven. You know Peter, success, success, success, but that’s not how his life really went. Turn to Galatians chapter 2. Paul wrote a letter to the Galatians, it’s actually a region of Galatia, and there are number of churches there. The church was in a crises, so bad of a crises, they were about to loose all the gains that he had made. And in Galatians chapter 2, verse 11 Paul blames Peter for the problem. Verse 11 it says: “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, Peter would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.” The Jewish Christians!

So here is the situation; Peter is in there helping everybody, helping the Gentiles grow and all this, and then some guys come down from General Conference, and they say: “hey look, Jews aren’t suppose to be with Gentiles.” And so at the fellowship meals of church, what used to be a nice community, a gathering, now you had Jews on one side and you had Gentiles on the other, and Peter was involved. Verse 13 it says: “And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, ‘If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jew, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?’” Paul is saying, “Peter, you accepted Christ by faith, and you know that’s the way to salvation, and now, you are telling these people who have done that that they have to become what you left. Peter, you are to be blamed.”

Peter had a problem, and do you know what his problem was? He was born human. Peter was born human. Peter spoke for God, Peter worked for the Devil. That’s what it is to be a human in this life that we live. The greater miracle is found in the Gospel that is in this story. I am going to show that to you. By the way, John 3:16 what does it say? “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not parish, but have everlasting life.” They are never going to perish; they will have an everlasting life. Do you know the gospel verse of Acts? John 3:16, let’s look at Acts 3:16. Here is what I want you to leave with here today. Acts 3:16; Acts 3:16 says

about Jesus: “And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given this guy this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.” Why do you stare at us, as if through our own power or godliness we made the man walk? It is Jesus, and faith in that Man’s name. Brothers and sisters it was true then, it is true now, in the walk with God and what has to take place; it is never, never, never, our own power, it is never, never, never our own godliness, we don’t have power, we don’t have godliness, we were born human. It is a miracle. It is beyond reason, that’s why it is called “Amazing Grace!” It is a gift from God to us through Jesus Christ. It is a gift! We are paralyzed in sin; we can’t even get ourselves to God sometimes. So friends, carry us, and the Lord doesn’t even deal with that man physically, He says: “Your sins are forgiven, now get up and walk.”

What did that man ever do? He didn’t do anything, but obeyed the Lord, and believed by faith. That’s all! He got up and he walked, it is beyond reason. It is extasas! It’s extasas! Now I don’t know where are you at right now? But I know this, you were born human. So I have a good idea what your life is like. And I know the struggles, and I know the doubts, and I know what it’s like to try to get from here to heaven, I am with you, I am a pilgrim, a fellow journeyer with you. And what we have got to realize is brothers and sisters, we have no power, we have no godliness, we got nothing to offer. And the greater miracle is Jesus offers it all. And He says, “Your sins be forgiven.”

Now, Brandon, can I use you for a minute? Would you sit over here? You’ll let you Daddy go, okay. Brandon is going to be our crippled man for a minute. Now when you read the story carefully, you will note this: Peter goes up to the man, takes him by the hand, and says: “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” What does Peter do next? Pulls him up! Now, let’s say Brandon is that man. At what point does Brandon feel whole when he is up. By faith, he didn’t resist, and when he allowed another, to pull him up, he was made whole. Thank you Brandon!

There is One, He is walking among us right now, His hand is out. He wants you to be made completely whole and well spiritually. He wants to lift you up, He wants you to know you are at one with God; you have peace with God. It doesn’t matter how you feel right now, in fact, it doesn’t even matter how bad of a sinner you’ve been. You are a bad sinner, right? That’s us! That’s being born human. But today, the greater miracle is that in Christ, through the power in His name, you and I can be made whole. And I am asking is there any one here who would like to say: “God, I am taking Your hand; I want to be made whole.” If you want to say that to the Lord, just stand right were you are at.

Father in heaven, thank you for the greater miracle of what You can do for us. Lord, we recognize we have no power, we have no godliness, we’ve got nothing to offer, but thank you that is Your name, and in the power of Jesus that we are made whole. And we thank You in Jesus name, Amen.