

Miracles – When Heaven Touches Earth
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Today we are beginning a new sermon series entitled Miracles – When Heaven Touches Earth. If that phrase sounds familiar it's because our church vision is "Touching Heaven ~ Changing Earth." There are many aspects to this. For instance –

We expect to touch heaven in our worship services. To us this means we do not just sing songs or hear a message, but we expect to meet with God – to experience His manifest presence. That means we expect supernatural things to happen that can only be attributed to God. Our goal when we touch heaven in that way is found in 1 Cor. 14:25 – unbelievers *will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"*

So many people tell us today that if you want to grow a church, you must tone it down, dumb it down, shorten it down, water it down... As a result, some churches are moving away from radical praise and allowing the gifts of the Spirit to move in their services. But this is the exact opposite of what 1 Corinthians teaches us!

The Bible teaches that when the Holy Spirit has the freedom to move in a church service – He will draw people to Himself! That's why we sometimes linger in worship. That's why we honor spiritual gifts like prophecy and tongues! Because when we touch heaven – heaven changes earth!

We get this vision from the Lord's prayer where Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:9-10

This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Jesus taught us to pray that God's kingdom would come on earth as it is in heaven – that His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. When this happens – miracles happen.

1- Miracles happen when heaven touches earth.

By the way – miracles are not really miraculous to God. They are simply Him being who He is and doing what He does. God is naturally supernatural.

Our vision for touching heaven – changing earth can really be seen in Matthew 17:1-2 when

Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

In this passage the glory of the Lord was manifest to the disciples and they heard the voice of the Father. In short – they touched heaven.

Peter wanted to build tabernacles and stay there but Jesus refused to stay up on the mountaintop. Instead, they came down into the valley where there were immediately faced with a desperate father who asked Jesus to heal his demon-possessed son. And Jesus miraculously set the boy free. That's because miracles happen when heaven touches earth!

What I want you to see is that the disciples touched heaven, but they had to come down from the mountain to change earth. Many Christians want to stay on the mountain top with Jesus. But Jesus doesn't stay on the mountain top. He went down the mountain to minister to other people.

The disciples went from the mountaintop where they experienced the presence of God down into the valley where they experienced the presence of demons. They went from the mountaintop where they were face to face with God down into the valley where they were face to face with Satan.

And our vision is to do the same thing at Grace Fellowship Church. We want to go up the mountain to touch heaven by spending time in God's presence where we experience God's glory and hear His voice. But we also want to come back down the mountain to change earth by meeting the needs of people. We want to see people saved, healed, set free and restored.

We are ministered to on the mountaintop so we can come down the mountain to minister to broken people.

We want to experience God's power and we want to minister to others with God's power. That's how we touch heaven and change earth.

It won't happen if all we do is worship, but never witness.
 It won't happen if all we do is witness, but never worship.
 Our vision is to touch heaven AND change earth!
 Miracles happen when heaven touches earth!

Think about it like this: When you are driving a car you have to be very careful at intersections. Why? So you don't collide with another vehicle.

God's intersection is very different!
 As you go through life – God wants your need to collide with His power! The intersection of your need and God's power is where miracles happen.

When we live life expecting miracles – our lives are characterized by words like: surprising, amazing, unusual, supernatural and unreal. Many people lower their expectations of God so that they don't have to deal with disappointment. But I'm encouraging you to raise the bar! Believe big! Pray big prayers. Believe for heaven to touch earth with God's miraculous power.

I want to spend some time defining what a miracle is. The dictionary defines a miracle as an event that appears to be contrary to the laws of nature and is regarded as an act of God; a marvelous event manifesting the supernatural power of God.

A miracle is something beyond the natural; it's supernatural.
 A miracle is something beyond the ordinary; it's extraordinary.
 A miracle is something beyond the possible; it's impossible – apart from God.

Jesus said it this way in Mark 10:27

With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.

2- Miracles do not occur in the realm of the possible.

Something must be impossible for us before it becomes a miracle. For instance – when the doctor says, “There's nothing more I can do,” that's grounds for a miracle.

When your bills are due and your bank account says, “I've got nothing for you,” that's grounds for a miracle.

When your spouse says, “I don't love you anymore – I'm leaving,” that's grounds for a miracle.

When there are issues and addictions and strongholds in our lives that we try to overcome but we keep failing – that's grounds for a miracle.

Do you get what I'm saying today? As long as we're living in the realm of the possible – we don't see miracles. Miracles deal with things that are impossible... for us.

For instance - as a church – we need a miracle. We need land and a building because we're running out of space. That will require millions of dollars. Now in the natural – that looks impossible to us. This is going to take the supernatural power and provision of God.

So as you listen today – keep these two things in mind – the miracle you need in your family and the miracle we need as a church family.

I found it interesting as I studied about miracles that there are hundreds of miracles in the Bible starting with God creating the heavens and the earth by speaking His word. But you don't find the word miracle in the Bible that much. Instead you see words like signs, wonders and mighty works.

In the New Testament there are 4 main Greek words used to identify something as a miracle.

The Greek word DUNAMIS means power – miraculous power – supernatural power that cannot be produced by natural sources. This is the word used in Acts 10:38

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, who went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him.

Miracles show what Jesus did and still does!

The Greek word ERGON means a mighty work. This is the word used in John 5:36 when Jesus said

The very works that I do — bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

Notice that miracles bear witness to who Jesus is.

The word TERAS speaks of unusual manifestations that cause people to be astonished. This happened in Acts 2:43

Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

The word SEMEION means to give a sign as evidence of divine authority. It's interesting that 3 of these 4 words were used in one verse as Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:22 says

Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know.

The New Living Translation says

People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through Him, as you well know.

Miracles, signs and wonders were all done by Jesus in the power of the Spirit. You might say – but that was Jesus. True – but Acts 6:8 says

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.

The same three words are used to show that people who are full of the Holy Spirit can be used of God to do miracles, signs and wonders.

Some people misquote Jesus when they say we should not seek to operate in miracles, signs or wonders. In Matthew 6:4 Jesus said

A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

That causes some people to say "Don't seek signs or miracles." But Matthew 6:1 says

Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven.

So – when Jesus said an evil generation seeks signs – He was speaking to skeptical unbelievers who refused to believe unless He performed a miracle. Then Jesus said the only sign they would get was the sign of Jonah - which he explained in Matthew 12:40

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

In other words – the only sign people need to see in order to believe in Jesus is His death, burial and resurrection.

The Bible does not say we should never seek miracles. In fact, 1 Corinthians 12:31 tells us to *...earnestly desire and zealously cultivate the greatest and best gifts*. This is speaking of the gifts of the Spirit and one of those listed in 1 Corinthians 12:10 is *the working of miracles*.

We'll talk more about that in a later sermon, but for today I want you to understand that signs have a purpose. They are not an end in themselves.

3- Signs point to a greater reality

For example - when we exit a building we don't go out through the exit sign. That sign is pointing the way to the exit.

When we need to put out a fire, we don't beat it out with the sign pointing to the fire hose. We follow the sign to the hose! The sign in real – but it is pointing to a greater reality!

Signs on a road confirm we are on the right road. Without the signs we have no way of knowing if we are in the right place headed in the right direction. Signs are

not the ultimate goal – they point the way to the ultimate goal – which is relationship with God!

If you are driving to a city like Los Angeles and you get to the outskirts of the city and you see a sign that says, “Welcome to Los Angeles” – you don’t stop there and camp at the sign for a week and then go home without having ever experiencing the city! You don’t go home and the only pictures you have are of the “Welcome to Los Angeles” sign. You don’t tell stories about the sign – how big and bright and beautiful it was.

The sign is there to point you to a greater reality – which is the city itself. The sign is not inviting you just to experience the sign – but to experience the city. If you don’t go past the sign and get into the city – you missed the point of the sign.

If you go to the Hollywood sign and hang out there – what happens when people ask, “How was Hollywood?” You don’t know because you never experienced it. You only experienced the sign.

Are you getting my point today? Signs and wonders do not exist for themselves! They exist to point us to the greater reality – which is the Lord!

Miraculous healing points us to the Healer!
 Miraculous deliverance points us to the Deliverer!
 Miraculous provision points us to the Provider!
 All signs and wonders point to a higher reality and have a meaning behind them.

Every time God reveals His presence in miraculous ways (like the cloud on the mountain in Exodus), the message really was an invitation into RELATIONSHIP with Him. That’s why we don’t follow signs – signs follow us! Mark 16:17-18 says

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

There are many categories of miracles in the Bible:

Miracles of Healing

Miracles of Provision – like when God provided manna and water to the children of Israel as they traveled to the Promised Land or when Jesus turned water into wine

Miracles of Protection – like when God protected Daniel in the lion’s den or Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace

Miracles of Increase – like when Jesus fed 5,000 people with just a few fish and loaves of bread

Miraculous signs – like a burning bush that is not consumed

Miracles of Resurrection – where God brings dead people back to life

Miracles of Victory – like when the walls of Jericho fell

Miracles over Nature – like when God sent a star to guide the wise men to Jesus or when Jesus calmed a storm by saying “Peace be still.”

Miracles of Transportation – like when Jesus walked on water or Elijah was caught up to heaven in a chariot of fire

Miracles of Communication – like when God made a donkey speak or like the gift or prophecy or speaking in tongues.

Miracles are usually God responding to a problem someone has. Problems are an opportunity for the Creator to get creative.

You might think your problems are too big – even for God. But don’t forget Luke 18:27

What is impossible with men is possible with God.

The principle of the impossible says that impossible situations are the time to tap into God’s creative power for miracles! A miracle is simply an encounter with the creative will of God. Miracles are only difficult when we think we have to have power. Actually, we are the vessels that God is waiting to pour power through. Miracles will happen when we believe they are possible because with God, ALL things are possible!

You may think there’s nothing for God to work with in your life, but did you know that God created everything “ex nihilo” which means “out of nothing.” God is the only one who creates out of absolutely nothing.

Many people think we’ve figured everything out with all of our scientific achievements – science is even cloning now – but science will never be able to create like God – ex nihilo – out of nothing.

I heard about a scientist who challenged God saying, “Science can now do everything you can do including making life, I challenge you to a man making contest.”

God said “You’re on, you go first.”

The scientist reached down and picked up a handful of dirt to which God said
“Oh no – I made that. First you have to make your own dirt.”

Game over! You see what man calls creating is taking something and making it
into something else. But God creates out of nothing.

Everything that is once was not. But it existed in the mind of God and He spoke
it into creation.

So - God can create something out of nothing in your life.
God can create something out of nothing in your family.
God can create something out of nothing in your finances.
God can create something out of nothing in your business.

Choose to have faith in God and when you touch Heaven – watch Him change
your world by turning your nothing into something!