



Week 5 – God’s Power Displayed

“You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Through the Bible, we read how God acted and intervened in the life of his chosen people. In Ps 145:3-11, the Psalmist offers praise to God for his greatness. He encourages us to keep telling the stories of God’s mighty acts from one generation to the next. We are to celebrate God’s abundant goodness, righteousness, grace, compassion and love. We (the saints) are to “tell of the glory of (his) kingdom and speak of (his) might, so that all (people) may know of (his) mighty acts and the glorious splendor of (his) kingdom (for his) kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and (his) dominion endures through all generations.”

PRAY: thanking God for his goodness – and that we might faithfully tell of the glory of God and his mighty acts.

ICEBREAKER – What are some ways that God has shown his love and goodness to you/ your family? Think of an incident where - in the midst of a hard or desperate situation - God’s grace and love was very evident to you.

READ Acts 3:1-26

As Peter and John entered the temple for Jewish afternoon prayers, they inevitably had to pass people with various forms of deformity who were asking for money at the temple gate. No doubt, this guy (we’ll call him Joe) was a familiar sight to them – and his constant requests for cash would have strained their purse strings. Joe had lived with immobility since birth and was dependent on other people for his survival, mobility and sustenance. If he couldn’t stand, let alone move about, he probably couldn’t ever hold down a job. Joe knew nothing of orthopaedic surgery and rehabilitation, so his expectations for any quality of life were probably low – and his life expectancy was likely short. The best he could hope for was some sort of financial handout.

As Australians, we have expectations of access to health care, pain relief and (to a greater or lesser extent), to be healed from or get medication for whatever physical, emotional or mental health issues we may be dealing with. At the same time, people in countries immediately bordering Australia, are in a similar situation to ‘Joe’ and lack basic health care. (e.g. Women in PNG have a 20% lifetime risk of dying due to pregnancy/ childbirth).

- How much do you rely on our health care system for resolution of issues? Have you (or someone close) been in a situation where a health issue was seemingly untreatable and the only option was prayer?

“I am the LORD, who heals you.” (Ex 15:26); “Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,” (Ps 103:2-4); “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” (Ps 147:3) In the Old Testament, God is depicted not only as our rescuer, saviour and redeemer, but also the God who acts out of his love and compassion to heal his people: our diseases, our broken hearts, our shattered dreams and our wounds.

- Many things blight our sense of wellbeing. What situations do you hope and pray that God will tend and heal? Can you imagine God swabbing, disinfecting, stitching and applying a dressing to that wound?

Jeremiah wrote to God’s people in exile, reminding them that God ultimately had “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”. In the future, they would seek God and pray and God would listen to them. (Jer 29:11-13) He said they would wait a lifetime (literally, 70 years) to realise this promise.

- How hard is it to hang on to hope (and faith) – that God will heal someone – when it seems that God won’t heal them quickly or in this lifetime? How hard is it to “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him ... Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him”. (Ps 37:5-7). Do unanswered prayers – particularly regarding health issues – affect how you view God and his character (eg his goodness and kindness)?

- How does your physical wellbeing (or that of someone close to you) impact your (or their) hopes for the future? How does physical wellbeing impact your (and/ or their) view of God?

In Acts 3, Peter and John told Joe that they were cash-strapped. With a “Sorry, mate ...”, they could have walked straight past. But, they’d seen Jesus heal many lame people (Matt 11:4-5), including the man at the pool of Bethesda in John 5 and the paralysed man put through the roof (Mark 2, Luke 5). Peter and John offered Joe healing in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6). Paul replicated this miracle in Acts 14:8-10, with a lame man in Lystra.

- What do we learn from Acts 3:4 & 7, about Peter and John’s pastoral method in how they engaged Joe?
- How did the man respond? (Acts 3:8-9) How did Isaiah anticipate this response in Is 35:5-6?

Jesus had “cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind” (Luke 7:21) and was consequently regarded as “a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.” (Lk 24:19) Jesus’ acts were a demonstration of both God’s power (*dynamis*) and authority (*exousia*). In Luke 5, “the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick” (v17) and Jesus’ healing of the paralysed man was given as a proof: “that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”. (v24)

When we read through Acts, we come across the words “signs” (10x), “miracles” (3x) and “wonders” (10x). The apostles declared that God’s power had raised Jesus to life. Miracles provided credibility to those who spoke, as their acts displayed God’s power. Miracles authenticated the gospel message, of God-in-flesh, transforming lives.

- Miracles showed Jesus as approved/ endorsed by God, as he used divine authority and power (Acts 2:22)
- Jesus said that his work testified that he was sent by God (John 5:36)
- Jesus’ miracles showed he was the promised one/ the messiah - in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy (Is 61:1-9, Luke 4:18-21; Luke 7:20-22)
- The kingdom of God was breaking-in, including Jesus confronting the powers of evil (Mk 1:15, 24, 34)
- Paul cited signs, wonders and miracles as evidence of his authenticity as an apostle (2 Cor 12:10-13)
- God authenticates the gospel and the apostle’s testimony by signs, wonders and miracles. (Heb 2:4)

This first miracle in Acts shouts out: remember Jesus’ healing of the paralytic! As the disciples invoked the name of Jesus of Nazareth, we’re reminded: Jesus had God’s authority and that power and authority is still at work! Jesus had told them that “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.” (Acts 1:8) The early apostles understood the role of miracles in giving credence to their message, but also recognized the power of God and authority of Jesus’ name, over all forms of brokenness in a sin-marred world. Healing pre-empts our ultimate resurrection, of bodies freed from effects of sin. (1 Cor 15; 2 Cor 4:14)

REFLECT & SHARE: Miraculous acts, including healing, give us a glimpse of the power of God in-breaking into our world and restoring a broken creation. Reflect on the following verses from Rev 21:3-4 and the hope of a time when the kingdom of God will be fully realized, when God comes to “restore everything”. (Acts 3:21)

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

- How do you respond to these verses?
- Do you long for and pray for healing of those around you: spiritually, physically, emotionally, mentally, relationally, financially ...? And for people around you to experience – and acknowledge - the goodness of God in their lives?

PRAY: “Our Father ... your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth – as it is in heaven”. Pray for God’s presence to be with all those in your group and each family represented. Ask in Jesus’ name that God’s power break in and touch and transform each form of brokenness – including sickness, sin, grief and loss, exhaustion, financial stress, ... and pray that God will ultimately and always be glorified through all situations.