

**“Our God Heals”  
 (How God Works In Us And Through Us)  
 Acts 8:4-8 & Acts 9:32-43  
 by Pastor David Nygard  
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Preached at Messiah Lutheran, Joliet Illinois

All Bible verses are taken from the New International Version (NIV)

**Acts 8:4-8** <sup>4</sup> Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. <sup>5</sup> Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. <sup>6</sup> When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. <sup>7</sup> For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. <sup>8</sup> So there was great joy in that city.

**Acts 9:32-43** <sup>32</sup> As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda. <sup>33</sup> There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. <sup>34</sup> “Aeneas,” Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up. <sup>35</sup> All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. <sup>36</sup> In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. <sup>37</sup> About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. <sup>38</sup> Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, “Please come at once!” <sup>39</sup> Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. <sup>40</sup> Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. <sup>42</sup> This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup> Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

Grace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. Good morning! It's good to be in church. We miss you when you're gone. Did you know “Prayer can move mountains”. And God can move us.

If you feel trapped by some problem, or troubled by a relationship or overcome by loneliness, guess what? God is in the moving business. Open your heart. Let God be God. He is a mover and a shaker.

Karen and I just got back from Hawaii. I still have sand in my shoes. We were on the beach in Maui. I've been there before. I knew what to expect. You can see whales from the beach. but they are far away, just dark specks frolicking in the distance. This time was different. About 75 yards from shore, I saw the entire body of a whale breach the water and fly through the air. I think that the whale winked at me. It was exciting and thrilling. It felt supernatural. When people ask about our trip, that's the first thing that I mention; that whale changed everything.

When we read the Book of Acts that's how the first Christians felt about Jesus. They knew what to expect from religion. And they didn't expect much. They knew what to expect from today. Each day was like the day before ...until they heard how God's Son died for our sins and rose from the grave. For everyone who heard his promises and invited Jesus to live in their hearts, it was exciting and thrilling. It felt supernatural. They couldn't wait to tell everyone about him. Why? Jesus changed everything. Jesus takes a personal interest in your life and mine.

Pastor Kurt has been preaching from the Book of Acts; sharing the stories of the first Christians. People said of them that they changed the world. They turned it upside down. I wish that something could change our world. We have faith today because those first believers shared their faith with other people, who kept sharing their faith until the good news came to you and me. Now it's our turn to live and share our faith.

**My sermon is called "Our God Heals". How God works in us and through us.**

The very last thing that Jesus told his disciples before he rose into heaven was **"Go out into the world and preach, teach and baptize in my name."** (Mathew 28:19) The disciples thought "What a nice idea". But no one did it. They loved living in Jerusalem. It was home and comfortable. Why leave it?

God responded in this way. He sent persecution. The Jews and the Romans made it unsafe to be a Christian in Jerusalem. So, Christians left home. Wherever they went, they shared the good news about Jesus. The Book of Acts tells their story. It is very readable.

We read in **Acts 8:4-7 "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria**

**and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip ...they all paid close attention to what he said.... and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.”** Along with the promise of salvation God often sent healing. The same is true today.

**Here are three different ways that God heals people today.**

**1) God heals us through the words that we say and that we hear.** We read in **Acts 9:32-34** “**As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord’s people who lived in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. ‘Aeneas,’ Peter said to him, ‘Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.’ Immediately Aeneas got up.”**

Aeneas didn’t feel any different, until he heard Peter say “**Jesus Christ heals you. Get up.**” Hearing the words, believing the promise, made it so.

Sometimes we all feel sick with guilt or regret. Our private prayers of confession feel inadequate. We can’t shake our dark feelings. Then we come to church and hear the pastor say, “As a minister and according to God’s Word, I tell you, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’” Somehow hearing the words, believing the promise, makes it so.

Maybe you’ve been lonely, addicted or depressed. And then you heard someone say, “I love you.” “I’m here for you.” “Come, sit with me in church.” “God isn’t done with you yet.” Somehow hearing the words, believing the promise, makes it so. What healing words do your loved ones need to hear from you? Maybe they need to hear you say, “I was wrong. Please forgive me” or “I pray for you every night.”

In the first church where I was a pastor, the sanctuary was very long. Standing up front I could barely see the people in the back. But I always saw a little old man, wrinkled and alone, come in late and then leave before the service was done. He never took Communion.

Finally, I asked him, “Why don’t you ever take Communion?” He said “I haven’t lived a very good life. I’ve made bad choices. I don’t deserve to receive the Lord’s Supper.” I said “Wait a minute. No one deserves the Lord’s Supper. We all commit sin and make mistakes. Communion is for people who hunger for God and need a second chance. It’s a gift.” He said “Really? Really?”

From that day on he was still wrinkled and old. But he was the first one in church, the first one in the Communion line, and the last one to go home. He heard healing words, and believing the promise, made it so.

**2) God heals us through honest heartfelt prayer.** It might be our prayers or the prayers of someone else. We read in **Acts 9:36-41**, “...there was a disciple named Tabitha... she was always doing good and helping the poor. ...she became sick and died... they sent two men to (Peter)... “Please come at once!” When Peter arrived, he was taken upstairs to the room... then (Peter) got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive.” Tabitha, once thought dead was alive. God was at work.

God is at work every time we take a medicine and we get well. Who gave the researchers the wisdom to discover that medicine? Who gave the doctors the training to prescribe that cure? The answer is God.

God is at work whenever our bodies fight off a fever or recover from sickness. God is at work when a friend stops by the hospital and prays with us. Many children are born with problems. But it is God who helps them run in the Special Olympics or get an education or bless our lives.

**But there is no doubt that God heals us through honest heartfelt prayer.** We have a prayer chain at church where we can ask for prayers. Call in your name and thirty people are praying for you within an hour. Many have stories of healing.

Many of you met my mother, Dorothy Nygard. She came from Minnesota to visit us. She died six years ago. If she was with us, she could tell this story. She had back pain most of her adult life. It was always there. One day an evangelist spoke at my home church. He made Jesus seem very real.

At the end of his sermon, he offered to pray for anyone and to pray for their healing. Mom walked up to the front of the church. She told him about her back pain. He had her sit on the floor, back against the wall. He said, “Some pain comes from having two legs of different length.” Sure enough one leg was longer. Now I have worked in physical therapy as an

orderly for five years. I know that sitting on the floor, back against the wall is no way to measure a leg. But when he prayed, you could hear the heel of mom's foot scrape against the floor, as her leg grew out. She never had back pain again until her 80's and 90's. I am not making this up. Next time my brother visits here, ask him.

It never occurs to us in this modern world to pray for healing. But James said of prayer **"You do not have because you do not ask God"**. **(James 4:2)** We can't tell God what to do but we can ask him for anything. The answer is up to him.

**3) God heals us by helping to see the bigger picture.** We've all prayed for a loved one to recover and then that person dies. Maybe we blame God. Perhaps we lose our faith. It hurts. But God helps us to see the bigger picture.

Even though we pray, sometimes people die because their bodies just wear out. Sometimes people die because they have so many things wrong that healing one thing isn't enough.

As Christians the big picture tells us that Jesus has prepared a place for us in heaven. When that place is ready, he comes back to take us to be with him. Do you believe that? Karen's mother Erma is in Hospice. Thank you for your prayers. Her time is short. We want her to recover, but when she dies, I will say "Good for you Erma. The best is yet to be".

One more example. Evangelist Pat Robertson told the story of a dear Christian friend. His friend was a great volunteer and believer. When he was diagnosed with cancer, Pat and other Christians filled his hospital room. They laid hands on the man. Pat prayed "Lord, give him the healing that is best for him." Everyone went home knowing that God was at work. But then the man died. Everyone was heartbroken.

Pat told the man's widow, "I don't understand why God didn't answer our prayer." The widow said, "But God did answer our prayer. My son and my husband had not spoken together in years. When my son heard of his dad's illness, he came home. They forgave each other. These months of being together meant everything". Then Pat remembered his prayer. He said "Lord, give him the healing that is best for him." Everyone thought cancer was the problem, but the man needed to be right with his son. That's the bigger picture.

We might think that someone needs physical healing but maybe they have memories that need healing or relationships that need forgiveness or words that need to be said. Try to see the bigger picture.

Our congregation has many ways for you to be a healer. You can help feed the homeless. You can join our prayer group. You can volunteer at a Crisis Pregnancy Center. If you want to help children donate to Operation Smile, Shriners Hospital or St. Jude's Hospital. You can make a difference.

I began this sermon talking about whales. I don't know what the whale thought when he saw me. He probably told his wife "You should see the one that got away." **Our sermon ends with good news "Our God Heals"**. I preach again on March 8<sup>th</sup>. God bless you. Amen.