

I'm guessing the last time you went to the doctor you didn't sit in the waiting room expecting a miracle. Maybe you hoped the doctor would find what was wrong with you and give you the right medication to take it away. Maybe more you wished the doctor would find nothing wrong. These kind of seem like miracles, like doctors can work miracles. They give us the right combination of pills and presto, the sickness goes away. We go in for the right surgery and presto, everything is repaired. Have doctors become miracle workers that we should expect the miraculous?

A true miracle by definition is something happening beyond normal. The sun rising in the west would be a miracle. You flapping your arms and flying would be a miracle. Being raised back to life after death would be a miracle. Not ever dying in the first place would be a miracle. Not walking from birth and suddenly standing and walking that would be a miracle. These miracles we don't expect. We won't limit God, but physical healing doesn't always happen, miraculous or otherwise. Relief sometimes never comes.

The second lesson records one of the first miracles performed by the apostles of Jesus after Jesus had ascended into heaven. With Jesus gone people may have assumed the miracles would stop. But that power for the miraculous now rested with the apostles. Peter and John didn't heal just everybody though. As we read and examine this lesson we get the sense that we can...

Expect the miraculous
Physical healing may happen
Spiritual healing will happen

Unable to walk from birth, that was this man's situation. In forty years he never walked into the temple. Never ran to the end of the street. Never jumped into the air in celebration. And he never would. There was no cure for what he had. The best he could do was get carried by friends to the temple gate called Beautiful. There he could beg for money from the people passing by.

By now Jesus was gone physically, he had ascended into heaven. But his apostles were still taking the message of what he had done out to Jerusalem and the entire world. They started by going to the temple regularly. **"When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money."** Peter and John went to the temple every day. The man begged at the gate every day. They had seen each other before. The man probably knew Jesus, or at least had heard of him. But there were a lot of lame and sick people at the gates. No way to help them all. Peter and John didn't expect the miraculous; they didn't just go around healing people all day long. The miraculous didn't come from them, it came from God. Miracles had a purpose. God verified the message of those he sent in his name. On this day God revealed to Peter that this man should be healed. It was time for him to expect the miraculous.

Because visiting the doctor so often ends positively with a cure or physical healing it has become routine for people when they get sick to think first of the doctor. We expect the miraculous from someone who can't guarantee it. We sometimes sinfully forget all about God who can actually give us the miraculous. Physical healing only comes from him, but we might look to the doctor first before we ever say a prayer asking God for physical healing. And if the doctor's visit does heal us we can forget to say thanks to the most important one, God who healed us. And when a diagnosis rocks our world or an injury changes our physical abilities then we might get mad at God. Then we expect the miraculous physical healing and if it doesn't come we figure God ruined our life. Our prayers become half hearted or not at all. We lose the expectation for the miraculous thinking physical healing never will happen.

The begging cripple thought he was going to get something special. **"Peter looked straight at him...the man gave them his attention expecting to get something from them."** When our suffering is the worst, the headache is blasting, or the pain is shooting are we sinning? Are we sinning thinking solely of getting special physical healing from God? Are we sinning by forgetting God's ultimate promises to us and instead blaming him if our prayers aren't answered like we want? The man got the best when he expected something less. In our moments of worst suffering, physical deformity, or excruciating pain God's grace is still the best. God turns to us and looks straight at us in Christ. God makes all our physical problems meaningless; meaningless because in Christ we look forward to something better. We look beyond this pain filled existence to an eternity with no pain and no more physical disabilities. To get there took more than a physical miracle; it took Jesus removing our sins.

Expect the miraculous when you pray. Pray expecting God hears and will answer. Pray honestly believing that God has the power and desire to heal. But don't get discouraged if physical healing doesn't happen because God knows exactly what is best. The crippled man with Peter and John was lame since birth. His suffering gave God an opportunity to verify the apostles' message about Jesus. What happens to you may just be used by God someday to bring the message of Jesus to someone else. It may be used by God just to continue to strengthen your faith in Christ Jesus. Either way we have reason to expect the miraculous, physical healing may happen.

Certain actions will bring a response. A scream from one room will bring people running from another. A bad grade on a report will get your parents mad. Yelling 'fire' in a crowd will bring a reaction of panic and also have you end up in jail. Praying to God for physical healing will have God hearing you. It may just not have him healing you. But if you want to expect the miraculous and be guaranteed of a certain reaction get into God's Word, take the sacrament, or remember your baptism. In those you can expect the miraculous, spiritual healing will happen.

It's very likely this man had no faith in Jesus before this miracle. His concerns were in money. But Peter offered better. **"Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."** Money would eventually run out and it couldn't give the man what he really needed. The name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth could. Everything Jesus did and everything Jesus promised was carried in that name. It was the gospel being shared with that man. "Believe it," Peter was saying. Believe in Jesus and you'll have something better than physical healing, you'll be spiritually healed, you'll be saved.

Something changed in the man. Luke, the author of this book of the Bible and also a doctor, describes it vividly. **"Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God."** Sure instantly he could walk when just before he had never walked. Sure he was jumping with strong ankles where before he needed to be carried. But those changes were only physical. His walking and jumping carried him with the apostles right into the temple where he gave thanks and praised God. No longer was this man an unbeliever who didn't care about Jesus. Spiritually he was changed and that should have been expected. He knew who got the credit and it wasn't Peter and John. It was God. He should have expected the miraculous, spiritual healing did happen.

Nothing ever happens. Do you leave here sometimes with that depressed tone? We say all the same things. I'm listening for something uplifting to make me jump. I concentrate but there's nothing. I just never feel different. TV shows can make us laugh, cry, and even get angry. We're changed by TV but not church it seems. Maybe we expect something in our pockets like the man expected in his. Shouldn't we be rewarded with a financially good life for sacrificing fun and enjoyment? Maybe we should expect a miracle, something to confirm that things we're hearing are true. If that would happen that would change us and others too. But when the miraculous doesn't happen like we expect we question and doubt whether we're in the right place listening to the right word.

I guarantee the message of Jesus is changing your heart. It's putting priorities in line. It's cleansing sin from the deepest parts of your heart. It's taking away guilt from yesterday to last year. It's completely making over your life. And you can expect more. You can expect that this gospel good news about Jesus will have an ongoing effect on the rest of your week and the rest of your life. This gospel is something that assures you in the worst moments, the loneliest times that Christ Jesus is with you. It gives you confidence to face the unknown. And on top of all that it is a miracle. Maybe not visible, but inside you when faith is produced and strengthened that's God working a miracle. Your life goes from marked for eternal death to eternal life.

Going to the doctor you've come to almost expect the miraculous. How they'll get you the right pills or the right surgery to heal you maybe you'll never understand so it seems like a miracle. Shouldn't we expect the same at church? We want miracles on demand at church. Well expect the miraculous. Christ Jesus promises the miraculous happens here each week, every time you open your Bibles. Physical healing isn't promised. But spiritual healing by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth most definitely is. In Christ you can always expect the miraculous.