

## Miraculous Healing

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the risen Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, amen.

What a wild couple of weeks this has been. Our daughter, Melanie, gave us quite a scare. For about 5 days she was in critical condition brought on by pancreatitis. The normal treatment for pancreatitis is to rest your digestive system by taking nothing by mouth until the inflammation of the pancreas calms down. That treatment works for most normal people, but we all know Melanie is far from normal. On about the fourth night of watching helplessly as her whole body convulsed I prayed until I ran out of words. At that point I simply started repeating The Lord's Prayer out loud for Melanie to hear. Eventually, I fell asleep with my head and arms over the top of her bed railings. While I was asleep, the word "withdrawal" kept coming into my head. There wasn't any fanfare or angel visitations, just the one word. I don't usually even remember my dreams, but when I woke up I actually remembered that single word. When the nurse came into the room, I asked her if Melanie could be going through withdrawal from her medications. She gave me some excuse that the doctors think her constant and continual convulsions were either pain related or caused by seizures. About 3 o'clock the next afternoon, the head doctor from the ICU visited Melanie and informed me that after observing her behavior, he is convinced she was going through withdrawal symptoms from at least three of her medications that should

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never be stopped abruptly. By this time her blood pressure was down to 59/49, her heart rate was well over 140 beats per minute and her oxygen levels were so low they had to place her on a bypap machine to help her breathe, and Melanie was completely limp and comatose. After placing a nasogastric tube to begin feeding her, they also were able to begin crushing her meds and putting them into her NG Tube. Miraculously her symptoms began to subside and every day she showed great improvement. During this whole ordeal, every doctor, nurse, and care givers of every kind, flocked to Melanie's bedside. She is so tiny and lovable, she immediately became everyone's favorite. They all gave her the absolute best care they could. I tell you this story, not to gain your sympathy, but to show you the power of your prayers. I am confident your prayers stirred God's Holy Spirit to work a great sign for Melanie and for me.

In our scripture reading for today, Peter and John, who represent the early Church, also prayed for a poor man who had been lame since birth. This man must have been the village favorite because the Bible says people would bring him every day to the "Beautiful Gate" so he could beg for alms. Most people wouldn't give the time of day to a poor beggar. For most people, especially back in ancient times, life was hard and there was no "extra" money nor "extra" time to care for the sick and lame. They were cast out and left on their own. Not this man. He was brought out every day so people would see him on their way to the temple.

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Melanie used to be a greeter at Abiding Christ many years ago. She was our social butterfly. I imagine that's the way it was with this man. He was everyone's favorite person.

In our reading Peter and John looked at the man intently. Perhaps others passed by and dropped a few coins into the man's jar without so much as a sideways glance. They didn't want to see him. Oftentimes I do the exact same thing. I send money off to World Vision for example, but never take the time to see the ones I'm helping. We've been sending in our monthly donation for 15 or more years and I don't even know the names of the ones we're helping. It's like I'm trying to buy my blessing without getting too personally involved. I give without really seeing who I'm giving to. Peter not only saw this man, the Bible says he looked intently at him.

When Jesus would heal a person, he would usually say something like "Your faith has made you well." There's no faith requirement in our healing story today. Luke, who wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, never mentions the faith of the lame man. After the miraculous healing, the man entered the Temple and began jumping and dancing and praising God. His faith, at this point could not be contained. He wore it on his sleeve for everyone to see. Speaking of everyone... Everyone in or around the temple that day saw what happened and they were amazed.

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Our story in these 10 verses doesn't show us what is happening behind the scenes with the early Church. All we see here is Peter and John acting for the rest of the Church. However, right before this story of the healing of the lame man, Luke lets us behind the curtain to see what the rest of the Church was up to. On the day of Pentecost Peter's sermon converted over 3000 people to Christ. In Acts, chapter 2, verse 42 it says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Learning, eating together, receiving Holy Communion, and praying were the orders of the day for the earliest Church. Those are not bad things for the Church today to focus on. When we needed to be with Melanie, you all did exactly that! You stayed focused on Worship, and prayer. I know that without your prayers Melanie would never have recovered either at all or certainly not so quickly. I know your prayers were responsible for my dream and I know your prayers were responsible for the head doctor of Soin Medical Center's Intensive Care Unit to finally come and see Melanie. Until then, many doctors, nurses, and other care providers had examined Melanie, but they didn't really see her. When one doctor did finally see Melanie, everything changed for her. He saw through all the preconceived diagnoses and actually looked intently at her. At that point he also was given the vision of what was wrong and how to go about healing her. This my friends was the turning

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point. I am convinced without the prayers of this Church and so many others, Melanie would not have recovered.

We can't thank you enough for your faith for your trust in the power of the Holy Spirit, and for the witness you all make to the love of God and in the power of prayer. Your prayers were our food for those two weeks. They encouraged us and gave us hope when our hope was waning.

It's not often we get to be part of God's signs and wonders in such a spectacular manner. We should all stop and take notice of what just happened. While we were all celebrating the resurrection and making merry, Melanie was in the fight for her life. At least for me and my family, the celebrating quickly turned into wailing and dreading what might come next. It's hard to shift gears so abruptly. It's equally hard to hold both truths together at the same time. We live in a world where sin and death seem to go unchecked. Yet, at the exact same time we live in a world that experiences the love of God and the hope in the resurrection. We knew that no matter which way Melanie's prognosis went, she was either going to come back to all the people who love her and whom she loves, or she would wake up with Jesus and be in the very presence of love incarnate. Either way, for Melanie it was a win-win situation. Thanks be to God she came back to us and is now, one more time, a living example of God's love and mercy.

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I wish I had the power to perform miracles like Peter and John. I wish I could have been there to witness the ankles and the feet of that lame man become strong and agile. I wish I could have watched as he jumped and danced in the Temple that day. I confess that I don't feel much like a witness. I feel more like that lame man who was healed that day. Seeing the power of y'all's prayers restored and strengthened my faith and healed my soul. It's going to take some time to get the images of Melanie's suffering out of my mind. It's a kind of PTSD that I pray none of you will have to endure. Even as I say those words I have to add that all we did was watch, it was Melanie who endured and who suffered, not me or PJ. Nevertheless, when those horrible images subside, I can guarantee I'll be the one doing some jumping and dancing around here.

May the Lord continue to heal this lost and broken world. May we continue to encourage one another in fellowship, in love, and in prayer. May we continue to devote ourselves to the teachings of the Apostles and may we never be ashamed to jump and dance when God moves in our lives because in our joy we display our faith in the risen Lord Jesus for everyone to see. May our witness to the risen Christ kindle the fire of faith in others for the sake of the Gospel and for the sake of the world. Amen.