

Fil-Am Community Church
Pastor David Bennett
April 17, 2016
Key Verse: Hebrews 4:14-16

"Miracles from Heaven, the Miracle of Faith"

Good morning Fil-Am it is so good to see you here this morning, as we are celebrating in a new location for this week due to commitments in our normal location. This morning we are continuing the series that Pastor Rolly Started called Miracles from Heaven.

Today we are going to dive in deep as we look at the miracle of faith. Our backdrop for this series has been the movie *Miracles from Heaven*. If you haven't seen it yet, you should. The film is based on the true story of a little girl named Anna Beam who was miraculously healed from a life-threatening illness through unexpected events.

It's a wonderful story that opens our hearts to the miracles of grace and mercy in every one of our lives. And it also does an excellent job of capturing the struggles we face as we journey in our relationship with God toward deeper faith and trust.

That's where we're going to start today as we watch a clip from the movie, *Miracles from Heaven*. As a little bit of setup, this is a scene in which we see Christy, played by Jennifer Garner, talking with her pastor, at least he's the pastor of the church where Christy's family attends. It's been a long while since Christy has come through the doors there. Her daughter has been slowly dying from a painful intestinal disease that has baffled most doctors. When Christy was still attending church, some fellow members told her it must be Christy's or another member of their family's fault that God hadn't healed their daughter.

That didn't go over so well. Christy is at the end of her rope. She's a loving mother who has desperately been trying everything possible to get medical help to save her daughter, and she just doesn't see God doing anything to help her or her daughter. Let's watch.

[\[Show video clip: Pastor Scott Talks to Christy\]](#)

That clip is packed full.

- Maybe you can relate.
- Maybe you've been there in your darkest night,
- Facing your deepest problems or worst nightmares,
- Maybe you have cried out, "Are you really there God?"

It's a big question. In fact, it's one of the greatest faith questions of all time: "Why would a loving God allow suffering?" It's an important question and one that theologians have debated and answered in various ways throughout history.

It's a question worth asking and worth seeking an answer for. If that is your burning question today, I'd love to talk with you more and give you resources as you seek answers.

This is a question and answer period by Dr. Zacharias where he was asked if God exists, why he doesn't stop bad things from happening to good people.

Why doesn't he stop the suicide bomber from bombing, or stop the shooter from pulling the trigger?

Dr. Z said, I understand and appreciate the question, why didn't God keep the killer from pulling the trigger, rather than allowing the man to pull the trigger and then simply watch over and then pronounce judgement.

I would say this to you, that the Supreme ethic that God has given to us is the ethic of Love.

It is the place of all intellectual and emotional alignment, this thing we call Love which places value upon the other person of worth and as something to be protected.

If love is the supreme ethic and freedom is indispensable to Love and God's supreme goal for you and me, is that we would love him with all of our hearts and love our neighbors as ourselves.

For him to violate our freedom of will would be to violate that which is necessary component so that love can flourish and love can be expressed.

If you're always asking for God to stop the trigger why not stop everything else? So next time you hold a cup of boiling water, and it starts to spill he makes it into frozen water instead.

Next time you cross the street and you are going to be hit, he pulls your leg back, what you are asking for is different entity than humanity.

As wonderful as it may seem that in stopping that you think he is protecting you from that which is destructive, the greatest denial, is the freedom of your will in order to choose and love God with all your heart.

Why is it possible to choose or to reject so that love can ultimately reign supreme? If you want compliance and some kind of mechanical response your question itself will self-destruct.

You're asking the question because you're free to ask it and you're free to ask it because you're free to love and when you love him you're trusting him to having the supreme wisdom and the knowledge to bring a pattern out of it all.

We think for example we know so much, the story is told in Mid-Eastern Folk Lore of this man who lost his horse who ran away.

When the horse ran away the neighbors came to him and said. "You know it is bad luck isn't it, that your horse is gone?"

The man shrugged and said what do I know about these things?

A few days later the horse returned and came back with 20 other wild horses. The neighbor said, "Amazing it is not bad luck after all, it is good luck because now you have 20 more."

The man shrugged and said what do I know about these things?

His son was working with one of the wild horses trying to tame him and the horse kicks him and breaks his leg.

The neighbor said, "It is terrible isn't it? Your son's leg is broken because of the new wild horses, it is bad luck that they came."

The man shrugged and said what do I know about these things?

A few days go by and a bunch of thugs come by looking for able bodies recruits to join their gang. They are about to pick his son and find out he has a broken leg and say they don't want him and go to the next house and get the neighbors son instead.

The neighbor comes and says it is good luck your son's leg was broken or he would have been taken.

The man shrugged and said what do I know about these things?

In one little series of episodes we don't know what lies ahead...

So why don't you wait before you stand before God face to face and you will find out there are reasons why he didn't stop the trigger.

So that you will see the heinous of evil and see the majesty of love and good managing to navigate yourself.

With that being said I'd like for us to take a slightly different focus together this morning. I'd like to address a different but related question.

I'd like for us to take the direction Pastor Scott points out to Christy in this clip. He doesn't try to dismiss or discount Christy's pain.

He knows it's real, and he acknowledges that he doesn't know why God allows Christy's daughter to suffer like she is. Instead, he says, "Let me tell you, the lowest points in my life I've tried it both ways: Doing everything I can to connect to God,

or walking away. And in my experience, one feels a whole lot better than the other.”

Choosing the Way of Faith

In our time together this morning, instead of looking for an answer to the question of why God allows suffering, we are going to address the question of how we live in the midst of that question.

What does it look like to live a life of faith when we don't have all the answers?

Because, really, we never have all the answers. We never will have all the answers this side of heaven.

Life and faith are full of big, unanswered questions. And many of you may find yourselves there today, struggling to hold onto faith in the face of questions you cannot answer.

We don't even have to face a life-threatening illness, the suffering of a child, or the death of a loved one to bring those questions to life. In our fallen world, daily stresses, failures, heartbreak, and the news of senselessly violent and maddeningly corrupt world events are enough to make each one of us question God's place in our lives and our world.

When we are honest, at times life itself is enough to cause us to say to God, “I don't feel you. I don't see you. I don't understand you.”

But before we dive in, I have some very GREAT news!

God is big enough to handle all our questions. God is big enough to handle our doubts. He is neither surprised nor threatened by them. Doubt is not the absence of faith, but proof that it is alive and well.

Before we go much further, let us look at the statement of Doubt is not the absence of faith and define a little further what Faith is, and also add the word hope in the mix as they all interrelate along the journey.

Webster defines faith as “unquestioning belief, complete trust or confidence.” While Hope is defined as “a feeling that what is wanted will happen; a desire accompanied by expectation.”

When you look at Webster’s definition of both words, one deals with a belief while the other is a feeling with an expectation.

I especially like the second definition of hope, “desire accompanied by expectation.” The Hebrew and Greek words for hope also means to have an expectation. It’s a concept involving trustful anticipation, particularly with reference to the fulfillment of the promises of God.

The way the word Hope is defined throughout the Bible tells a little different story other than just a fond wish or desire, they teach us that Hope is a **deep settled confidence** that God will keep his promises!

Hope is one of the finest responses of which the human spirit is capable of. It has kept people alive and fighting when the conditions of life were most unbearable. Many people have died because they lost all hope. Hope is a vital part of our spiritual and our natural lives.

I will tell you hope also requires action, for example I can hope forever to lose weight, but until I actively do something with it, it will not happen.

The miracle of faith is that God doesn't require us to have all the answers before we can believe. In the midst of our broken and dark world when His people were questioning where is God?

Saints remember in the midst of them asking our same questions, God sent His Son to be one of us and to die for us so that we can be one with Him. And the beauty of that process and experience is that Jesus knows and understands us.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NASB)

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, and yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with **confidence**, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

We can take our questions with confidence to God. In our weakness, we will not find condemnation; instead, we will receive God's **Mercy, Grace, and Help**.

So do not be afraid to ask the tough questions of faith, all the time remembering God's promise from **Deuteronomy 4:29 (NASB)**

²⁹ But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.

What does that look like to seek God with all your heart and soul? What do we do when we don't hear or feel or understand God? Today we'll talk about three things we can do:

- Cry out to God.
- Don't stop seeking Him.
- Cling to truth.

1. Cry out to God.

Remember when you were a kid? I know, for some of us that's a long way back there in the memory. Or what about your own kids? What does a kid do when he or she is in trouble? This isn't a trick question. That's the beauty of kids—life is pretty straightforward. When kids get in trouble, they usually yell, "Help!"

Think about it. Maybe it's a girl who has climbed up on a rock and can't get down. Or a boy who has tangled a pile of rope and can't figure out how to get it undone. Whatever they face, kids are generally quick to call for help. (Sometimes as parents we wish they wouldn't call for our help quite so often.)

We should be more like kids when we face hard things in our lives. Somewhere along the road of life we lose that instinct to cry out for help. Instead, we learn that we should be strong enough and smart enough to handle things on our own. Often we adopt the toddler "Do it myself" stage and forget how to cry out for help when

we need it. But counter to the culture, our first response as we live out our faith in the midst of questions should be to cry out to God.

The Bible is full of examples of people who cried out to God in times of trouble. Much of the book of Psalms is filled with David's cries for help. If you struggle with crying out for help, the Psalms can be an excellent guide.

Psalm 18:6(NASB) says, ⁶ *"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears."*

When we cry out, God hears us. Even when we may not feel it, God is there with us and promises to hear our cries for help. So do not keep silent. In the midst of the tough questions of life, cry out to God.

Psalm 27:1-6 (NASB)

A Psalm of Fearless Trust in God.

¹ *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?"* ² *When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.* ³ *Though a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear; though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be confident.* ⁴ *One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.* ⁵ *For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.* ⁶ *And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord."*

David tells us that the Lord will hide him in his tent. This was typically the vert center place of the encampment, completely surrounded by a host of battle ready soldiers. The King's tent could be considered the safest place on the battlefield.

Therefore, as the battles of life rage around us, we are safely tucked away in the Kings tent. It is just amazing that there is a place of shelter, s place of safety or solitude while the battle rages around you.

- The fist point we discussed is you need to **Cry out to God**,
- the second is...

2. Don't stop seeking Him.

Matthew 7:7-8 (NASB) tells us, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8 Amplified Bible says, ⁷ "Ask and keep on asking and it will be given to you; seek and keep on seeking and you will find; knock and keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking, it will be opened."

Have you ever ridden a bike up a very steep hill? Again, some of us may have to reach way back to remember the last time we were on a bike. But you've probably been there before. Imagine yourself riding a bike up a hill at that point where you can barely crank the pedals around again, and you're not even sure you're on the

right road or trail anymore. You look up and can't even see the top of this hill that seems like it must have suddenly morphed into Mount Everest.

In that moment, the worst thing you can do is to stop and ponder whether there is a top. Or to stop and hope to be able start again on the steep angle. Even when it's painful, your best bet is to keep riding, to keep moving forward, even slowly or as best as you can.

The same is true in life—when our pain is greatest and questions deepest we are tempted to just stop and give up. Or even to just stop and think about things for a while. But when faith is a struggle and the pain or difficulty in our lives is making us want to give up, it's not the time to stop or turn away. In that moment the best thing we can do is to keep leaning in.

1 Peter 4:19 (NASB) echoes this when it says,

¹⁹ *“Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”*

- The first point we discussed is you need to **cry out to God**,
- the second point was **don't stop seeking Him**,
- And the third point is...

3. Cling to Truth

It may seem counter-intuitive to cling to truth in the midst of our faith struggles. But the nature of faith in God, this side of heaven, is that we will never fully understand. We can't reject everything until it all becomes crystal clear. Because it won't.

1 Corinthians 13:12 (NASB) tells us that ¹² *“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”*

The gospel of Mark gives us a great example of this in the story of Jesus healing a boy from a spirit that possessed him since birth. The father comes to Jesus and asks Him to do whatever He can to help his son. Jesus’s response is that “everything is possible for one who believes.”

And the response of the father is so beautifully honest. “Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, ‘I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!’” (**Mark 9:24**).

What an honest expression of human faith! Was Jesus surprised? No, He knew the man’s thoughts better than the man himself. And Jesus knows this is part of our humanity. How often is that statement the reality of our faith? We believe. And yet we know our shortcomings. We know our nagging doubts. We need God to help us overcome our unbelief.

In that story, Jesus healed the man’s son. Like him, there may be times in our lives when we experience a miraculous moment. But even when we don’t, when our immediate requests are not granted, God’s bigger story is still miraculous. He may not change our immediate circumstances, but He has already rewritten the story—we are forgiven and the world is being redeemed.

Hebrews 11:1 (NASB) says, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

Faith is present tense, what is taking place right now, and helps put this into perspective.

Hope is future tense – something that we expect to happen in the future.

Hope is one of the finest responses of which the human spirit is capable. It has kept people alive and fighting when the conditions of life were most unbearable. Many people have died because they lost all hope. Hope is a vital part of our spiritual and our natural lives.

The miracle of faith is that we can have this faith, this confidence, even alongside our questions, doubts, and weaknesses. This is possible because it is not about us, it's about God. It is when we crack wide open that we can be filled with His grace.

This is what faith is all about. This is what we cling to in the big picture. And in the day to day, we return again and again to God's Word to remind us of His truth and of His promises and of the bigger story that we are a part of.

Even if you find yourself in the midst of questions, fighting to hold onto faith in the heat of battle, I hope you will be encouraged today. God is with us, even in, especially in the midst of our struggles. He wants our faith to be challenged, to grow, and to become stronger. And we can cling to the truth that our faith is in one who is all-powerful and all-loving.

As He told His disciples in **John 16:33 (NASB)**, *“These things I have spoken to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”*

John 16:33 Amplified Bible

³³ *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have [perfect] peace. In the world you have tribulation and distress and suffering, but be courageous [be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world.” [My conquest is accomplished, my victory abiding.]”*

Let us cling to that truth today.

The Knot Prayer

Dear God, Please untie the knots that are in my mind, my heart, and my life.

Remove the “Have nots”, “Can Nots”, and the “Do Nots!”

Erase the “Will Nots”, “May Nots”, “Might Nots”, they may find a home in my heart!

Release me from the “Could Nots”, “Would Nots”, and “Should Nots”, that obscure my life!

And Most of all, Dear God, I ask that you remove from my mind, my heart, my life,

All the “Am Nots” that I have allowed to hold me back! Especially the thought that I am not good enough! Amen

Are fighting some type of battle today? Do you find yourself doubting God, or lacking the faith to be able to what is happening around the corner?

In the Midst’s of our battles do you have Hope?

Do you have that deep settled confidence that everything is going to be alright?

If you do make sure you praise him for that blessing, if you don’t, you can get it here today!

If you lack that **confidence** today, it can be **obtained**?

You can do this by...

- Reaffirming your **confidence** in the Lord,
- Renewing your **commitment** to the Lord,
- Resting in your **comfort** to the Lord.

Do you need to talk to him about your **battles**? If you do the **altar** is a great place to start, Saints remember we say it Sunday after Sunday, but don't miss the opportunity, that is being presented to you today as we know that we are not promised tomorrow.

Make today the day that you **Let GO** and **Let God!**

Let's pray.