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I Give You Authority

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

The devil tried to stop me preaching this message. How's that for an opening line?

We were in a, I should say, it's not because it's such a good sermon, but because of the topic that we're talking about. We're talking today about the victory that we have over the enemy.

And I believe that the devil tried to stop this sermon from happening. Three weeks ago, we were in a staff meeting on a Monday, and we were planning a break from our Christ in Scripture project.

And we're going to do a little two-week sermon series called I Give You Authority, with two sermons, one on healing and one on deliverance. Last week, the plan was that I was going to preach on healing, but I got too sick to preach on healing.

And dad got far sicker than I did, which was greatly ironic. Today's sermon was going to be on deliverance, as in freedom from demonic dark powers.

And so, three weeks ago, we were planning this sermon series, and talking about healing and what does the Bible say about it, talking about deliverance, and even sharing some stories of encounters that we staff have had with demonic powers.

And as we were sharing these stories, I wondered, three weeks ago, I wondered if something might happen.

Anecdotally, it seems to me that when you start to talk more about the powers that are in opposition to God and his plan, sometimes things happen.

And that's a pretty intense thing to say, but I think the devil tried to stop this sermon from happening. So, it was gonna be a two week series. We've now condensed it to one, because I wrote an entire sermon on healing that I didn't get to preach.

So this is that sermon condensed. And originally, we, dad and I decided, let's just drop the deliverance bit, just do the sermon on healing. Until we realized that's exactly what it was trying to make happen.

So I've condensed this sermon. We're talking about authority, deliverance and healing today. So buckle up.

This is the sermon that the devil tried to stop me from preaching. Let me pray. Thank you.

I'll need a lot of that today, please. Let me pray. Father, we give you thanks for your goodness.

We give you thanks for our risen Lord Jesus, this morning. Thank you that He has all authority in heaven and on earth. And the evil one has none in this room.

So as we approach this difficult but important topic, we pray for the spirit of truth to reign in our hearts now. Illuminate the meaning of scripture to us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

If you've been around our community of faith this year, you would know that we're almost halfway through our vision theme. Always ready. We desire to be a church that is always ready to see Christ, serve Christ, share Christ and steward Christ.

Frankly, I think we're nailing the see Christ bit. We're taking a break from Christ in scripture, which is our 66-week project aiming to see Christ across the entire story of the Bible. We're going to come back later to serve Christ and share Christ.

But to steward Christ means for us to minister in the power of the name of Jesus. That's the point of this message. It's called, I give you authority.

Matthew 10 verse 1. Jesus called his 12 disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. Authority, deliverance, and healing.

Those are the three parts of this message.

Firstly, authority. What is authority? The capacity for meaningful action.

The ability to make something of the world. The right to use power. When we look at authority in the Bible, I think we see three types of authority.

His, its, and ours. Authority, his, its, and ours. Firstly, his authority.

Matthew begins his gospel with these words in chapter 1 verse 1. This is the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. That is an astonishing statement based on the three titles that Jesus has given.

He's the anointed one, the true king, and the seed of Abraham that will bring God's blessing to the entire world. You talk about authority in one sentence. Matthew elevates Jesus to a very high place, and Matthew closes his gospel with these words.

Excuse me. Matthew closes his gospel with these words in Chapter 28. Jesus came to his disciples and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Matthew is a gospel about authority from beginning to end. And towards the middle, there is this repeated refrain, twice repeated in Matthew 9.35 and 4.23.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

The good news of the kingdom, the gospel of the kingdom, God is at work, God is doing something. That's the central topic of Jesus' life and teaching.

Notice Jesus does three things with the good news of the kingdom, proclaiming teaching and what you might call manifesting, proclaiming as in the kingdom of heaven has come near, the announcement that God is doing something.

Jesus apparently proclaimed that message with so much authority that fishermen dropped their nets and followed him, left their families and their vocations. So Jesus proclaims the kingdom with authority. He teaches the kingdom with authority.

What's the greatest teaching of Jesus in the Bible? Sermon on the Mount, thank you. Straight after the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus comes down the mountain and it says the crowds were amazed at his what?

Authority, Jesus has authority to teach and thirdly to manifest the kingdom. Manifest is a weird word today, but it just means to make real and visible.

When Jesus was casting out demons and healing people, he was manifesting God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. So notice Jesus has authority for proclaiming, teaching and manifesting the kingdom of God. That is his authority.

Secondly, it's authority. By it, I mean that character that Jesus encountered in the wilderness. The devil, the tempter, the Satan, the serpent from Genesis 3, the accuser from Job 1, the dragon from Revelation.

I call that character it, following the lead from the Bible scholar NT Wright. He says that the devil or Satan, as it is depicted in the Bible, is sort of sub-personal. And so the pronouns he, she or they don't really seem to fit.

And so it has authority. What kind of authority does it have? Well, Ephesians, Paul talks about it as the ruler of the kingdom of the air, to Corinthians, the god of this age.

Three times in the Gospel of John, it is called the prince of this world. In Revelation, it is the dragon waging war. So it, the devil, has some authority.

But it's important for us to clarify what type of power and authority it has. And the power that it has is not creative power. It is destructive power.

The Spirit of God creates, but the devil only destroys what God has created. So in John 10 verse 10, Jesus has come that we may have life and life to the full, but the thief has come to what? Kill and steal and destroy.

Those are three negative words. Not only that they're bad, but they're twisting words. He kills life, he steals goodness, and he destroys love.

In theology, we call this probation, as in deprivation. That strictly speaking, theologically speaking, evil is not a thing in itself, but it is the twisting of goodness. That is what evil is.

It does not have power apart from destructive power, the power of lies. So did the devil make us sick last week? Does the devil make me cough every couple of minutes in the middle of this sermon?

I don't know. I don't know if we could say for sure. I suspect it did have something to, some involvement in the events of the past two weeks.

It's been an insane two weeks for dad. He's been really, really unwell. So please pray for him.

I've had like 1% of his sickness. But I think it has had some kind of influence on the events happening in our church in the past couple of weeks. So what do you do when you encounter its authority?

I, so my dad is a pastor. I've heard him preach probably thousands of times. And he, I know exactly what he would do right now if he were preaching.

So I'm going to do it. And whoever cares enough, see if you can go find dad doing this bit and then stitch them together. What do you do when you encounter its authority?

A flaming arrow from the evil one, it goes, what do you do? You pull it out and you say, good shot, well done. And then you throw that arrow down and you say, devil, my King Jesus tramples on your head.

You have no power here. You are defeated. I've seen dad do that little bit so many times.

And so I kind of want to do the same thing. It has been a rough two weeks, especially for dad, really unwell. But we pull that flaming arrow out and throw it to the ground and declare the authority that we have in Jesus' name.

Which brings me to our authority. What authority do we humans have? Well, we had great authority.

That's what it is to be made in the image of God. Psalm 8 says that mankind is crowned with glory and honor. But we used our authority against God.

And so we were left, or our forefather and foremother were left naked, ashamed and hiding. Still with some authority, mind you, the Bible calls it the flesh. Willard defined flesh as the natural powers apart from God.

Human beings apart from God's spirit can still do stuff out of the flesh. But it doesn't compare to the authority that a human has who is filled with the Spirit of God. Putting it all together, authority, his, its and ours.

He gives us his authority in his name to manifest his kingdom and drive out its dominion. That's how these pieces of authority fit together.

And so when Jesus sends out the 12 with authority, he is sending them out with his name to drive out its dominion. In the Book of Acts chapter 19, we read this.

God did extraordinary miracles, extraordinary miracles through Paul so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. Isn't that insane? That's Paul.

A handkerchief that touched Paul was healing people and casting out demons. That, aside from the resurrection, is almost more authority in a healing setting than even Jesus showed in the gospels. Are we supposed to walk in that?

That's insane, but he gives us his authority and that is Jesus' authority. So how are we regular Hornsbyens supposed to walk in the authority of God? Well, you keep reading the very next verse, Acts 19 verse 13.

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits, tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon possessed. They would say, in the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.

Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, Jesus I know and Paul I know about, but who are you? Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all.

He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. That is an example of authority used poorly. They think they have Jesus' authority, but they don't have Jesus' authority.

So how do we, normal people, walk in the authority that Jesus gives us? Well, notice in Matthew 10, Jesus called his, well, who? Who does he call to him?

Twelve disciples, meaning the ones that Jesus was walking with, the ones he was doing life with, those guys are the ones that he gives authority to. My point is the connection between authority and intimacy.

Before you step out in authority, you have to step in to intimacy with Jesus. To know how the master would do things and to walk in his power. Our graphic for this sermon, I give you authority, originally it was a sheriff's badge.

Dad often says that the power we have in the name of Jesus is like a deputy sheriff's badge, Jesus' power. And so I tried to make a sheriff's badge and it was too hard. So I made a name tag instead.

It was much easier. I actually think the name tag is kind of interesting because it's not like he gives us the power and then just sends us off to go do whatever we want.

It's more like a name tag with the name of Jesus written on it, placed on our chest, and so he sends us out in relationship. The power that he gives us is not separate from intimacy with Jesus.

So as we desire to grow in authority to use the name of Jesus, to steward Christ, we must step in to intimacy with Jesus at the same time.

And so now we come to applying that authority to deliverance and then to healing. There's a lot of wacky people and wacky ideas about these two topics.

In fact, if you want to find out if a Christian is a wacky Christian, bring up these two topics and you will find out for sure. I desire to not be wacky. I desire for us to not be a wacky church.

And so to that end, John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard Movement of Churches, has this great little kind of paradigm. Thank you, Steph.

That if we want anything to come off the pages of scripture and live in our community, you need theology, model, and practice. You need to know what the Bible says. What is the truth on this topic?

That's theology. Then you need a model. How does those ideas apply in our community?

And then you have to try, practice, try and fail, action and reflection. So we're going to talk about deliverance in theology, model, and practice. CS.

Lewis, in his famous book, *The Screwtape Letters*, writes this in the preface. There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence.

The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. That's really wise, really helpful.

Firstly, on the excessive interest side, maybe you know people who think that there's a demon under every rock, who thinks that every time anything goes wrong in their life, it's spiritual warfare. Like, oh, my car's out of petrol and I stalled.

It's spiritual warfare. I lost my keys again. It's spiritual warfare.

Maybe, maybe, but maybe you need to fill up your car with petrol, and maybe you need to remember where you put your keys. I don't know. Is there a demon under every rock?

I don't know. But on the other side, there's the disbelieving side, and frankly, that's closer to where I find myself. Personally, I have never had experience with individual, manifest, demonic power in front of me.

I don't have experience. And so, that's why dad was going to preach this sermon, because he has had experience.

The most kind of acknowledging of dark spiritual powers that I get is the Lord's Prayer, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. And so, I am, I confess, what Dr. Michael Heiser calls selectively supernatural.

I'm a Christian. You're a Christian. We believe in a fundamentally supernatural event, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

We believe in angels. We believe in the inspiration of scripture, the resurrection, the healings of Jesus. But when it comes to the dark powers, it's like, maybe that stuff isn't real.

We're selectively supernatural. Because if God is real and his power is real, then there is also an enemy who is aiming to defeat God's purpose. And he is real.

It is real as well. And so I confess that I'm more in the disbelieving side, but the events of the past two weeks have made me want to search scripture and see what the Bible says. What does the Bible say about deliverance?

Well, the word demon possessed gets used a lot in the New Testament. It's the Greek word, *diamonitsomai*. *Diamonitsomai*.

That's a cool word. And often it's translated demon possessed. But as I was studying this word, there's a lot of scholars who think that demon possessed is unhelpful and demonized is the better language.

Because when we say demon possessed, especially if we have Hollywood horror movies in our mind, we think of a person who's a totally normal person, and then they get fully possessed by a demon, and then it leaves, and they're fully normal again.

Now, you see something like that in Scripture, but more often, you see that parts of a human person take on a demonic influence and power. And so scholars are arguing that demon possessed is too kind of absolute a term. Let's say demonized.

It's this kind of idea that it seems like dark spiritual powers attach themselves to wounds in a person's life, to hurts, to lies, to trauma.

Rather than a person being totally and categorically demon possessed, it's kind of like some people could have wounds that are demonically animated in some way. Do you know what Beelzebul means? The Prince of Demons.

It means Lord of the Flies. That's where the title of William Golding's book came from. Lord of the Flies.

Think about what flies do. They hang around dead bodies. That's what demons do.

They find wounds and parts of death, and they hang around those things, it seems. I don't have experience with specific manifest demonization, but I have experience with this second type of deliverance that we need.

Paul says in Ephesians chapter 6, finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full. It's ironic, the words that I'm saying when I feel like I have to cough.

It's ironic, or not ironic. Ephesians 6. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Yes, Lord. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

I'm drawing attention to the fact that there are two types of deliverance that we need. One is from occasional manifest demonization in a person. I don't have experience with that.

But Paul is saying here that this whole world is, I mean, the earth is full of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea. But we also live in a battle against an enemy, the powers and authorities. That is who our struggle is against.

So it's the shift from specific demon manifestation to kind of universal dark evil empowerment that every Christian stands against in the name of Jesus. Paul says in Colossians that Jesus disarmed the powers and authorities in his death on the cross.

CS. Lewis says there is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.

We are in a war as the people of God. Now the battle has been won on the cross, but the victory is being implemented as the kingdom of God comes to earth. We need to take our stand against the devil's schemes.

And frankly, that's what this sermon is about. I could have just preached the one on healing and not spoken about this. My voice doesn't feel great.

I shouldn't be singing, I shouldn't be preaching, but it's like, no, we're standing against the devil's schemes and pushing back. Which brings us to the model, theology of deliverance, model of deliverance.

I think the main thing is authority and intimacy. You can't step out with the authority that you have not learned from intimacy with Jesus.

So be with him and he will teach you how to fight the powers and to stand, and he'll give you a grace to stand.

I've read a couple of chapters from a few books and they suggest that once a demon specifically manifests in front of you, if you're in that situation, you need to exert the authority of the name of Jesus over that demon.

So some words which might be helpful. Demon in the name of Jesus, leave and never return. Don't touch the person as well.

In the Gospels, Jesus never touched a demonized person. He touched people to heal them. He didn't touch demonized people.

And then discern if the demon is gone. I offer that to you only as what other people have said, not as what I have tested for myself.

But when it comes with dealing with the powers and the authorities, Paul talks about putting on the armor of God, the belt of truth, the shield of faith, the sword of the spirit, the breastplate of righteousness, the feet fitted with the readiness

that comes from the gospel of peace and the helmet of salvation. And with the armor of God, we stand against the devil's schemes and we declare the victory of Jesus. There was a monk in the 4th century whose name was Evagrius of Pontus.

And he went out into the wilderness to battle demons. And he wrote a book called Talking Back, a monastic handbook for combating demons. Is that not the coolest subtitle in the entire world?

And Evagrius wrote this book. And the structure is that he will list a lie from the enemy, or a situation in life like temptation, or you're not good enough, or God doesn't love you.

And then he will quote scripture that directly contradicts that lie. 498 times Evagrius quotes scripture. And the reason he does that is that the soul of the spirit is what?

The word of God. We have power by the word of God to demolish every stronghold. Paul says that in 2 Corinthians.

Here's an example of what Evagrius would do. This is number 24. Against the thought that weeps over simple foods and dry bread.

And here's a scripture. A morsel with pleasure in peace is better than a house full of many good things and unjust sacrifices with strife. He does that to all sorts of temptations and lies from the enemy.

You're not good enough. He's got a scripture right there. God doesn't love you.

He's got a scripture right there. That is how we fight the powers by the word of God, by truth, and to use another image that dad uses all the time.

If the sword of the spirit, the word of God is a sword, you can't pull somebody else's sword out of their scabbard. You need the sword yourself. That's why scripture memorization is such a key habit for the people of God.

Because when the lie comes, how are you going to defend yourself if you have no sword to pull out? If you have no truth to defeat the lie, that's our model. Memorizing scripture, using truth to defeat the lies of the enemy.

Which brings us to practice. And by definition, we can't talk about this because we have to practice it as the people of God.

Part three, healing. We've talked about authority, talked about deliverance and now healing. It was a Sunday morning in 1999.

Dad was preaching and it was the first Sunday of the month, and so the people of God gathered around the communion table. And dad felt a prompting to invite the people of God to pray for healing. And my mom came forward to be prayed for, for healing.

And at this stage, mom and dad had two kids, my older brother, my older sister, and then they had had two miscarriages. They had lost two children in the womb.

I can only imagine the devastation and the pain that they went through, the kind of, the seeming death of the dream of the family that they wanted to have.

And so mom came forward for healing, for prayer, and she heard God say to her, Leanne, your womb is healed. And nine months later, I was born.

Twenty-three years later, I was preaching on Christmas is Miraculous, about the miracle at the heart of Christmas, God become a man, and how heaven came to earth, and heaven is still coming to earth. And so I felt prompted.

It also happened to be the Communion Sunday, right? I felt prompted to invite the people of God to pray for healing on a Sunday night.

And a woman came forward who I was getting to know in my life up, and she had very aggressive bowel cancer, and we prayed for her for healing in Jesus' name. And three years later, she still has bowel cancer.

So why did God heal one and not the other? Why did God listen to one prayer and not the other? Same God, right?

Same yesterday, today, and forever. Same setting, the people of God around the communion table. Same heart, I think, of just desiring for God to do something and touch his people with healing.

Same heart. Why did God answer one and not the other? Can I ask you to raise your hand if you have witnessed God healing in your life?

Can I ask you to put your hand up if you have asked for healing and not seen it? Can I ask you to put your hand up if you have seen it? More hands, and I won't ask for hands for this one.

How many have lost hope in asking for healing full stop? You've lost the belief that God would ever heal, and so you protect your heart by not even asking in the first place. That's closer to where I'm at.

I've prayed for healing for people so many times and not seen it before. I think most of us believe that God is able to heal. But some of us have stopped believing that He is ever willing to heal today.

And so we stop asking. What we need is again, theology, model, and practice of healing. Firstly, a theology of healing.

I think those two questions are helpful, able and willing. Is God able to heal? And is He willing to heal?

Is God able to heal? That's for the people at home to hear. The church, declare.

We believe God is able to heal. Jesus healed the blind man Bartimaeus. Jesus healed the man with leprosy.

He healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law, the centurion servant, the paralyzed man, the other woman who was bleeding for 12 years. Jesus healed the paralyzed, the blind, the lame, the mute, and the leprous. He is able to heal.

Well, 2,000 years ago, he was able to heal. Is Jesus able to heal today? Good, I agree.

Some people don't agree. They're called cessationists. It's a theology that the miraculous gifts of the spirit stopped after the apostolic age.

The only problem with cessationism is it's not in the Bible, and it's not really in human experience either. In fact, the best argument for cessationism is that we don't see as many healings as you might expect if God still healed. And that's fair.

I confess, I feel that. I just wish we saw more healings. The other position is continuationism, which is what I think you guys are, what we are.

We believe that God still heals today. So is He able? Is He willing?

That's the harder question. Is God willing to heal us all the time? Now, obviously, every time Jesus healed someone, it was because he was willing.

He was willing to heal mom 27 years ago. But that's not helpful to retrospectively say that he was willing to heal someone. Is God willing to heal us today when we ask for it?

Is He willing to heal me of the things that I need healing from? That's a question. That's a really good question.

And I think a good starting point to answer that question is to ask, what was the greatest physical healing Jesus ever performed? Apart from his own resurrection. The raising of Lazarus, maybe?

You don't get more sick than dead for three days. John's Gospel makes a big deal about the raising of Lazarus. But notice something.

Jesus raised Lazarus to life, but he died again. Jesus healed Bartimaeus' eyes, but they closed again. Jesus made the paralytic walk, but he lay down again.

Jesus healed the man with leprosy, but his skin decomposed again. Which tells us something very important, I think, for our theology of healing. And that is all healing of the body is temporary.

All healing of the body is temporary. It is a sign of the coming kingdom, but not the substance of the kingdom. It's a foretaste, but not the fullness.

It's like a child helping mom make a cake, and the kid cannot wait for the cake to come. But mom, in her grace, gives the child a lick of the spoon. A foretaste of the fullness to come.

So one of the things that that does is it lifts our hope from the healing to the resurrection. It centers us not on the sign, but on the substance of the kingdom. God does heal today.

He is willing, often, and he is able. But our hope is not ultimately in the healing of this sick body, but in the resurrection of this dead body. And God is always willing to resurrect those who are in Christ.

And so we lift our hope onto the resurrection. I think Paul learned this lesson in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. I was given a thorn in my flesh, Paul says, a messenger of Satan to torment me.

We didn't know what that was. It could have been a cough every time he tried to preach. We don't know.

Three times, Paul pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But Christ said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me. Paul needed healing. He had seen healings done through his handkerchief, of all things.

He asked three times, but God said no to him for healing. But he said yes to a grace that was sufficient to sustain Paul. And that's the lesson that he learned.

God was not in that instance willing to heal his body, but he was always willing to give a grace to empower life in the kingdom. Is God willing to heal? Often, yes, he is always willing to provide grace to sustain us.

I think both ends of the spectrum of God's willingness are unhelpful. It's unhelpful to say that God is always willing to heal every single time we ask in Jesus' name.

It's unhelpful because if healing doesn't happen, then I didn't have enough faith, or I got a demon, or you don't have enough faith, or we didn't do the formula right.

We ask all these questions, which might be worth asking, but it's missing the point. Too far on the other end believes that God will never heal me, so I won't ask him in the first place. Frankly, I find myself up that direction.

I have a really robust theology of redemptive suffering, meaning when somebody tells me they're sick with a relatively trivial thing like a flu, I'm almost hesitant to pray for healing because I'm so confident that God will bring good out of this,

that I want you to have the good that comes from redemptive suffering more than the good that comes from a miraculous healing. Do you know what I mean?

A solid, robust theology of redemptive suffering should not negate a belief that God can and does do supernatural miraculous healing of the body. I want to have both of those things together and to hold them as one.

Right before Jesus sent out the 12th, he said this, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. And then he sends them out to heal people.

So is Jesus not saying that there is so much healing that he wants to do, but his people aren't asking for it? What if God is calling us to get our hopes up that God might be willing and to ask him again? Which brings us to the model for healing.

This is where healing gets hard. Because even Jesus rarely ever healed the same way twice.

Sometimes he healed with a touch, sometimes no touch, sometimes with a word, sometimes no word, sometimes he said, your sins are forgiven, sometimes sin has no part to play, sometimes it was through his fabric, other times it was through his

disciples. It's very hard to get a three step formula for healing from Jesus. But what if that is the whole point?

Because if there were a three step formula, we would punch in the numbers, get our healing, and say, thanks God, I'll be back next week with my sore toe.

What if the reason that God heals is not to give us something and send us on our way, but to draw us closer to himself? And if God can draw us through suffering that he redeems, then he will do that.

And if he draws us through a miraculous healing, he will do that too. So it's hard to find a model of the way that Jesus healed, but it's not a vending machine. It's authority and intimacy.

A couple of thoughts from watching Jesus. It seems like faith is a factor, a factor. Jesus couldn't do miracles in Nazareth because they lacked faith.

It seems like preparation is a factor. At times, Jesus fasted and prayed before he healed. It seems like perseverance is a factor.

Sometimes Jesus healed in two stages. Paul asked three times for healing before he got a response. It seems like sin is a factor.

James 5, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed. It seems like elders and oil is a factor. James 5, is anyone sick?

Call the elders, pray over them, and anoint them in the name of the Lord, and they will be made well. And so, maybe I don't want to give a formula, but if you need steps to practice a ministry of healing, find a sick person, ask them.

It's not hard to do. Find a sick person or have one come to you and say, what do you want me to ask Jesus to do for you? And have them say, I would like to be healed of my sore knee.

Maybe have a conversation about that for a little bit. And then place your hand on their shoulder and say, in the name of Jesus, be healed. It's his power, it's not ours.

We don't have to, shh, it's not the force. He's a person. We can't bend his arm.

So we just ask. And when we're asking, we're discerning if God is willing in this moment to heal miraculously. And after you've prayed that, say, better, worse, or the same.

Better, worse, or the same. And if they say the same, maybe as the Spirit of God leads you, you might pray again, or you might not, or you might have a conversation about redemptive suffering, and you might walk with them.

So having prayed for healing for someone, and we're going to have a chance later today to pray for healing. It seems like there are two things that can happen. Either they get miraculously, obviously healed, or they don't.

What do you do? What's our model for both of those situations? Firstly, what do we do when the healing does happen?

So somebody comes up the front with a terrible knee, and they can't walk on it. We pray, and then they're running and jumping and leaping and praising God. What do we do?

Thank you. Praise God. Remember the ten lepers Jesus healed.

Only one of them came back to say thank you. We will not be like the nine. We will be like the one.

Giving thanks to God. Put it in the calendar. Jesus healed me on this day.

Throw a party. Give thanks to God. And remember last week's sermon.

Remember that what you now need is the grace to wake up tomorrow morning with more faith. Having received the miracle, we need the miracle of more faith. Gosh, if we saw healing, we would celebrate.

We would give thanks to God. But what happens when the healing doesn't happen? We remember that our hope is resurrection of the dead body, not the healing of the sick body.

We remember that He gives us a grace that is sufficient to sustain us. Maybe we pray again as Jesus leads us.

But above all, I think that we remember the truth in Romans 8 that the spirit, the same spirit that works miraculous wonders is the one that grieves with our spirit in the brokenness of this world.

And so as a church, as we step out in boldness to pray for healing, we must also grow in our capacity to lament at the same time, because the same spirit empowers us to do both, to heal the sick and to grieve the brokenness of this world.

And so if we become a community of faith that increasingly prays for healing, we will see healing and we will see not healing. Paul says in Romans 12, rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.

What's the hardest part of that verse? The semicolon. The grammar nerds know what I'm talking about.

A semicolon is a punctuation mark that indicates two separate but related ideas. I'm telling you, it's human nature to rejoice with those who rejoice. We have mirror neurons.

When we see someone smile, you smile, don't you? When you see someone cry, you cry, don't you? It's easy to rejoice with those who rejoice.

It's easy to mourn with those who mourn. But how do you do both of those things at the same time in the same community?

When we pray for healing, somebody's jumping up and down for joy right here, and another person is broken down crying because God hasn't answered their prayer again. We're called to be a community that holds both of these things together.

That's what the semicolon does. It holds together. And so we need to be a community that prays with boldness and who weeps in lament at the same time.

Remembering that the spirit that empowers the work is the one that empowers the lament as well, which brings us to practice. Trying it out, praying for healing, seeing if God might be willing. We're gonna have prayer for healing and deliverance.

Today, we're not gonna do it during the final worship set, but after the service. I feel called for us as the people of God to worship all together.

We have kids and teenagers in the room, so we're all gonna worship God in intimacy together, and then after the service, if you would like prayer for healing, come up the front and we would love to pray for you.

And if you don't need healing, please have morning tea. So that will be a chance for us to put this into practice.

Which brings us to communion. There is a tragic irony that I couldn't preach last week on healing because I was sick. But there is a poetic beauty that we come around the communion table again.

This is the table where my mum was healed. Not that literal one, but the communion table. I'm only here alive because God healed at that table.

I think that's beautiful. I think God is in that somehow. And so we come to the table now.

And last week we were going to have communion and we're talking about healing. And I was going to read Isaiah 53. He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities.

The punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. And it was going to be, I was aiming for it to be a sombre moment.

Today, I'm not reading Isaiah 53, because I think we need to celebrate the victory of Jesus at the table today. The table is a monument to the death of Jesus, but also to the resurrection of our Lord.

And so as you come to the table, take the bread and hold on to the cup, and we're going to stand together and drink the cup, and then sing literally four songs together, and fill this room with praise.

So I think Fie Fie and Stuart are going to serve us. Please come to the table, hold on to the cup, and take the bread in your own time.