

Acts 5:27-32  
Revelation 1:4-8  
John 20:19-31

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I believe in miracles. There are different kinds, of course. Healing of any kind are God's miracles. When our wounded bodies mend themselves, some don't give God the credit, while you and I see it as the marvelous design of our Creator. When doctors, nurses, therapists and others bring healing, we are grateful to them, believing God works through their hands and inspires their wisdom. When it is our relationships which have been broken or wounded, the miracles of love and forgiveness are needed for us to get back on track. Sometimes the healing process strengthens and deepens the relationship far beyond what it was.

If any of those prayers for healing get answered, we are grateful. It isn't too often, however you see the kind of remarkable healings featured on TV shows. I love to ponder what these miracles mean. I remember a program featuring the story of a crippled woman with a titanium rod implanted in her leg, who actually got hit by lightning while washing her dishes. Her startled husband thought she would die. As the woman lay in his arms, she suddenly announced that the crippling pain in her leg and hip had completely disappeared! She danced a jig, threw away her walker, and is now an avid golfer. The woman believes God healed her this way. I'm guessing no one prayed she would get hit by lightning. I don't know if I have enough faith to recommend anyone try to be healed in this manner.

When I was in Boy Scouts, one of my friends, Danny Johnson, in the Troop who had taken CPR actually saved a man's life. A bolt of lightning struck their fishing boat, stopping the man's heart, and my friend gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and performed chest compression. Both said God provided this miracle. I believe it.

But I think I have as much control over miracles as I have over lightning. Both come from the heavens. They're very powerful, and we sense the rumblings deep within us of potential blessing or disaster. They startle us with bright light in the darkest times. We might pray for rain, or showers of blessings, but we're not sure what to do when it starts to thunder and lightning. Perhaps you've nervously joked about God striking you dead if you weren't telling the truth in some situation.

The day Jesus was crucified, the sky turned dark, and darkness enveloped everyone. It was like lightning struck when Jesus died... and the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, like the very heart of God and the heart of the people. Hope died along with their faith in Jesus. This disaster claimed everyone as victims.

Easter morning came as another bolt of lightning, quite unexpected, even more powerful than the disastrous storm three days before. It happened early in the morning, and continues to reverberate across the centuries. Sometimes we sense it rumbling in our souls. This lightning bolt was brighter than daylight, because God resurrected the Light of the World in our Lord Jesus Christ. It was at this moment He brought life and immortality to light, revealing God's loving purpose in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus for our sake. Hope was reborn, as was our faith in Jesus. God reversed the disaster to proclaim the greatest blessing to all who believe.

But miracles are hard to understand, and for some people, just as hard to believe. The disciples who were closest to Jesus had difficulty believing the news of resurrection from Mary Magdalene. They hid behind locked doors, fearing a hostile world, disbelieving news too good to be true. They were thunderstruck when Jesus appeared in their midst. And just as unbelievable, the Lord didn't condemn their failures, but brought them forgiveness and peace. They were forever changed in powerful ways.

But one disciple, Thomas, wasn't with them, and when he heard the news, the miracle was too unbelievable. No way! Thomas remembered the realities of Christ's wounds as well as the death. No one could have survived it, or been revived. He said: "Unless I see the mark of the nails in His hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in His side, I will not believe." He too would have to be struck by lightning, overloading the circuits of Thomas's mind with a powerful reality and peace beyond his understanding. And when it happened, Thomas didn't need to perform any tests on Jesus. He was awestruck, saying: "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him: "Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe!" I must enough Thomas in me to want to see miracles from time to time. Not just to satisfy some intellectual questions or rid me of any lingering doubts... but to experience again and again the healings more powerful than the painful wounds inflicted on people by the storms of life.

We have seen families who look like they've been struck by lightning... churches, communities and nations blown apart by sin, leaving everyone fearful of storms. They try to hide behind locked doors, because they've already been robbed of any spirit of peace and forgiveness. Maybe you've been there too. It takes a miracle to heal these tragedies. Oddly enough, it might take a tragedy to receive a miracle.

Easter would not come, without Jesus having gone through the worst this world could do. And it is through His wounds we are healed. Christ was raised from the dead to proclaim how we too shall be raised from the dead, we too may trust in God's healing love! There is no tragedy which God cannot transfigure in miraculous ways!

I still want a magic wand sometimes. I guess it means I want to control the lightning, to step into God's rightful place. We pray for healing, we pray for miracles, we want to be able to stick our hands into the wounds and double-check if God is going to meet our demands on our timetable.

Be careful what you pray for... it might be lightning which could transform your life forever. St. Paul's conversion was when he was struck down on the road to Damascus by a bright light, hearing the Lord's voice asking: "Why do you persecute me?" It left him blind and confused for days, turning his life upside down. But the eventual transformation in his faith turned the world upside down.

It's funny... either we're here because our world seems turned upside down, or because we believe God wants us to turn this world upside down in His name. It's either in spite of the woundedness of our lives, or because of it. And in Christ's name, it seems to me to be nothing short of a miracle.

Amen.