I know a lot of us have lot of doubts about whether God heals today.

- Distrust of faith healers
- Influence of naturalism—that supernatural things don’t happen. Everything has to have a natural explanation. But, whether something supernatural happened or not can only be resolved by examining the evidence. We can’t just argue away that it doesn’t happen.
- Westphal: “If God exists, miracles are not merely logically possible, but really and genuinely possible at every moment. The only condition hindering the actualization of this possibility lies in the divine will.”

And the reality is that God is healing today. We will hear more about it later.

Note: I’m not saying that the main way in which God heals people today are through these miracles.

- In fact, I believe that the main way God heals people today is through the medical profession.
- In fact, nearly always, I think, today the way in which God heals people.

But in addition to that, sometimes God heals people miraculously, spontaneously, instantaneously. He contracts the normal healing processes into an instant.

I want to start off by talking about what the Bible says about healing.

**I. Healing in the Bible**

Please turn with me to Mark 1:15. There are the first recorded words of Jesus in Mark’s Gospel.
“The time has come! The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

The central theme in the teaching of Jesus, theologians of all denominations and all traditions are agreed about this, was the Kingdom of God.

- That expression appears 80-82 times in the first three Gospels: Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heavens.
- The Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heavens or Heavens) is essentially a place or realm in which God is the king!

Most of us think of the Kingdom of God as something we will experience in the future. And, yes, it has a future element.

- Kingdom of God will be fulfilled, Jesus is saying, in a future time by a decisive event, at the end of the age as we know it, when Jesus returns.
- The first time Jesus came, he came in weakness.
- When he returns, he says he’ll come with power and great glory.
- History is moving towards that climax: the glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - There are 300 references in the NT to the second coming of Jesus.
  - Nobody knows when, but we’re told it’s a certainty:
    - that there will be a universal resurrection,
    - there will be a Day of Judgment,
    - there will be a new Heaven,
    - there will be a new Earth. He is going to restore all things to perfection.
    - Jesus himself will be there, together with all those who love and follow him.
    - It’ll be a place of intense happiness which goes on forever.
    - We will be given glorious resurrection bodies that are painfree, that will never die.
- There will be no more death, no more mourning, no more crime, no more pain.
- On that day, all who put their trust in him will be totally healed.

Until then, not everybody is healed.

Paul writes in Romans 8:23: he says,

“We groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

That final redemption of our bodies is a future event.

- So, many people we pray for, certainly many people that I’ve prayed for, have not been healed.
- My sister-in-law Jenn is suffering from a rare blood disease similar to leukemia.
  - She was diagnosed with this illness about 13 years ago. My brother and Jennifer have 4 children. When she was diagnosed, her oldest was about 10 and the youngest was 1.
  - Initially, the doctors gave her about 7 years to live.
  - She is beyond that time now.
  - But, she’s not been healed.
  - Even so, her relationship with God has been taken to another level.
  - For her, the big prize is salvation: “eternal life, Kingdom of Heavens.”
  - She believes that if God heals her, and we pray that she will be, that will be a bonus.

So, in the future, there will be total reign of the Kingdom of God. That’s the heaven we talk about.

- It has not yet come.
- It will come one day.

But, there is also in the NT a present aspect of the Kingdom of God, right now.
Jesus says: The time has come; the kingdom of God is near.

We see signs, we see dawning, we see a breaking-in, a budding, of the approaching kingdom.

Jesus says: The kingdom of God is among you.

The Kingdom (heaven) is something that can be discovered and experienced now.

- And Jesus demonstrated the coming of that Kingdom in his own ministry: through forgiveness of sins, healing of sick, suppression of evil.

These 2 diagrams will help you understand better.

- Look at the first diagram.
  - The Jewish expectation was that **this age** would come to an end, and then **the age to come** would start.
  - The Messiah would immediately inaugurate a completed Kingdom.

- Jesus’ teaching was a modification of that. And you’ll see it in the second diagram.
  - Jesus’ teaching is that with the arrival of Jesus, **this age** continues.
  - But the **age to come** has already started.
  - So, we’re living at a time when we’re both living in the **old age** and in the **new age**.
  - **What has happened is that the powers of the new age have broken into history.**
    - The technical term the theologians use is that there is an “eschatological in-breaking of the Kingdom of God.”
    - Let me give you an illustration of what that might mean.
      - Let’s say that we had a February day that was sunny and hot, you’d say “this is an eschatological in-breaking of the summer.”
• You might not say that, but if you were a theologian.
• The point is that it is the foretaste of what’s to come.
• And Jesus’ ministry was like a foretaste of what’s to come,
  Heaven, the Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven.

And we see this eschatological in-break of the Kingdom of God demonstrating through various powers. One of those powers is the power to heal.

• 25% of the Gospels are made up of his healing.
• He didn’t heal everyone, but he did heal many individuals.

Please turn with me to Matthew 4:23 (Matthew sets out his Gospel in a very systematic way). In verse 23:

“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people.”

• Matthew then sets out chapters 5 to 7, how he preached and how he taught.
• Chapters 8 and 9, he sets out how he healed: nine healing miracles.
• And at the end, he goes back to the verse that he had at the beginning.
• So, Matthew 9:35 is exactly the same as 4:23:

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

• They didn’t have punctuation in those days, and this was a grammatical device known as an inclusio: you had the same verse at the beginning and at the end, and that in other words said: That’s end of the section.
• That’s what Jesus did.
  o He preached the good news of the Kingdom,
  o and he healed.

Then 10:1:
He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

Verse 7:
As you go, preach this message: “The Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.”

In other words, Jesus said:
“This is what I’ve done. Now, you go and do exactly what I’ve done. Tell people the good news and heal the sick.”

It’s not just the twelve. If you look over to Luke 9:1-2:
• He first commissions the twelve.
  When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, he sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Then, he commissions 72 others in10:1:
  “After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place that he was about to go.

And the instruction he gave them, verse 9:
  Heal the sick who are there and tell them, “The kingdom of God is near you.”

So, Jesus did it.
• he proclaimed the Gospel, and he demonstrated the coming of the Kingdom by healing the sick, dealing with evil.

Then he says to his disciples:
• “Now you go and do it. Tell people the good news of the Kingdom, and demonstrate the coming of the Kingdom, the in-breaking of the Kingdom, by healing the sick.”

And then, at the end of the Gospels, he commissions them. He says in Matthew 28:19-20:

Go and make disciples of all nations—[that’s us, here, today]—baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to do everything I’ve commanded you to do.

• What did he command them?
  o To go, tell people the good news,
  o and demonstrate the fact that the Kingdom of God has now broken into history,
  o that we are now living in this period between the first coming and the second coming.

And that’s what they did!

• They went out, and they didn’t just talk about it – they did it!
• You know, that’s why the book of Acts is called Acts! They did it! They didn’t just talk about it.
• They preached the good news, but they also demonstrated the in-breaking of the Kingdom into history.

And as we go on through the NT, we see that’s what happened: these things continued in the life of the church.

• So, today, we should expect God to heal as part of this Kingdom activity.
• Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom: The Kingdom of God is at hand.

II. And we see that in church history.

As we look down the centuries, you come to the 2nd century.
• Someone like Irenaeus speaks about healing the sick by laying hands on them.

3rd century:
• Origen, another theologian, Biblical scholar, writing in the 3rd century, says: “The Name of Jesus can take away diseases.”

4th century: St. Augustine, perhaps the greatest theologian of the church, certainly the greatest theologian of the 4th century.
• He in his book: The City of God, he describes so many healings.
• He says,
  “I can’t even record all the miracles I know. Even now, many miracles are at work.”
• And lists tons of them.
• There’s just story after story after story of people being healed.
• One of my favorites is the cure of Bishop Innocent, which is a great name for a bishop.
  o He was being treated by doctors for fistulae.
  o Fistulae is a kind of abscesses, infected glands which fill up with pus and become increasingly painful until they’re drained.
  o Today, it would require general anesthetic and it would require three to ten days in hospital and up to six weeks off work.
  o Then, of course, they didn’t have anesthetic.
  o So this is what St. Augustine tells us is:
    “He was being treated by doctors for fistulae, of which he had a large intricately seated in the rectum. He had undergone one very painful operation. It was not thought he would survive another operation. While they were praying for him, he was cast down to the ground as if someone had hurled him violently to the earth, groaning and sobbing, his whole body shaking, so that he could not speak. The dreaded day for the next operation came. The surgeons arrived. The frightful instruments are produced. The part is bared. The surgeon with knife in hand eagerly looks for the sinus that is to be cut. He searches for it with his eyes, he feels for it with his finger, he applies every kind of scrutiny. He found a
perfectly healed wound. No words can describe the joy (!) and praise and thanksgiving to the merciful and Almighty God which was poured forth from the lips of all with tears and gladness.”

And then he adds: “Let the scene be imagined, rather than described!

And healing has continued down the centuries of the church.

So, we see it in the Bible, we see this in church history, and we see it today.

III. God is still healing people today.

Leo’s story.

Akiliah’s story.

God is a God who heals.

• One day, we will have a new perfect body.

• In this life, we never reach perfection.

• When God heals someone miraculously, we get a glimpse of the future, when the final redemption of our bodies will take place.

• But, no human being can avoid death.

• Our bodies are decaying, and at some point, it might be right to prepare a person for death rather than to pray for healing.

• We need to be sensitive, of course, to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

• But, we shouldn’t be discouraged, because when we pray for no one, no one is healed.

• But if we pray for lots of people, not everyone’s healed, but some are.

  o Even those who are not healed often speak of the blessing of the experience of being prayed for, the love that they experienced.

God gives some people special gifts of healing.

• But that doesn’t mean we can leave it to them.
• Just like God gives to some people special gifts of evangelism, but we can’t leave it to them.
• All of us have the responsibility to pass on the good news.
• And all of us are able to pray for people.

How do we do it in practice?
It’s God who heals, not us. None of us have healing up our sleeves. There’s no technique involved, it’s simply love, compassion. Jesus had compassion on the people. That’s why he prayed.
• We pray with love and simplicity because it is not our prayer, but it’s the power of God that heals.
• Sometimes, God gives us an impression of some sort to pray for someone in some particular way. Some people call this, word of knowledge. So, sometimes, God gives us impressions to pray for a certain person in a certain way.

How do we pray?
Various models in the NT, but it’s always simple:
• in the Name of Jesus, sometimes they laid hands on people,
• sometimes they anointed people with oil.

After praying, it’s important to reassure the person of God’s love, regardless of whether they’re healed or not, to give them the liberty to come back and be prayed for again.
• Not to put burdens on them, and certainly not to suggest that it is lack of their faith that caused them not to be healed.
• Jesus never said to anyone “It was because you didn’t have enough faith that you weren’t healed.

And to go on praying.
• And to ensure that people’s lives are rooted in the community.
• Because it is the Christian community where we experience long term healing.
• As I said earlier, not everybody is healed.
• I have not had any experience of God healing someone through me.
• But the reason that I go on doing it is because I believe it’s what we’re asked to do, what we’re commanded to do by Jesus.
• And therefore, even though no one was healed, I still continue praying.
• So, we have to be persistent: we have to go on and on and on.

God is a God who healed in the past and he still heals today.

Let’s pray.