

MIRACLES | Easter Sunday | When God Says “No”

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April 4, 2021

Introduction

We're in a series about the miracles Jesus performed throughout the Gospel accounts of His life, and we've been hearing miracle stories from individuals right here in our Grace Chapel family.

One of the big questions many of us have as we talk about miracles is why does God say “Yes” to some miracles and “No” to others?

VIDEO—watch online to see Allison's miraculous testimony.

It's a moment of despair, disillusionment, and disappointment. It's a moment when the life you thought you understood spirals out of control and refuses to make sense anymore. It's a moment when your fervent prayers to a God Who is supposed to be good and powerful seemingly fall on deaf ears.

And just like Allison's story, and maybe like your own story, **the Easter story is filled with moments like this.**

My **hope** for you today, whatever your experience in life has been, is that you would see there is a God Who intimately knows your deepest sorrows, most crippling grief, and biggest disappointments.

My **hope** is that you would see He's not some distant, uninvolved deity, coldly watching from above, but that He knows more than you could imagine, and He wants to meet you right where you are.

My **hope** is that you would be willing to take a risk and trust God again, or for the first time.

This doesn't mean that every problem will be magically solved, but it does mean that **as you take a step toward Jesus Christ, He will fill you with a hope for your future that you've long forgotten or maybe never had.**

The Disciples

Question—How do we reconcile the idea of an all-powerful, all-loving God with the disappointment of a miracle denied?

The Gospel of Mark hinges on an enormous turning point. Throughout the first eight chapters, after Jesus performs miracles that only the Son of God could perform, the disciples finally figure out Who He is. In Mark 8, Jesus asks His disciples two important questions.

Mark 8:27–29

Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, **“Who do men say that I am?”** So they answered, “John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” He said to them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** Peter answered and said to Him, **“You are the Christ.”**

- In other words, Peter says:
 - You're the One we've been waiting for.
 - You're the One Scriptures prophesied about—the long-awaited Messiah, the Anointed One.
 - You're the One Who is going to bring justice and peace to Israel.
- Peter is making a huge statement. He's saying he believes, based on everything he's witnessed—the miracles, the interactions, the teachings—that Jesus is the One Who is going to make everything right for Israel as the true King of Israel.

Background—In the first century, the Jewish people were under horrendous oppression and persecution. Their own land was occupied by Rome, and the Jewish people loathed the Romans. They didn't want statues of Roman emperors in their temples, didn't want to pay taxes to help further establish the Roman Empire, and, most of all, they didn't want Caesar's delegates making claims on their promised land. **The Jewish people were ready for a rebellion against Rome. Their idea of Messiah was someone who would be sent from God to deliver them from their earthly oppressors.**

- So what Peter is really saying in this passage is, in effect: “Jesus, You're here to deliver the Jewish people once and for all from our suffering, hardship, pain, and injustice. You're here to make things right for us and free us from Rome.”

But the disciples had a problem—

*There was a major difference between
the miracle they wanted
and the miracle they needed.*

Application—The same is true for many of us. We approach God, we plead, we pray, we ask, we seek, we knock, with good intentions and good motives, because we want God to . . .

- bring healing where there is sickness
- bring hope into a hopeless situation
- bring life where there is death
- bring peace where there is turmoil
- bring justice where there is injustice
- bring reconciliation where there is division
- bring joy where there is sorrow

Yet sometimes God looks at our good requests, and for reasons we can't see or understand, He says, “No.”

The disciples expected one thing, but—

Mark 8:31–33

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, **“Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”**

- Matthew's account tells us that Peter told Jesus, in effect, “This will never happen to you. You'll never be killed.”

- Peter thought what we all would think were we first-century Jews: that revolution against the Romans would be hard to accomplish if the leader of that revolution was dead.
- Jesus responded with a rebuke because Peter didn't understand the type of Messiah Jesus is. He didn't understand the enormity of what God was about to do. Jesus made clear that His mission then was not to establish an earthly Kingdom (that will come later) but to establish an eternal Kingdom. He didn't come to change an empire, He came to change *eternity*.

**While we only see what's right in front of us,
God sees the whole picture.
While we have a limited perspective,
God has an eternal one.
While God sometimes gives us what we want,
He always gives us what we need.**

When Jesus was crucified, the disciples ran for the hills and hid. They didn't understand, even though Jesus had prepared them for His crucifixion.

Imagine the grief, the disillusionment, the pain, and the anguish—

- All of your hopes had been put in this Man, you left everything to follow Him, and you expected to receive positions of power in the new earthly kingdom you thought you were helping to establish.
- In the face of all of these expectations, God said, “No.”

**Sometimes God says “No”
to bring about something much bigger
and much better
than we can possibly imagine.**

The Son

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus was under a stress we can't fathom. He knew the cosmic suffering He was about to endure, He knew the cross was coming His way, and He pleaded with the Father.

Mark 14: 32–42

Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, **“Sit here while I pray.”** And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, **“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.”** He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, **“Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”** Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, **“Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. Then He came the third time and said to them, **“Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”**

- Three times, in deep anguish, Jesus prayed, “Father, let this cup pass from Me. If there's any other way to cleanse them of their sins, to reconcile them with You; if there's any other way. . . .”
- And God said, “No.”

**Because God said no,
Jesus Christ took full weight of our sin upon Himself
and subjected Himself, in our place,
to the wrath of God on the cross.**

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

- God knows the pain of disappointment, sorrow, loss, even rejection, betrayal, and abandonment. He experienced all as He went to the cross.

Hebrews 12:2

... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- What was the joy set before Jesus? What was the one thing God didn't have that He gained as a result of His death and resurrection?
 - **You. Two thousand years ago, as He was suffering on the cross, Jesus was thinking of you! He saw you! You were the joy set before Him.**

At the death of Jesus,

- the disciples ran for hills,
- the Jewish people were lost in confusion,
- the religious leaders celebrated their position and power,
- and Rome was rid of the threat of a Jewish rebellion.

They all thought they understood what the death of Jesus meant, but none had a clue.

When God said "No" to an earthly revolution, He said "Yes" to an eternal one!

When God said "No" to an earthly rebellion, He said "Yes" to a heavenly one!

When God said "No" to the pleading of His Son, He said "Yes" to every single one of us!

When God said "No" to Peter, He said "Yes" to you!

**Death and resurrection of Jesus
reveal that God stopped at nothing to make a way for you.
The resurrection of Jesus
is the heavenly solution to the human problem.
In the victory of Jesus over death, hell, and the grave,
every single one of us can have
forgiveness for the past,
power for the present, and
unshakable hope for the future.**

When God says "No" to us, we're tempted to believe that He isn't good, or doesn't love us, or isn't powerful—

But in the resurrection of Jesus, we see His eternal goodness, His magnificent love, and His infinite power.

Conclusion

Everything God does He does with perfect wisdom and purpose.

Maybe you've experienced the pain of a "No" from God. But could it be that God said no to a miracle in your past to bring you to this very moment, to bring you **the miracle you need?**

Maybe today you need the **miracle of salvation**, which is the greatest miracle of all. It's the miracle of God nailing your old life to the cross with Jesus and raising a brand new you in the resurrection of Jesus.

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

- He came because He loves you.
- He died because He loves you.
- He said no because He loves you—because He is doing something bigger.
- He rose so that you wouldn't perish but have everlasting life. Resurrection life.

I want to invite you to pray with me. Scripture tells us that if we'll believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord, we shall be saved. Come, and receive life!

Lord Jesus, I thank You today for Your great love, that You came down from heaven, and You sought me, and You found me.

God, I confess my sin, my wrong beliefs, my wrong deeds, the things I've done, and the things I've failed to do.

I repent of my selfishness and my sin, and I receive Your cleansing and Your forgiveness.

I receive Your salvation that's been bought with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I turn away from my old life and I receive my resurrected life.

Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Make me a new creation and give me a brand new start.

In Jesus's name, amen.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has made your salvation sure. May God bless you and lead into everything He has planned for you.

Discussion Questions

1. Reflect on times when God has answered your prayers and pleadings with a "No."
2. Is it easy to remember God's love, power, and goodness when He answers you with a "No"?
3. Have you ever experienced the miracle you needed instead of the miracle you wanted?
4. Why was God's "No" in the Garden of Gethsemane His most significant "No" of all? What were its immediate implications for the disciples? The Jewish people? The Jewish leaders? Rome? What are its eternal implications for all of us?
5. Discuss Hebrews 12:2. How does knowing you were the joy set before Jesus change everything?

NOTES