

Kev's sermon notes for eGroups

Sunday, March 14, 2021

Elevation Church - Broadcasting from Ballantyne Campus – Charlotte, NC USA

Pastor: Steven Furtick

Sermon Title: "Surprise! – Stay Surprise-able - We don't need mirrors of people that think and act just like us – we need to be surprised by who God uses in our lives – Be open to divine surprises – Be less entitled and more open to surprises - When we become less surprise-able, we become more cynical - the challenge of faith is not to be more certain – it is to stay surprise-able.

Elevation Worship + Maverick City Music

- "I Thank God" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LM1grx0Huds>
- "Never Lost" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TOPBr8k8xY>
- New beautiful Song – "Million Little Miracles"
- Here Again - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfLcdBuB7NY>

Scripture for this week:

- Acts 3: 1-16: Peter Heals a Lame Beggar - 3 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. 2 Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. 4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" 5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. 6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. 9 When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. Peter Speaks to the Onlookers 11 While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. 12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. 17 "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. 21 Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. 22 For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own

people; you must listen to everything he tells you. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’ 24 “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. 25 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’[b] 26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

- **Mathew 17: The Transfiguration**
- **John 4:27:** Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.” 19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” 21 “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” 25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” 26 Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” The Disciples Rejoin Jesus 27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?” 28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.
- **I Peter 4:12:** 12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” 19 So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Sermon Title: “Surprise! – Stay Surprise-able - We don’t need mirrors of people that think and act just like us – we need to be surprised by who God uses in our lives – Be open to divine surprises – Be less entitled and more open to surprises - When we become less surprise-able, we become more cynical - the challenge of faith is not to be more certain – it is to stay surprise-able.

- **Please consider joining an eGroup (small group) so you don’t have to walk this walk alone? – See www.elevationchurch.cc.**
- **Interested in joining Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc**

- Interested in leading an eGroup? See: www.elevationchurch.cc
- Interested in serving at Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc
- Interested in attending or leading a watch party: See: www.elevationchurch.cc
- Here Comes Church:
 - Interested in serving at Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc
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 - Recall the remarkable testimony of Jesus Rios and his family from Columbia – after being inspired by sermon by Pastor Furtick in 2014 in Columbia where he talked about trusting God in the transition – Now they are using their gifts as translators and Spanish greeters and leading eGroups – see www.elevationchurch.org/espanol
 - eFam visiting Atlanta in late March – www.elevationchurch.org/eFam-Atlanta
 - One year ago today, we went into a lockdown – so much has changed and so much has not – as we are all renegotiating our lives – and some of us have been going through somethings that are very disorientating – for others the changes have been positive – regardless of our situation, we rarely get a chance to brace for positive or negative impact – be respectful and attentive as to what God is trying to tell us.
 - Easter Worship experiences:
 - Friday, April 2, 2021
 - Sunday, April 4, 2021
 - See: www.elevationchurch.org.
- Opening prayer by Pastor Steven Furtick on 3/14/2021: *“Lord we thank you for your presence – We ask now that you fill the empty places in our lives – the things we do not understand – where we do not have knowledge – God we receive your outpouring – we say that you come and we welcome you into situations – and we understand this is our way of expressing to you – the reality is you are always waiting for us - wherever we find ourselves – and your arms are always open - and you are always available – we know that there is no one that you would walk past – nor is there anyone that you would pass over because they are not important – we know that you would stop for one person that calls out your name – to open the heart of just one person – Lord I thank you that you would stop by a well in Samaria to change the life of a woman – a woman that was shunned by the entire village because of her lifestyle – Lord I thank you that you wait for the procession of all of Jesse’s sons before you anointed David as King – Lord we thank you for your patience with us – there were so many times when you had so much more to give but I lacked the space to receive it – and you were still so merciful – the king James version calls this “long-suffering with me” – Lord please be with those people that feel they’re far away from you today – God I pray that your break barriers – barriers of shame as well as other barriers. Lord we are grateful that whatever you build you fill – everyone here today was designed by you to fulfill a purpose – Lord thank you for this appointment in church today – to bring us together at this time and in this way – so now God release your glory, joy, and wisdom into our lives – and release it like a wave. The glory belongs to you. In Jesus’s name we pray - Amen.”*
- Let’s go to Acts 3: 1 to 16.
- Sometimes dramatic change happens when we least expect it.
- The title of today’s sermon is “Surprise!”

- Do you like surprises?
- Recall the funny story of Pastor Furtick trying to surprise a fellow pastor – “I came out here to because he needed a surprise.”
- The fact that we do not like surprises does not mean that we don’t need surprises.
- For some in this church when I say let’s go to Acts 3, this will be their first time they’ve ever seen this before – and they will probably get the most out of it – for others they might have a hard time hearing it in their heart - because they know it in their head.
- When God shows up in church we might act like we didn’t expect it to begin with – and after Peter performed a miracle, Sadducees and the Pharisees were motivated to put Peter in prison.
- There are several surprises that we read about in Acts 3.
- **We might be surprised that Peter and John are hanging out together because they were so different – Peter is boisterous and John actually doesn’t do much in this section of Acts 3 (see vs. 4) – Yet they got along even though they are completely different + they are competitive – Question: I wonder if it was John’s perspective (that was so completely different than Peters) that enabled Peter to be in position to experience God’s power? We wrongfully conclude that God will bring people into our lives that are similar to us – this is what we call a mirror (exactly matching our own specifications of the friends that we think we want) – and we can buy one of these at Lowe’s – we don’t need people in our lives that only reflect back at us – our same exact prejudices and preferences – reinforcing our biases – we need to be open to being surprised at the people that God uses in our lives – some of the biggest things that God does in our lives might come from people that we don’t really like. Consider this: Why would God send us something that we already have plenty of?**
- Why were Peter and John surprised when they arrived at the empty tomb of Jesus – after Jesus did exactly what he said he was going to do?
- It’s amazing that Peter and John performed the first miracle after the birth of the church – Peter and John together.
- **We should allow ourselves to be amazed as to how God uses our personality to accomplish certain things and we should be open to being surprised by the people that God puts in our lives. Question: Are you open to who God uses in your life? Or do you have a wish list that looks like something you should give to Santa then something you should pray to Jesus over?**
- If someone comes into your life that does not meet the exact specifications of what you’re looking for - will you be open to a surprise?
- In Acts 3, John and Peter are going up to the temple for a time of prayer – at about 3PM in the afternoon – they are going to the temple in this surprise me – the temple was the old system – During Pentecost Peter preached a powerful sermon – and the Holy Spirit was a demonstration of what he preached – and growth the church by 3,000 people – and these two designated leaders of this new “cult” within the Jewish faith as a fulfillment of what God already had started – are heading up to the temple and doing what they always did – and the best way to explain it is that Peter and John are the in between two things in their lives – there is the old/familiar/nostalgic/comfortable thing we used to do and then there is the new thing that is true – but there is a need to have a new belief within the same system or the same temple – and Peter and John are going to the temple like they always did every day – and then God gives them an interruption in their schedule.

- See Acts 3: 2.
- **The man is moving to his spot at the entrance of the temple gate while Peter and John are moving to their spot inside the temple – and what is amazing about what happens next is this - in order for the miracle to happen both parties had to be open to a divine surprise. Are you open to divine surprises?**
- What would happen if we were not open to divine surprises? A 2021 equivalent to this would be: No one got healed because no one was open to a surprise because we were too busy looking at our own phones – while looking at something that was not even real.
- My weekly rant about smart phones: What we like about our phones is that they are predictable – yes they make us miserable - but we know exactly what we're going to get because we know what is available to us.
- Most of us don't like to being surprised – however life brings many surprises – and if we are honest, we will not like a surprise unless it's a good surprise - or a surprise we can customize – We all probably want a God that customizes the surprises that He wants to present to us today.
- **In Acts 3, everyone in the temple (His house) was surprised that God actually did something – they were surprised that God actually had the audacity to do something in the name of Jesus Christ in His own house – can the potter tell the Clay what to do? Can God switch things around as a little bit? Can God give you a blue one instead of a red one? Can we just start small (in cultivating a natural ability) to be surprised by God? Have we structured God right out of our prayer life?**
- **Peter might not have stopped to speak to the man had it not been for quiet John – and the man probably would not have gotten what he received (miraculous healing) had he received what he originally asked for (spare change).**
- **Here is why this matters to you: We have to decide to embrace what life surprised you with or fight it – this 40-year-old man in Acts 3 has been paralyzed his entire life – nor are we defined by what we were born with – Jesus is bigger than our genetics – and God is going to give this man something that he had been wanting for a long time ago.**
- The longer we live, the less surprise-able will become – (Kev bonus: Why do we lose our capacity to wonder? - See Matthew 18:3 – “And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”)
- **Pastor Furtick classic: “I wish I wrote a children’s book before I had kids – it would’ve been perfect containing thousands of valuable insights and what I think children need.” “Also write your marriage book while you are still engaged – because life will surprise you to the point where you won’t be able to write the book anymore.”**
- **“Life will surprise you and people will certainly surprise you – and we can become traumatized. Can you relate to this at all? When we become less surprise-able, we become more cynical – and become more jaded – and we call it discerning to make it sound nice - but that’s not what it is. We can put a Breyers ice cream label on a can of spinach but it’s still spinach.”**
- We have to give a lot of credit to how much Peter has grown at this point in his ministry – in fact Peter was probably the least surprise-able from all of the disciples – because he would do the stupidest thing imaginable and think he was doing it for Jesus. Recall that Peter was shocked when Jesus went to the cross and then ascended to heaven on the third day – yet Jesus told Peter this over and over again.

- See Mathew 17: The Transfiguration – where Peter is very sleepy – and then says that we should build a shelter for Jesus and Moses and Elijah – What was Peter trying to do? To keep Jesus on the mountain and prevent him from going down to Cross – even the author comments that Peter did not know what he was saying – and did not know what he was talking about.
- **For anyone that is arrogant enough to speak to what other people should do for challenges that you have never faced – Life will surprise you – and we don't know what we are talking about – and the challenge of faith is not to be more certain – it is to stay surprise-able.**
- And yes “surprise-able” is a word in Merriam Webster dictionary - check it out.
- Stay Surprise-able.
- In fact, the miracle of healing in Acts 3 is a fantastic way to start the church – the man was not expecting much that day – and the people that Jesus healed asked to be healed – Peter is so obnoxiously proactive - he does not even ask the man are you looking for a life change? Because the moment the man gets up to walk he can't beg anymore – for three years Peter has been apprenticing under the Savior who specializes in surprises.
- Yes Jesus is stable – the same he is yesterday, today, and tomorrow – but he is surprised-able.
- And there's nothing in the text that suggests that the disciples like being surprised – but they needed it because Jesus put them in exact situation – where he could've given his disciples some advance notice but he didn't – by calling the catering service before feeding the 5000 – so why do you think Jesus surprised his disciples were a need?
- See John 4 – the women at the well – See John 4:27 – the disciples went out to get food and they were surprised to see Jesus with a woman and no one ask what he wanted.
- **Key point: What we are surprised by is based on what we assumed – the man in Acts 3 expected to get something from Peter and John (money) – Peter and John went to church expecting to pray – neither party was expecting a miracle – Can you let God surprise you or do you assume so much about him that you don't? – Sometimes we are surprised that our God is actually a good God – because we assumed based on what we heard about Him growing up – where God was made out to be the pettiest character in the whole story – but - when we learn the true nature of this awesome God, we are actually surprised.**
- What have you assumed about you? Because by the time you reach 40 - you've pretty much got it figured out as to what your limitations are – this is my spot - this is my gig - this is my deal – this is what I have to do to feel good – and this is what I have to do to get what I want.
- **See Acts 3:7 – Note the word “instantly” – what was imposed on the man for four decades was fixed instantly – it can change like that – and we need to keep things in balance because there are times that we think somethings changed instantly - and yet we are surprised that we still struggle – especially if you came into a relationship with God that was merely transactional – pray this prayer and get Jesus on your side so you don't have to die in hell like Hitler – and yet we continue to be surprised by the ongoing struggle – and when we nailed our sin to the cross we get home thinking our sins were forgiven – surprise! – here is lust right where you left it – but lust still got a ride and came home with you – we do not know our own strength because we always stop at our weakness.**
- It's what Peter said next that demonstrates the power of the gospel when confronting the handicapped man – See Acts: 3 6 Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped

him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God."

- What Peter and John are carrying he's going to keep the man from ever being carried again – God is most strategic when we are surprised – Peter and John went to church to pray and that's what they expected – but this would not have made Acts 3 – definitely not as interesting – and because of this miracle Peter and John were able to enter into the persecution knowing that God can do the impossible.
- **Think about all the things that had to happen for the man to have an encounter with Peter and John – the man thought he was going to get some change – and he did – just not dimes, quarters, and nickels – and we don't want to change because we don't want to be surprised – because we want to go to change stuff – without changing us – and this is not how God does it.**
- **Are you surprise-able?**
- **Keep some room in what you planned.**
- Peter is a good study here: By the time Peter has gotten to this point in his ministry, he is full of the Holy Spirit because he has seen the empty tomb – he has been restored since he left Jesus on the cross – He's no longer surprised by his own weakness – Peter is confident in God's strength – but he is not surprised by his own weakness – we should not be surprised by her own weaknesses – Peter learned to access the power of the one who could save this man.
- Nor should we confine our spouses to the first version of them when engaged.
- Recall that cute shorty of what Holly said to Paster Furtick: I never will marry a preacher and I will never preach myself – Surprise!
- Have you surprised yourself lately?
- When I started preaching, one of the first things I said was I could never preach into a video camera because I needed to be speaking to people in a room – Surprise! One year ago, I walked into a room the preach but there's no one in the room – forcing me to do the one thing I didn't think I had to do – Surprise!
- **Note the progression of Peter – the capacity to be surprised takes a little time – and we get conditioned by certain things – this means we should be more surprised and less entitled – when we go to the Bible with fresh eyes and realize that God wants to surprise us – in our Bible – in our lives – and in our relationships – he is the God of surprises – but sometimes we are not surprise-able.**
- **See Acts 3:8 – "the man was walking, jumping and praising God – it caused such a commotion that everyone was amazed – because this man was walking, jumping, and praising God" – Because he was not expecting to walk – there is a type of praise that comes out of somebody who has not learned yet to take God's grace for granted – because if you've always been able to walk – when you've always had provision – when you've always been taken care of – you stop being surprised by it – where as one person says we exchange appreciation for expectation – expecting people to do something they don't have to do for you – and this is very dangerous – the secret is to stay surprised – and savor every breath.**
- **See 1 Peter 4: "12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." God surprises you with great gifts and opportunities – and don't be surprised by the fiery trial –**

Note the maturation of Peter here – Don't be surprised by the favor and don't be surprised by the fire – don't be surprised when God strengthens you – and don't be surprised when you struggle – and above all else – don't let your struggle keep you from accessing your strength.

- Closing Prayer 3/14/2021 by Pastor Furtick: “When you started receiving blessings from God and you started being used by God – your feet barely touch the ground – and every once in a while you need to remember it is a blessing from God that you are able to walk – it's a blessing just to see another day – it is a blessing to just survive – and this can be easily understood if you ever walked through a season where you thought that you were not going to make it – let us get in the right mind and bless each day – stay amazed – stay surprised – jump for joy every once in a while – don't stop being surprised – God wants us to be surprised and he does this in strategic ways – and God is never more strategic than when we are surprised. Peter had no plans to preach that day (in Acts 3) – but he preached a sermon that was so powerful – because God planted someone at the gate – Surprise! – I want to think that the devil threw a great party when Jesus died on the cross – thinking that Jesus gave up – Surprise! – Tell the Devil this: “Devil, you hit me with your best shot - you formed every weapon against me – you tried to kill my confidence – you thought I would die in the shadow of the valley of death – you thought I was going to curse God and die – Surprise! – You thought you were going to pick my marriage apart – you thought you were going to derail my kids – Surprise! – Because the devil's plan back fired” – Because the one that started a revival in Jerusalem is faithful to complete it – we are stronger than we think we are – struggle made us better – and we need to enter into the God of surprises – Let God surprise you by giving him all of your insecurity and anxiety – Don't get overwhelmed by too many choices – Be surprised – If John and Peter can be interrupted on their way to their afternoon prayer by a paralytic man who asked for money but instead got healed – and God knows that you might not be ready to be surprised – Walk in the confidence knowing that Peter did not get it first – And we don't get this at first either – God is most strategic when we are most surprised – have a surprise-able Spirit – Don't be so guarded that you miss God – We need to be in a “surprise me” season – Surprise me God on the goodness of your provision – because we get too overwhelmed – the menu is too big – the world is too complicated – and the inputs are great – and the noise is too loud – Surprise us God and fill us with wonder and amazement – May we leap for joy for all of the things you have done for us – Make us a gate for something that needs to be released – God use us to surprise someone else – Amen”