

"The Disciples See Two Miracles"
John 6:1-24
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In college, I had a professor who frequently told jokes during class. As everyone laughed at his jokes, I often sat there wondering, "Why was that so funny?" A classmate would explain the joke to me, but I still wouldn't get it. I didn't laugh much during my young adult years. I was way too serious. With that being said, here's a joke. JOKE:

An Irish priest is driving down to New York and gets stopped for speeding in Connecticut. The state trooper smells alcohol on the priest's breath and then sees an empty wine bottle on the floor of the car. He says, "Sir, have you been drinking?" "Just water," says the priest. The trooper says, "Then why do I smell wine?" The priest looks at the bottle and says, "Good Lord! He's done it again!" That joke is titled "It's a miracle!"

We're going to explore three areas:

1. What is a miracle?
2. How does adversity contribute to miracles?
3. How can you make miracles happen?

Let's recap on the miracles Jesus performed so far:

1. Turning water to wine (2:1-11)
2. Healing the official's son (4:46-54)
3. Healing the invalid at Bethesda (5:1-9)

Before we dive into John 6, Jesus had gathered the 12 disciples and "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." (Luke 9:1-3) "So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere." (v. 6) When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he (Jesus) took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida..." (v. 10)

In John 6, Jesus went up on a mountainside with His disciples and a great crowd of people followed because they saw the miracles He had performed on the sick. As they were walking towards Him, as in many cultures where it's customary to serve food at social gatherings, Jesus turned to Philip and asked, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" If anyone knew where to get food, it would have been Philip because he was from Bethsaida, a town not far away (1:44). Philip replied, it would take 8 months' wages, almost a full year worth, to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite! He was being sarcastic...to Jesus.

Have you ever asked anyone (a friend, co-worker, or a child) a question that you knew the answer to?

As a child I didn't get an allowance, but what money I did get I'd put in the bank. That's actually how I saved to put a down payment on my first house. Periodically my father would ask to borrow money from me so he could travel back to his home village in China. Every time he asked, in my mind I was thinking, "Do you know how long it took me to save what little money I have?" But being the good, obedient daughter that I was, I uttered "okay" reluctantly.

Jesus knew it was impossible for the average person to provide enough food for this crowd of 5000 people or more. Some scholars suggest there could have been up to 20,000 people by counting women and children. He was testing Philip...just as my father was testing me.

Another disciple, Simon Peter's brother, named Andrew, spoke up and offered what they had. "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish" ... (v. 9) "Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish" (v.11).

How many times have you felt inadequate, not good enough, or incapable of completing a task? Glossophobia is the number one fear in America, public speaking. In my younger years, I had that fear. Reading and writing were something I avoided too. That's why, at one time, I was a math major in college. And those of you who love to read and write, you avoid math like a plague.

A couple of years ago, after I gave a devotional in People of the Word, Carol came up to me and said she and Maggie thought I might make a good lecturer. I'll never forget that day. It was our Christmas luncheon. I sat at the very back, corner table of the room. I was overwhelmed with the Holy Spirit. How did I know? (Carol doesn't know this...Well, she does now because she had to approve this lecture.) Because I couldn't stop sobbing. I had tears dripping down my face. Good thing I was sitting in the back of the room. When it came time to give Carol an answer, yea or nay to lecture, my flesh said, "absolutely not." What could I offer to People of the Word? We have people here who are well seasoned Christians and have been believers longer than I've been alive. No, that's not true. I'm older than I look.

I did accept that challenge. And when it came time to write the lecture, I was so stressed. I couldn't sleep for weeks. I felt like I was "flying over the cuckoo's nest" (like Jack Nicholson). I didn't know what to do; I didn't know how to start. I ended up on Maggie's couch, pouring out my feelings. We talked about lectures and ultimately she said, "Carol will also help you." But that was her advice. She didn't baby me one bit.

To make a long story longer. I got through the first year. And then Carol once again extended an invitation to lecture. And this time, my flesh said, "no" once again. It's difficult to say "no" to Carol, but it's more difficult to say "no" to God.

John 1:3 says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." In other words, ...you exist only because God made you, and you have special gifts only because God gave them to you. With God you are something valuable and unique; apart from God you are nothing, and if you try to live without him, you will be abandoning the (very) purpose for which you were made (Life Application Study Bible).

To make this story shorter, the bottom line: I never got stressed over this lecture. In fact, I looked forward to writing this. How did I go from freaking out to looking forward to it? I loved how Cheri Bean a couple of weeks ago reference John 3:30, "He must become greater, I must become less." When I refocused on glorifying God and giving God all the credit, it took the pressure off me. (Now, if I make a fool out of myself, that would be God's fault too.)

Back to the story: Philip offered nothing, therefore God had nothing to use. Andrew spoke up and offered what the young boy had, and God turned it into something great. Don't ever think you're too young or too old to be of service to Him.

After all the people were fed, Jesus asked the disciples to gather the leftovers (v. 12). That meant they had more than what they needed. "God often starts with what we have when He wants to do a miracle" (Pastor Sherry Reeves). Not only will God provide, but will provide beyond what you can imagine.

How else could I look forward to doing something I didn't want to do?

In the evening, after the miraculous sign of feeding the people, the disciples got into a boat to row across the lake for Capernaum. A strong wind blew, and the waters grew rough. After rowing for about 3 ½ miles, "they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified." (v. 16 – 19). Jesus identified himself, "It is I; don't be afraid." (v. 20) "Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading" (v. 21). There are two miracles here: Jesus walking on water and the boat miraculously ended up on shore. When we allow Jesus to enter our boat (our hearts), we'll find we don't need to struggle getting to shore. God will take us there, where there is peace and safety (Psalms 4:8).

God promised that He would never again flood the earth with water (Genesis 9:11), but He sure likes using water to get our attention and display His power through water.

1. We saw it when He split the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-29).
2. He instructed Moses to 'Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink' (Exodus 17:6).
3. When Jonah tried to escape from God on a ship, "the Lord sent a great wind on the sea..." to get his attention (Jonah 1:3).

Did you know water is named 722 times in the Bible? God also uses water to represent life with Him.

John 4:14: "But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

John 7:38: "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

"Rivers of living water" represent the Holy Spirit's presence and power poured out on Jesus' followers.

According to Astrobiology.nasa.gov, it says "All living things on Earth need water. Everything from people, plants, animals, and even mushrooms and things too small to see need water to survive." We, the people, need water too; the "living water" for eternal survival.

Water has a high surface tension. This means that the molecules at the surface of a body of water are attracted to each other and hold each other together. The high surface tension of water is also why some insects, like water striders, can move around on top of water. (See, Jesus isn't the only one who can walk on water.) Atoms join together to form molecules. A water molecule has three atoms: 2 hydrogen (H) atoms and 1 oxygen (O) atom.

Jesus is our body of water that holds us together in which we can do all things through him who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13).

Just as the 3 atoms provide strength, the Trinity (the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) is what gives us our strength, and not the other trio - me, myself, and I.

In whatever area of weakness we find ourselves, whether in ourselves or our circumstances, the Holy Spirit "helps us in our weakness" (Romans 8:26). The grace of God is sufficient and made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9), and we can receive grace upon grace from Him in our time of need (John 1:16). Only with God can we fly in freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17), and not over the cuckoo's nest.

Faith: Let's talk about it. If you've ever exercised, you might have felt sore the next day; actually, you could be sorer 48 hours after. But if you continue to exercise, you'll find that the activity gets easier and easier. Muscle growth occurs when the body breaks down muscle tissue and then rebuilds it bigger and stronger through a process called muscle hypertrophy. Quite often, our faith is being tested, broken down by hardships and then rebuilt bigger and stronger through the struggles and challenges of life, a process called faith hypertrophy.

God tests our faith to deepen our faith. What are you struggling with today? Is your faith muscle being broken down. If we exercise our faith muscles, our faith will get stronger. The end-product could be a hypertrophy of a miracle.

Miracles – I've known people who have been in financial struggles, and they were short of a specific amount of money to make ends meet. And then, low and behold, they received a check in the mail for the exact same amount they needed. Have you ever had this happen to you? Well, I haven't. But that's not to say I haven't had miracles happen.

When I think of miracles, I think of big miracles. One story that you might be familiar with is Annabelle Beam. (Not Bean in Cheri Bean.) She developed a painful digestive disorder which caused bloating in her stomach when she was 5 years old. On December 30, 2011, she fell 30 feet into a rotten cottonwood tree and was there for 5 hours. Not only did she survive without injury, but she was cured of her disease. They made a movie about this miracle called, "Miracles from Heaven."

The definition of **Miracle** (Oxford Languages): a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency.

Remember the days when we had rotary phones? I know this has happened to me several times, but had you ever picked up the phone to call someone and before you dialed, they were on the other end. Or you're thinking of someone you haven't spoken to in a long time, and someone mentions their name; or better yet, they called you or sent you a card or text? Coincidence?

Carol was so kind to ask me when a good time would be to do my lectures so I could work around my work schedule. I told her I didn't know because I didn't get my schedule yet. I'm a teacher; we get classes that start at the beginning of the semester, the middle, and at the end. I left it for Carol to decide. It wasn't until a couple of weeks ago that I looked at the date of my lecture, which was today the 17th and noticed the start of 2 new classes. Guess when those 2 classes are starting? This coming Monday, the 21st, right after the lecture. I couldn't have coordinated this any better. Coincidence or was it?

Then I heard God say to me, "Hello, that wasn't the only thing I did." When I got my schedule for this school year, I couldn't believe how many classes I was teaching. I had my full load, which is my full-time schedule, and then more than ½ of a full-time load was added to it. I didn't know how I was going to do this. That's a lot of classes to teach. When will I have time to write this lecture for People of the Word? The beauty of this was I did not panic. God had His hand on this situation all along. What I realized, thinking back to the beginning of the semester, I had 2 classes cancelled on the first day of school, due to low enrollment, so my department chair created a new class that will start later (this is another class, not the ones starting this Monday). That opened more time for me to do God's work, preparing for this lecture.

Coincidences or not, miracles come in all forms: overcoming addiction, healing from diseases, conquering fears or even forgiving someone.

In Florida, Granville Ritchie raped and strangled to death 9-year-old Felicia Williams. On the day of his sentence, the victim's father, Jerome Williams in the courtroom said to Ritchie, the defendant, "You got time, Bro (Brother). You got time to get right with God. I forgive you. I love you." For with God nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:37 KJV).

"Forgiveness is the act of the will," quote from Corrie Ten Boom (not a feeling). She was a Holocaust survivor, author of "The Hiding Place." She went back to Germany in 1946 and met with and forgave two Germans who had been employed at her concentration camp. She said, "Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness." She was eluding that we could be our own prisoners. (Fun fact: Did you know Corrie Ten Boom lived in Placentia?)

I think we can all agree that we have experienced both emotional and physical hurt, failures, and disappointments (may it be anxiety, depression, hurtful words, pain, disease, loss of a job or a relationship, backstabbing from a so-called friend, seeing a loved one go back into rehab for the 50th time, etc.). All this can cause anyone to lose hope.

But when we have faith in God, He can restore hope. Hope doesn't exist without faith. And with faith, miracles can happen just like for the father of Felicia Williams and Corrie Ten Boom. "You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples." (Psalm 77:14)

What does it take to make miracles happen?

There was a believer who passed away. In heaven he saw rows and rows of these cubie holes. He asked Jesus, "What are all those cubie holes with my name on it?" Jesus said, "it's all the miracles you didn't ask for." "Heaven is full of answers to

prayers we have never prayed." - Billy Graham. Prayer is the difference between the best "I can do" and the best "God can do." (Pastor John Reeve)

Let's focus on 3 areas of prayer: ask, believe, be specific.

#1 Ask:

James 4:2b "You do not have because you do not ask God."

Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

And when you ask, ask boldly like "...a synagogue leader came and knelt before him (JESUS) and said, 'My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.'" Matthew 9:18

In the Bible, we have read miracle after miracle. These miracles are attached to beliefs.

Mark 11:24 "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

#2 Believe:

James 1:6a "But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt..." There is no room for doubt. Say this with me, "Doubt, get out."

There was "an unclean woman who had a flow of blood for 12 years said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.'" And Jesus said, "...your faith has made you well." (Matthew 9: 21-22)

And – As two blind men followed Jesus and cried out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" "...He (Jesus) asked them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' 'Yes, Lord,' they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, 'According to your faith let it be done to you.'" (Matthew 9:27-29)

God can't do much with the faithless. In Matthew 13:58, "he (Jesus) did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith." He's not going to force us to believe. He gives us the gift of free will. We can have unfulfilled wishes and choose to be angry, resentful, and hurt, or let God heal and do miraculous things in our lives.

#3 Be Specific:

A young woman asked a pastor to pray for a mate. (This isn't a joke. It's a true story.) The pastor asked, "What would you like me to pray for?" The young woman said, "For a Christian man." "Anything else?" the pastor replied. "No." There are all

kinds of Christian men out there, and I'm sure she doesn't want just any old Christian man.

We pray for the salvation of our loved ones all the time. Last year in our small group, someone asked specifically for good Christian friends to surround her loved one. I thought that was interesting. I never thought to pray that way...so I stole it. I used it for one of my sons. Months later, my son was dating a young Christian woman, and he started attending the young adult group at her church. Well, that relationship didn't work out, but it did strengthen his relationship with God.

Conclusion:

In conclusion:

1. What is a miracle?

Anything under the sun. It can be big, a cure from a disease, or something small, having a meal with a friend.

2. How does adversity contribute to miracles?

Adversity has a way of strengthening our faith. As our faith gets stronger, so do the miracles.

3. How can you make miracles happen?

In John 15:7 says it beautifully, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

Please stand as we sing our song.

Let's close in prayer:

Dear Father God, in this lesson the disciples saw two miracles. But we know you provide miracles every day. Help us to see the small miracles in our day-to-day lives. Use us so we can be a miracle to others and be a testimony of your love for us. We ask all this in your name, in Jesus Christ. Amen