

Wednesday with the Word @Wheat Street Baptist Church

Rev. Ralph Basui Watkins, MFA, DMin, PhD
Servant Pastor / Teacher

God Is Still in the Miracle Working Business

What is a miracle?

Why do you think God performed(s) miracles?

Have you ever experienced or witnessed a miracle?

Do you believe God is still in the miracle working business?

Matthew 14:13-36 Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Note: The setting Matthew 14:1-12 - John had just been beheaded by Herod.

So Jesus is the midst of grief and yet he still acts. We see an example of love as a force to keep us, move us, sustain us and give us the the power to act when we are at our lowest. The question is how do we keep moving when we really want to give up because of the loss we have experienced?

Matthew 14:13-21

13 After Jesus heard about John, he crossed Lake Galilee to go to some place where he could be alone.

What was Jesus trying to do?

13b ***But*** the crowds found out and followed him on foot from the towns. **14** When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw the large crowd. ***He felt sorry for them and healed*** everyone who was sick.

How does Jesus respond to the crowd?

Why do you think Jesus responded this way?

15 That evening the disciples came to Jesus and said, “This place is like a desert, and it is already late. Let the crowds leave, so they can go to the villages and buy some food.”

16 Jesus replied, “They don’t have to leave. Why don’t you give them something to eat?”

17 But they said, “We have only five small loaves of bread and two fish.” **18** Jesus asked his disciples to bring the food to him, **19** and he told the crowd to sit down on the grass. Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and blessed the food. Then he broke the bread and handed it to his disciples, and they gave it to the people.

20 After everyone had eaten all they wanted, Jesus' disciples picked up twelve large baskets of leftovers.

21 There were about five thousand men who ate, not counting the women and children.

Why do you think the disciples wanted to dismiss the crowd?

What was their assumptions (what were they thinking) and how was that influencing their response to the crowd?

How do we look at what we have? Do we see abundance or scarcity?

Are we trying to hold onto what we got or are we trying to give it away?

Scarcity Thinking: Paralysis for Ministry

Ministry Over Money

English economist Thomas Malthus in his 1798 “Essay on the Principle of Population” predicts that supplies - which appear fix and limited will eventually run out. This attitude prompts us to seek to acquire more for ourselves no matter how much we have and to treat others as competitors no matter how little they have. Scarcity thinking and real scarcity are interactive in the simple sense that the frenzied accumulation of resources by some leaves others without enough, in a world that has the means to supply the basic needs for everyone. We will not give to others when we have and when we don’t have. We think it is going to run out so we hoard it and don’t share it, or give it away. God calls us to meet the needs of others and God will meet our needs. In God’s strange math, God calls us to give in order to get. Give the tithe, give the offering, bless the poor and I will open up the windows of heaven.

Do we believe **Philippians 4:19** - how does our giving reflect our faith?

19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

To believe in a miracle and actually experience a miracle we have to be in need of a miracle or put ourselves in position to need a miracle.

Matthew 14:22-31

22 Right away, Jesus made his disciples get into a boat and start back across the lake. But he stayed until he had sent the crowds away. **23** Then he went up on a mountain where he could be alone and pray. Later that evening, he was still there.

24 By this time the boat was a long way from the shore. It was going against the wind and was being tossed around by the waves. **25** A little while before morning, Jesus came walking on the water toward his disciples. **26** When they saw him, they thought he was a ghost. They were terrified and started screaming.

27 At once, Jesus said to them, "Don't worry! I am Jesus. Don't be afraid."

28 Peter replied, "Lord, if it is really you, tell me to come to you on the water."

29 "Come on!" Jesus said. Peter then got out of the boat and started walking on the water toward him.

30 But when Peter saw how strong the wind was, he was afraid and started sinking. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

31 Right away, Jesus reached out his hand. He helped Peter up and said, "You surely don't have much faith. Why do you doubt?"

Only people like Peter ever get out there on the water. Only people who try to be a part of a miracle get caught up in the storm of the miracle. There are turbulent times in the midst of a miracle, especially before the miracle happens or when it appears it might not happen and you are stuck in the middle. We experience all kinds of emotions while we are trying to believe God for what God can do and what God may have shown God was going to do. In the midst of it we doubt. We vacillate from faith filled moments to doubtful moments. The thing about God is God doesn't penalize us for it. God catches us just like God caught Peter.

Why do we doubt?

How do we realistically deal with doubt?

Is doubt unavoidable?

Is the degree of doubt and the length of time we doubt something we can manage and catch? Can we arrest our doubt?

2nd Corinthians 10:3-6

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. **4** For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, **5** casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, **6** and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

How do we bring our thoughts into captivity? How do we arrest doubt?

1. Remind yourself of what you prayed for and pray it again.
2. Repeat to yourself, talk to yourself, about what you believe God is going to do. Talk to yourself will has the power to change your mind.
3. Keep your eyes on Jesus reading the Gospels and seeing how he acted in the lives of others who were in need of a miracle.
4. Find real life stories of people who God worked a miracle for, the same miracle you are in need of, and you will begin to believe if God did it for them God can do it for you.
5. When you find that your mind is drifting and taking you to that place of doubt (recognize it, call it out, be mindful of what triggers it) immediately start thinking about something else. Tell yourself to stop tripping. Note those triggers.
6. Do something that brings you closer in line with what you ask God to do. Do something that can positively affect the miracle you are believing God for.
7. Count the signs, no matter how little they may be, that can give you hope that God is working.
8. Develop spiritual habits or rituals that refocus you (here are mine):

1. Exercise, eating healthier and going to bed 10:00 p.m.
2. Reading - books that speak to me: The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life by Rosamuch Zander and Benjamin Zander / Upon this Rock: The Miracles of a Black Church by Samuel Freedman
3. Prayer
4. Meditation
5. Talking to myself
6. Not talking to people who I know spit on my faith or increase my doubt. I avoid them as best I can because I know I am not in a position to deal with them right now. If I come in contact with them I pray that God will keep me from going off.
7. Listening to music that speaks to me: Anthony Brown - Trust in You; Maranda Curtis - Way Maker
8. Doing what I love that is connected to what I am believing God for: Teaching, Preaching, talking with people, walking the streets, going over to The Towers
9. WORSHIP - publicly and privately

Develop healthy rhythms that revive your faith.

Matthew 14:32-36

Don't be afraid to work for what you need!

32 When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind died down. **33** The men in the boat worshiped Jesus and said, "You really are the Son of God!"

34 Jesus and his disciples crossed the lake and came to shore near the town of Gennesaret. **35** The people found out that he was there, and they sent word to everyone who lived in that part of the country. So they brought all the sick people to Jesus. **36** They begged him just to let them touch his clothes, and everyone who did was healed.