

Dove South – August 2020 – Miracles

The Lexicon in my Bible lists a MIRACLE as: An event that does not follow the norms of nature or that defies the laws of probability and leaves a message to believers. Miracles help with salvation and they also reveal something about God. In Hebrew and in Greek, a miracle may have different names. It is a *sign*, a *wonder*, a *work of power*, or all at the same time. Miracles are always present among the people of God.

“God himself confirmed their witness with signs and marvels and miracles of all kinds, and by freely giving the gifts of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 14:3

Examples in Scripture

Scripture is full of examples of miracles, and not just around Jesus’ ministry, although that has plenty – some examples that immediately spring to mind are the miracles accompanying the Exodus journey including the parting of the Red Sea [Ex 14:22] and the provision of manna and quail [Ex 16:13-15], Daniel in the lion’s den [Dan 14:30-42], Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace [Dan 3:23-93], Jesus turning water into wine [John 2:1-11], and healing so many – blind, epileptics, lepers - including the paralytic [Luke 5:17-25], the raising of Lazarus [John 11:1-44], the multiplication of the loaves and fishes [Mark 6:35-44], the calming of the storm [Matt 8:23-26], and later the apostles who effected healings through handkerchiefs that had touched them [Acts 19:11-12]....

We know that God uses miracles to grab our attention, to build our faith, give us opportunities to express gratitude and to pass blessings on to others. In a recent homily we were told that miracles are a sign of the Kingdom of God, and if that is so, does God still provide miracles for us today?

At no time in history has it been harder to acknowledge miracles than it is today. We are living in a scientific and knowledge-based age, driven by the need to explain and understand everything. God is God. God can bend the laws of nature at will, and sometimes we are unable to explain or understand things.

The start of my Dove journey

I first came to Dove after receiving a miracle healing at a Cecilie Graham healing service. I experienced being nestled in God’s loving embrace. My life changed. Suddenly I was compelled to find some place in the Catholic Church where the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit was welcome and active. I found that in Dove.

The power of God, manifest and released through the Holy Spirit, is available to each one of the baptised believers, and especially so to those released in the charismatic giftings. In Dove we are trained and taught to pray, to wait on God’s timing, to believe expectantly, to bring the hopeless cases to God - just as Jesus instructed us to when he returned to the Father [Acts 1:8]. Each of us is entitled to claim the gifts of the Spirit for ourselves and for the building up of the Church – to share, to be a blessing to others, to become a dynamic Spirit-filled people, operating in the spiritual gifts and bearing the spiritual fruit. And miracles are part of that legacy.

I know that I went looking for a miracle when I was desperate and could see no other alternative. That is often when we turn to God, when there is nothing left of ourselves; when we have depleted medical resources and tried every other avenue – those are the times when a miracle is our last resort. But other times God whispers unexpected miracles around us, just to delight us and bless us out of his abundant goodness. It might be something like seeing light dancing on the water of a lake.

My miracle on the road

I have also experienced miracles of provision. Once when my father was living in New Plymouth, I took him on a road trip to visit an army friend in Whanganui who was dying. It did his aging car good to occasionally have a decent run. Dad didn't believe in keeping much petrol in his car because he usually only made short shopping trips around town, and he was keen for me to purchase petrol at the Gull station in Whanganui so didn't want me to fill up before we set off. But our time with his friend was intense and we were late leaving for home. In the excitement I forgot to find the Gull station and headed north in darkness. By the time I realised that we hadn't filled up, we were well on the road and there was no sign of a petrol station in the small rural communities on the way. His petrol gauge had a white line just above the empty mark and by this time the needle had moved below that and hovered there on 'E'. I asked dad how much petrol he had in the tank when the fuel light came on. What fuel light? My heart dropped. The white line was the warning point and we had certainly dropped below that miles before. We prayed furiously, stopping at each community we came to in the hope we could find a service station tucked away off the main road. Somehow we limped into a township where we could buy some petrol. I don't know how we did it, but we had driven for two hours in the dark on an empty tank. Thank you God.

Miracles at Dove

Many years ago when I was President of Auckland Central Dove I wrote on my folder "Be realistic – expect a miracle." Because we did see miracles in Dove. Little miracles at every meeting:- miracles of provision, miracles of multiplication, miracles of deliverance. For instance I remember one time when the woman who was filling in for our usual hospitality lady, discovered that there was only a tiny amount of coffee left in the jar. We had no time to purchase more before the meeting. When she showed me I said, "Never mind - almost all our ladies drink tea." But they didn't that night. Person after person came up and asked for coffee. Not daring to look, she prayed each time she put the spoon in the jar – and all evening she spooned out coffee without running out. Recounting that story later boosted the faith of all our team members. We felt God's presence strongly.

Lessons from Sr Briega McKenna

Looking back, I see that my experience of receiving a miraculous healing had a lasting impact on my life. God had certainly got my attention. But I upset my mother whenever I spoke about it and she warned me that if I kept talking about miracle healings people would think I was 'odd.' I was surprised to find that I really didn't care what people thought, so I kept on talking!

I'm not sure if this also impacted Mum, but I remember not long afterwards she lent me Sr Briega McKenna's book called "Miracles Do Happen". Sr Briega was an Irish nun who had a healing ministry to priests. I was particularly struck by a story she shared about a Priest's

retreat in Florida where they all prayed over a priest with a gangrenous foot. The next day the foot was miraculously healed. All the priests stood around peering at the limb in consternation - until someone suggested that it mustn't have been gangrene after all. There was a collective sigh of relief from the assembled clergy – at last they had a reasonable explanation that they could accept.

It is probably not surprising that our clergy are sceptical of miracles because the Church has quite stringent guidelines for accepting whether a phenomenon can be classed as a miracle or not, given that proven miracles need to be attributed to potential saints to enable their canonisation.

Bruce's miracle

I remember telling one of our Canon Lawyers about a miracle healing my husband Bruce, received. He got a cough which didn't clear up and developed into bronchitis and then pneumonia. We had been planning a trip to the USA and I knew there was no way they would let him enter the country with the cough he had. Every test, x-ray and CT scan he had showed the situation worsening, and he could only sleep sitting upright in a chair. At one stage he stopped coughing and I thought he was getting better. But it seems that he had cracked his ribs and was in too much pain to cough. People with pneumonia who are unable to cough often drown in the fluid collecting in their lungs, so I knew this was a dire situation, and I started considering what my life would be like if he died - a distinct possibility by that stage. I knew I would have need to look for a job.

The week before we were due to depart for San Francisco, a bronchoscopy found a lump in his lung which was the cause of the problem. Two days later we had a phone call advising that removal of the lump was scheduled for the following morning.

With such short notice I put a call to prayer out through facebook and took him to hospital the next morning. I was very surprised to get a phone call soon afterwards to collect him. Sometime between Tuesday (when they did the bronchoscopy) and Friday (when they went to remove it) the lump had just – 'disappeared'.

We quickly packed our bags and flew to the USA, and when we got home I was shoulder-tapped for the job which I believe God had been preparing me for.

I have never doubted this was a miracle. I know there was a lump, I saw the pictures of it. To the Canon Lawyers this didn't fit their criteria of a miracle, because Bruce's condition was able to have been resolved medically. To have a priest discount it as a miracle reminded me of Sr Brieger's experience with that gangrenous foot.

Why are we so reluctant to acknowledge miracles?

I think the story of the gangrenous foot has stayed with me because it taught me a powerful lesson with regard to miracles – whether or not we accept them is less a matter of evidence than on our own view of the limits of possibility. Remember that even Jesus was unable to perform miracles in Nazareth because the people's faith was compromised by their 'knowing' him as the carpenter's son. [Mark 6:1-6]

How easy it is for us to 'discount' and deny the miracles that God whispers into our lives! How many little miracles occur each week that we overlook? And in doing so we deprive

God of the glory and the thanksgiving; and in not sharing the stories we deprive ourselves and others the faith boost that we all need.

As I look back on Bruce's miracle I ask myself, was the miracle the disappearance of the lump before they could surgically remove it, or was the miracle that this situation prepared me to take a job that I possibly wouldn't have done otherwise? Perhaps God performs miracles in layers.

God's message to you today

Dear reader, I don't know what needs you have in your life, but I believe that God is preparing your heart to receive a miracle. And certainly in opening your mind to acknowledging miracles all around you. God speaks these words (received by the Dove Team and Intercessors) to you today:

"I have heard the cry of your heart; just rest humbly in my presence, keep your eyes on me and pray. For I have heard your prayer already, I have heard the cry of your heart. I say to you now, be kind. Conquer evil with goodness. Let go of your desire for vengeance, forgive quickly, as I have forgiven you, and bless those who have hurt you. Then you will be filled with my peace and your heart will overflow with gratitude. Take courage to step out of the boat, because at the very moment that you take action, that moment when you step out of your comfort zone, THEN I am able to make things happen. I have heard the cry of your heart."

Words received and emailed to me by Grace on 10 August 2020:

I have heard the cry of your hearts, just rest in me.

2Chr 7:14 if my people.....

I have heard the cry of your hearts.

Neh 1:11

It seemed to me all about being humble and worshipping.

In the team meeting it seemed more about courage and stepping out of the boat.

Rom 12: 14-21. and Col 3: 12-15.)