

Title: "Jesus the Miracle Worker"

Text: Mark 6:30-44

The past few weeks as we have continued to "re-introduce Jesus,"

-we have been highlighting various aspects of Jesus' ministry that the Gospel writers don't want us to miss.

We have looked in a fresh way at Jesus the healer, and Jesus the teacher, Jesus the story-teller, and Jesus the disciple-maker.

-Today I would like to re-introduce us to Jesus the miracle worker.

We touched on this aspect of Jesus' ministry already as we looked at Jesus as a healer.

-His ability to heal the sick, restore sight to the blind, cleanse the leper, and cast out demons was certainly downright miraculous.

But what we saw was that all of these types of miracles

-were an integral part of his overall ministry of bringing the kingdom of God to this world,  
-and overthrowing the kingdom of darkness  
-and reversing the effects of the original fall into sin.

But my question today is, what about those other types of miracles Jesus occasionally did,

-like turning water to wine at a wedding, or walking on water, or calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee?

These seem to be miracles of a different order.

-Jesus isn't doing them to reverse the effects of the fall.  
-These miracles seem to be signs of something else altogether.

We don't have time to look at them all today, so I'd like to look with you at the one miracle of this type which is recorded by all of the Gospel writers.

-It's the one miracle that made it into all four gospels.  
-It's the feeding of the 5000. (Read Mark 6:30-44)

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So let me set the stage a bit for this particular miracle of Jesus.

It takes place at a time when it is Jesus and the 12 disciples  
-who are themselves in the most need of ministry.  
-They are tired to the point of exhaustion.

The 12 have just come back from their first short term mission trip.

-Jesus had sent them out two by two with instructions to go into the surrounding towns and villages to preach the gospel of the Kingdom and heal the sick and cast out demons.

-Jesus was giving them the opportunity to practice doing the ministry that he had been training them to do as his disciples.

And lo and behold, their first foray out into ministry on their own had been quite successful,

-and as we come in on the passage I just read to you, they have come back to Jesus all excited and reported to him all that had happened.

-And this is all good, and they are indeed excited, but they are also tired.

-Jesus knows this and can see it in them, and says, "Now come away with me by yourselves to a quiet place and we can get some rest."

-He knows they need it.

And so does He!

-Because not only has Jesus continued doing ministry on his own while they were gone,

-but he has also gotten word that his cousin, John the Baptist, had been beheaded by King Herod, and is dead.

This news is grievous to Jesus, and he knows it will be for a number of his disciples as well.

-Because Peter and Andrew and James and John were all disciples of John the Baptist for a while before they became Jesus' disciples.

So this is the state that Jesus and the 12 are in as they go off

to a solitary place to seek some peace and quiet, and some rest and renewal.

It has been a week of great ups and great downs.  
-Both have worn them out, and they need a break.

But alas, it was not to be.

-All four Gospels tell us that the crowd somehow got wind of where they were going,  
-and tracked them down in that quiet place.  
-In fact, Mark says here that some of them got there ahead of time and were already there waiting for them when they arrived.

This is what I meant last week when I said that sometimes the crowds around Jesus interrupted the discipling ministry he wanted to do with his smaller group of disciples.

-But in this case, as in most cases, Jesus looked at the crowd and had compassion on them,  
-because he saw them as sheep without a shepherd.  
-So he and his 12 disciples spent another day in ministry.  
-No rest for the weary, right?

And at the end of this long day, they are all now totally worn out.

-The disciples want to call it quits.  
-They've had enough.  
-And at this point, they can see that everyone including the crowd is tired and hungry.

They go to Jesus and say, "Lord, we are out in the boondocks and it's already really late. Send the people away to they can go into the countryside and forage for a little food for themselves.

So that, my friends, is the setting for this miracle I want to examine with you for a minute today.

-We all know that Jesus is about to feed the 5000 with just five small loaves of bread, and a couple of sardines.

And the question is, why does he choose to do this?

Because I want you to remember, back at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry,  
-he was out in the wilderness for 40 days being tempted by the devil,  
-and the very first temptation of the devil was asking Jesus to turn stones into bread to feed himself when he was hungry.

And the other temptations were about using his divine nature to be a miracle worker on earth, to wow the crowds and take over the world.

You all know that Jesus refused to do any of that.  
-From the very start of his ministry Jesus refused to consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing and took on the nature of a servant.  
-What this meant on a practical level every day for Jesus,  
-was that He didn't go around every day being a miracle worker like that.  
-He didn't go around acting like a little god on earth,  
-zapping people he didn't like,  
-flying through the air on the wings of angels,  
-deposing kings and taking over their countries,  
-acting like a marvelous magician.

Those kinds of uses of his divine power Jesus mostly shunned.  
-It's only very infrequently that Jesus actually exhibited his divine power in that kind of way.

What I want us to notice today, is that when he did choose to do so it was because he saw a teachable moment for his disciples.

And this is a perfect case in point.  
-For Jesus, this moment of exhaustion and hunger at the end of a long day and a long week of ministry,  
-was a teachable moment for his disciples.  
-They were at the end of their rope.  
-They had exhausted all of their mental, emotional, spiritual and relational energies.  
-They were spent.

And so Jesus chooses that moment to ask them to do something that he knows full well they can't possibly do. - He asks them to feed the multitude that are right there before them, all of them tired and hungry.

And it was an impossible task to accomplish even if they were feeling spry and energetic.  
-But when they are tired to the point of exhaustion and hungry (and probably grumpy) themselves?

They say to Jesus, "You've got to be kidding me! It would take eight months wages to buy enough food for a crowd this big,  
-and look where we are, there's not a Shaw's or a Market Basket or a Wegmans anywhere nearby!  
-How in the world can we get food enough for all these people to eat?"

And you know the story, Jesus asks them what they do have on hand.  
-They go and ask around and come back with 5 small loaves and two little fish.  
-I was serious a minute ago when I said sardines.  
-That's the word that's used here for the fish.

So Jesus directs the disciples to have all the people sit down in groups of 50's and 100's on the grass where they are.  
-And then Jesus prays over the meal, breaks the bread and fish, and begins giving it to the disciples to pass out to the people.

He's not making stones into bread, but somehow he's taking 5 small loaves and two sardines and multiplying them so that the supply never runs out.  
-And everyone gets fed, and it says they were all satisfied.  
-So it wasn't just a crumb that everyone was fed.  
-No, they all ate and were full,  
-and all the gospels say that the disciples collected basketfuls of leftovers at the end.

It's mindboggling. Don't try to figure it out.  
-But all four gospel writers tell the story,

-and they never forgot it...ever.

It was a teachable moment for them, as they learned in a vivid way that ministry is not about them.

- Ministry in the kingdom is not about their resources.
- It is not about their abilities.
- It is not about their energy level, whether high or low.
- It is not about their finances whether high or low.
- It is not about whether they are feeling adequate or inadequate for the task in front of them.

Ministry in the kingdom is about trusting in a power outside of yourself, the power of God Himself,

- who is able to do above and beyond all we could ask or imagine.
- With God, all things are possible.

Teaching that lesson to his disciples was pretty much the only reason Jesus ever did these extraordinary kinds of miracles.

- When his disciples were at their wits end in the midst of a storm on the sea of Galilee, and were terrified they were about to drown,
- Jesus calmed the sea with a word of command.
- The disciples learned again not to trust in their own resources but to trust in the power of God who could do above and beyond all they could imagine.

When at a wedding in Cana the hosts had run out of wine,

- Jesus saw a teachable moment for his disciples and supplied the need turning water to wine.
- The crowd at the wedding didn't know where the wine had come from, but John says the disciples saw Jesus supply the need when the steward was at his wits end, and they put their faith in him.

You see, Jesus didn't do these kinds of miracles to wow the crowds.

- He wasn't ever depending on these kinds of miracles to prove his divinity,
- or to convince people to think he was the Messiah.
- He wasn't "showing off."

What he was doing was discipling his disciples.

-He was teaching them to trust in God no matter what the situation.

-He was modeling for them that if one quits relying on their own wits and ingenuity and resources,

-and learns to rely on the presence and power of God, you will see God do above and beyond all that you could imagine.

Not to feed your ego. Not to show off what a super Christian you are.

-Not to help you make a name for yourself as a miracle Worker.

-But to teach you again and again not to rely on yourself, but on the power and resources of God.

I believe this is what all the Gospel writers want us to see and learn for ourselves in these miracles of Jesus.

-Not that he was a “miracle worker” so much as that Jesus taught them all to trust in the power of God which was available to all those who would trust in Him to supply their needs as they walked in His ways.

That’s a lesson I have learned again and again in my life,

-and that we as a church have learned again and again over the many years of ministry here at Forestdale.

God has supplied our needs according to his riches in glory again and again.

When this church stepped out in faith 36 years ago to call me as the first full time pastor,

-there were many in the little congregation who thought we couldn’t afford a full time pastor.

-They were right, we couldn’t.

-But the body of Christ here stepped out in faith, and God supplied the need again and again for 36 years now.

And when we did needed renovations to the building, we couldn’t afford some of them either,

-but on multiple occasions we have seen gifts given from unforeseen sources which were just what we needed.

And when we felt God calling us to step out in faith and hire a full time associate pastor at the same time as sending 25 of our people off with our youth pastor to plant a new church,  
-that was crazy, too.  
-But we voted in faith unanimously to do what we felt God was calling us to do,  
-and God supplied our need again and again.

And those are just a few of the times when God supplied our financial resources when we needed him to.

There have been hundreds and hundreds of times when God has answered our prayers,  
-healed people, reconciled people, restored broken marriages, brought leaders or teachers or musicians just when we needed them.

There are little miracles God works in our lives everyday as we trust him.  
-And he doesn't do them to glorify us.  
-He uses them to teach us to trust in Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine, as we seek to walk in his ways.

Let us pray.

Benediction from Ephesians 3:20

*"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen."*