

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession: Holy and wonderful God, hear our prayer. We would be different; less judging, less selfish, less greedy, more hopeful, more graceful, more trusting. We would be different; if You would come into our hearts and cleanse them; if You would open our hands and direct them; if You would move our minds and feet to follow You. We will be different; if You will change us, and remake us, again, in Your image. Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time: Did you know that there are 35 different Bible stories about Jesus performing miracles? In 23 of them, Jesus heals a person who was really sick or had a disability (like giving sight to a man born blind), in nine of them, Jesus demonstrates power over nature (like calming a storm or walking on water), and in three of them, He raises someone who had died back to life (like Lazarus.) Did you ever wonder why Jesus did miracles or why some people got a miracle but others didn't? The Gospel of John tells us that when Jesus did miracles, He did it so that people could learn something about what God's heart is really like. They show us how much God loves us, and how much God wants us to turn to Him so we can live joyful lives even when things go badly. They show us how amazing it is that the most powerful being in the universe, God, loves and cares for each one of us personally.

MONDAY 9.26.22

John 2:1-11

When we think about Jesus' comment that His followers would do "greater things" than He did, we get hung up on the fact that Jesus performed miracles—real, supernatural, things that we can't imagine doing ourselves, let alone doing something even greater! This week, we will look at several of the Gospel of John's miracle stories, to consider what Jesus communicated through them, and whether the "greater things" Jesus talked about really meant "more spectacular things." We begin with the story of Jesus changing water into wine at a wedding in the town of Cana. While the miracle itself is, of course, amazing, and likely spared the hosts embarrassment (a compassionate gesture on Jesus' part) the last verse states its real purpose: "He thus revealed His glory." Remember from our reading of John 1:14 last Tuesday that the author used similar language in saying that "We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." We also need to realize that many Old Testament prophetic passages about the coming of the Kingdom of God (Amos 9:13, Jeremiah 31:12, Isaiah 25:6 to name a few) use the metaphor of new wine to describe that day. Through the miracle, Jesus says: Where I am, the Kingdom of God is too!

- How can your life, too, reflect the Kingdom of God?

TUESDAY 9.27.22

John 4:43-54

After traveling from Cana to Capernaum, Jerusalem, the Judean countryside, and even Samaria, Jesus returned to Cana in Galilee. While there, an important royal official asked Jesus to heal his sick son. Jesus makes a poignant observation, no doubt informed by His recent experiences in the aftermath of His changing water into wine—"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe." The problem with miracles, of course, is the sensationalism they inspire. Jesus' words make clear that He was not interested in performing miracles just to please the crowds, especially if that was what they demanded. The irony of the story, of course, lies in the fact that Jesus does heal the official's son, and that it is when the father connects the timing of his son's improvement with his discussion with Jesus that he believes—proving the truth of Jesus' observation. Would the man have believed in Jesus without the miracle? Or did Jesus perform the miracle because He knew that it would, indeed, inspire faith in the father? Either way, the man and his entire household became Christ-followers, and that is what Jesus seeks. But it is the creation of a faithful relationship, not the sensational sideshow itself, that is the end goal of the miracle.

- Based on Jesus' words, is your belief overly miracle-based?

WEDNESDAY 9.28.22

John 5:1-23

Immediately after the healing of the official's son, Jesus headed back for Jerusalem. While there, Jesus visited a pool which many people believed held healing powers. Among those present, Jesus found a man who had been sick for 38 years, and cured him on the spot. The story goes on to make a particular point: the day Jesus did this was the Jewish Sabbath, a day on which anything that could be construed as work was forbidden. What's more, after healing the man, Jesus told him to pick up his mat and carry it—which was also considered work! The Jewish authorities were scandalized by such behavior, but the miracle provided the opportunity for Jesus to teach important lessons about His identity and the "greater things" that God was accomplishing through Him. A primary point of that teaching was that restoring life, and the fullness of life in community, is one of the greatest things that can be accomplished on earth. The healing of the man at the pool was not simply about a sick man being made well—it was about throwing a spotlight on the tragedy of a sick man being ostracized by society, and spending all his days alone at a pool hoping to get well. It was about reincorporating that man into everyday life; life in relationship with God and with the community of faith.

- Why, then, does Jesus also tell the man to stop sinning?

THURSDAY 9.29.22

John 9:1-41

Once again, Jesus heals someone on the Sabbath. This time, however, Jesus heals a man born blind in response to a question from His disciples—"Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" It was a common assumption at the time that such a condition must be the direct result of someone's sin—usually either the person with the affliction themselves or one of their parents. A common adage, taught by rabbis, stated that "bad things happen to evil people." The healing of this man demonstrated that this was an incorrect worldview. Rather than seeing the blindness as direct evidence of God's judgment on sin, Jesus sees it as an opportunity for God's life-giving love to be poured out on an unfortunate victim of a fallen world. While the blind man learns this invaluable lesson, the spiritually blind Jewish authorities reject Him when He tries to teach them the same lesson. The miracle gives Jesus the perfect opportunity to teach a dual lesson, summarized in our final verse: no, being blind does not make you guilty of sin. But claiming you fully understand the nature of God and to be aligned with His will, while casting people out of community and refusing to change your perspective so you can see God for who God really is, does.

- Has Jesus opened your eyes? Do you consider it a miracle?

FRIDAY 9.30.22

John 11:1-48

In the Gospel of John, the miracles of Jesus culminate in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. While Lazarus' death gives Jesus opportunity to provide Martha and Mary with comforting teaching about eternal life and the future resurrection to come, it is Jesus' words at the actual event of calling Lazarus from the tomb that provide a window into what Jesus is ultimately demonstrating here. Remember the words from John 1:14 last week, and from John 2:11 on Monday about Jesus' revealing of the glory of God, and consider Jesus' words here to those present, as He miraculously calls Lazarus from the tomb: "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" The miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead is, above all else, a revealing of the glory of God, showing us who God really is. It is physical proof of the fact that human life is God's greatest concern, that God has power over death, and that Jesus' mission is to overcome the separation between God and humanity of which death is the greatest symbol. The raising of Lazarus, then, also serves as a preview of the greatest miracle of all, Jesus' resurrection from the dead. While Lazarus was resuscitated to human life and would die again, Jesus is resurrected to the glory of eternal life.

- When have you witnessed the glory of God, even in tragedy?

SATURDAY 10.1.22

John 20:30-31

Today's passage from the end of John's Gospel is one of the most important and key passages of the entire book. John does not record every miracle Jesus performed, but has chosen to describe the ones that he believes are most apt to engender faith in the reader. "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His Name." As we have seen throughout this week, the miracles and signs Jesus performed were not done with a focus on the individuals healed or helped. An emphasis on this aspect of the miracles cannot help but lead us to question, "Why did these people receive a miracle, but not everyone else?" When we move our focus in the miracle stories to what they reveal about God, when we understand that their purpose was to demonstrate God's character and glory for us, we come to better withstand the trials of life in which we are tempted to ask, "Why didn't Jesus do a miracle for me?" When we realize, as John writes, that we have these miracle stories so that we might believe Jesus is the Christ, and through that belief to gain eternal life—which is what God wants most for us—it moves us away from a self-centered worldview, and toward a God-centered one.

- Do the miracle stories lead you to belief in Jesus? How?



Daily Study Guide

September 25-October 1, 2022

Sermon Series: Greater Things

Week Three: "Miraculous Signs" - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, September 25: John 6:26-35 (CEB)

"Jesus replied, 'I assure you that you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate all the food you wanted. Don't work for food that doesn't last but for food that endures for eternal life, which the Human One will give you. God the Father has confirmed Him as His agent to give life.' They asked, 'What must we do in order to accomplish what God requires?' Jesus replied, 'This is what God requires, that you believe in Him whom God sent.' They asked, 'What miraculous sign will you do, that we can see and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, just as it is written, *He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*' Jesus told them, 'I assure you, it wasn't Moses who gave the bread from heaven to you, but my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. The bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' They said, 'Sir, give us this bread all the time!' Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Things that really impacted me from today's sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Bill Dahlin
- Jeanine Budt
- Rick Furgerson
- Glenn Shields
- Pat Primm
- Sandra Lewis
- Karen Tanaka
- Gerri Baum
- Barry Eschenbrenner
- Mark Grossenheider
- Natalie Grossenheider
- Linda Langston
- Mitch Mitchell
- Bill Reichter
- Vivian Rye
- Art Schnatterly
- Nini Schneider
- Peggy Zinser
- Coleman Family
- Fowler Family
- Debbie Thibault

- The Klos family on the passing of Helen Klos
- The Andreas family on the passing of Betty Andreas

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org