



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC
SUNDAY, APRIL 11

PSALM 133, JOHN 20:19-31

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR
DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.
TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

Some years ago, two friends are hunting ducks with one of the hunters continually bragging about what a good shot he was. Just then, a duck flies over their heads, the bragging hunter takes aim, fires, and the duck flies away unscathed. The Hunter puts his gun down, pauses and says to his friend, "You are now witnessing a miracle...for there flies a dead duck!"

Here we are, the third in our series on Miracles in this Easter season. Last week I quoted C.S. Lewis, who defined a miracle as Something that breaks a pattern so expected and established, we don't believe it could ever be broken.

- Divine interventions
- Breaking patterns
- we never thought could be broken-

--Through the chief miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ! Where Christ breaks patterns of addictions, illnesses, and sin. Jesus coming back to life to redeem and break our patterns of sin!

Then this past Wednesday night, we looked at this question: Do miracles and faith contradict science? Can we believe in the miracles of Jesus Christ, and science? We concluded that the idea that science is somehow at odds with faith and miracles is false and illogical. Many of the best scientists our world has ever known are Christian men and women! In fact, Francis Collins, director of the National Health Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland says in his excellent book, *Science and God*, that it was science that led Him to embrace Christian Faith! We also talked about the high number Anglican Priests who were and are at the same time Scientists, including

- The Rev. Dr. John Polkinghorne- Priest and Physicist
- The Rev. Dr. Alister McGrath, priest and molecular bio-physics
- The Rev. Dr. Greg Snyder, Rector of St. John's, John's Island - Priest and Geologist!

In the words of Dr. Peter Kreeft: Don't ever be intimidated by atheists or others who claim that science disproves God, faith and miracles. This is like claiming that studying Shakespeare's plays disproves Shakespeare! If there was no God, there would be no science, because there would be no world for science to know! God Himself invented science!

Today, our third in the series: 'How do miracles change our lives and what are the obstacles to receiving a miracle?' Let me take you to John 20 to the evening on the day of Easter Resurrection. The Disciples hadn't received news that Jesus was alive. They at this moment are filled with terror, all holed up in the same room where they had the last supper with Jesus. All they know is that Jesus is crucified, and they believe they're next. Of all people, they need divine intervention to break the pattern of their terror! Well...Intervention happens! Put your seat belts on! As Jesus would carry out 5 miracles in under 5 minutes. Out of nowhere, John 20 tells us that despite the locked doors, Jesus simply APPEARS out of nowhere in bodily form! Jesus had been dead, and comes back to life as a person!

Now you might ask, what kind of a resurrected body did Jesus have? You need to know the body of Jesus was no longer subject to the laws of nature as before His death. Jesus could appear in a locked room yet was not a ghost or apparition because He could be physically touched and could eat. But that leads to the second Miracle, Jesus saying to them: "Peace be with you!" Of all the things Jesus could have said, he chooses to say: Peace be With you. In saying that, He's not just saying have a great day. Peace be with you means May God Give you every Good thing! In other words, Jesus is referring to the fact that for the first time since Adam and Eve, and because of what He has done for them, they can finally have the Peace in heart and mind that they are saved for eternity! Saved from sin, Unforgiveness, Bitterness, and regret! Given Deepest Contentment.

Wow. Stop right here, how would you respond to this? What? We saw Him dead!! Now He's back to give us peace!

Third Miracle: Jesus says, it really is me. Touch my hands and side, it's really me!

Fourth Miracle: Jesus breathes on them the Holy Spirit! Which takes us right back to Genesis when God breathed into the first man, the breath of life and man became a living being!

This is no generic spirit, like when people say..I'm just a spiritual person. No, this is JESUS BREATHING HIS IDENTITY INTO THE DISCIPLES, JESUS TAKING UP RESIDENCE IN THEIR SOUL! AND With this breathing in of Jesus, came the Power! The Power FOR THE DISCIPLES to do sent to do God's will on earth!

And what is that will? Miracle number five: To forgive and be forgiven! Jesus is giving the Disciples the spirit powered mission to preach the Good News about Jesus so others through them could have their patterns of sin broken and forgiven! Jesus gives the Disciples here the privilege of telling new believers their sins can be forgiven! Through the Holy Spirit we have this power today! Meaning, if you've ever said, "It's just not in me to forgive"...you're right! It's only through this miracle of the Holy Spirit that we can forgive and be forgiven! If you can't forgive, you can even now say Jesus like you did then, breathe into me the Holy Spirit, your spirit, empower me to forgive and be forgiven! Don't water it down, that my friends is a miracle!

Five Miracles in under five minutes!

- Jesus comes back in bodily form
- Hands and side still wounded
- Giving the Disciples peace
- Empowering them through the Holy Spirit
- Giving them the power to forgive and be forgiven!

So, how do Miracles change our life? First, if you've ever watched the movie "Risen," which I urge you to do in this Easter Season, you see the first way miracles change us.

1. Miracles help us fall in love with Jesus all over again.

I mean imagine what was going on in the minds of the disciples as Jesus appeared among them! Pure grace! They did nothing to deserve it! Jesus, I love you so much! Miracles change us by overwhelming us with the love of Christ. We are loved!

2. Secondly, our lives change when we realize we are here on earth for a mission! That as Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into the Disciples, it was for the purpose of equipping them to break sin patterns of those around them through forgiveness and grace!

- a. It is supernatural!
- b. How could we ever forget The Rev. Anthony Thompson who shocked the world by forgiving his wife's murderer after the tragedy at Mother Emmanuel?
- c. Through the Holy Spirit
 - i. we can forgive,
 - ii. we can be forgiven
 - iii. we can show the world another way to live!

Think about it, if God can:

- make a black cow
- that eats green grass
- to produce white milk
- that makes yellow butter

He can certainly use you to transform the lives of others around you!

You are so loved, and on earth to transform the world through the Holy Spirit!
So personal. So powerful.

Yet my friends, there is one character in this story that proves that miracles can be prevented from happening in our lives. What can prevent a miracle? ABSENCE. On that night of the Resurrection there was one man ABSENT – Thomas. He's not doubting Thomas because he saw everything and doubted, He's doubting Thomas because he didn't show up! Thomas makes the mistake of withdrawing from Christian Community. Why? Well, he saw Jesus die and lost all hope! Out of disillusionment, he makes the mistake of walking away.

My friends, has disillusionment ever caused you to walk away from God? Walk away from the Church? Absence causes Thomas to miss out on 5 miracles! I so want to shout at the top of my lungs, come back Thomas! Experience the Miracles!

My friends, we live in a perilous time right now.

Nationally, In this Covid time, 1 in 3 practicing Christians have withdrawn from Christian Community. As a church our biggest priority coming out of Covid is to re-build community! I so want to shout at the top of my lungs, Come back anyone who this morning is living in isolation! Don't miss out on the miracles of a changed life! You see, Thomas made the group of the disciples weaker because he wasn't there! Absence weakens the believer, and weakens the church.

Here is the great news, for anyone living in isolation. What we learn from Thomas, just like we learned from Mary Magdalene last week, Jesus Never Ever never ever gives up on us. Eight days later after Thomas misses that meeting, something moves Thomas and he shows up! Does Jesus say: How dare you come now? You are condemned! No, Jesus says, "Peace be with you—too!!" May God Give you every Good blessing Thomas! Jesus then literally repeats the same 5 miracles he gave the disciples the previous week! And Thomas, with his jaw on the floor says, "My Lord and My God. Jesus responds, ahh Thomas, the real miracle happens when those who can't see like you have, believe. Wow! And Thomas would forever be changed through those miracles!

1. Overwhelmed with the Love Jesus!

2. And changed when he realized he was on earth for a supernatural mission..

Again, that's how miracles change us! That as Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into the Disciples for the purpose of rescuing the world, He's given us the same supernatural power, as we are overwhelmed by the love of God!

Finally this morning, Thomas himself is the best example of being changed by a miracle! When Jesus appears to Him, Thomas himself is yes overwhelmed with the love of the Father. But from that breathing of the Holy Spirit, Thomas takes the message of the Gospel supernaturally to the world! Yes, the disciples eventually would divide up the world among them so each might go to a different country to preach the Gospel. Thomas we believe went to India, preaching

- forgiveness,
- breaking patterns
- through the Holy Spirit!

My dear friends, you are loved. Let the miracles, through the Holy Spirit empower you to transform those around you.