

What About Me

Through out the ages, the church has loved its miracle stories, its stories which are beyond explanation or justification. Yet it is not just the church which loves such stories, in the past several months surveys and articles on belief in and experience of miracles have been the basis of articles in AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), Readers' Digest and Teen Magazines. There is something within us, within the human race, which grasps and yearns for that something beyond us. I believe that something is our true selves, our made in the image of God selves, our Christ in us selves.

Though there is much which separates and differs in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures stories shared today, they share the common miracle of the healing of leprosy. Of a *dis-eased (deliberate separation of word and pronunciation)* person, a person separated or shunned by society or in danger of such shunning, and of a physical cure which defied medical explanation. One cure took obedience, the other only trust and desire. One involved and impacted many, the other, hoped for though not realized, as a private encounter.

From our earthly, limited point of view it would be easy to say these cures were the extent of the miracles in these stories; that the point is, was, that faith can bring about -- though not always or guaranteed, the end of -- or at least a temporary halting of -- physical ailments. Let us pause from our earthly view point to identify the miracles which are easy to overlook and examine what we might learn about the nature of God; the nature of our unchanging God, God whose nature is consistent throughout history and Scripture, when we are willing to look deeply, past the solely human experience.

In the community of faith, miracle is often defined as when God intervenes so distinctly that there is little or no doubt of God's presence and involvement. Some talk about coincidents and God-incidents. Some share their own stories; some ask "what about me". For if these stories are all about God curing leprosy, then why didn't God wipe this disease off the face of the earth. Why doesn't God wipe all traces of disease and *dis-ease* from the human experience?

In their article AARP defines miracle as that which goes against or beyond the expected and for which there is no scientific explanation. Who would not agree that for a young woman, taken into slavery, to be concerned about her capture's health a miracle? What about the miracles of first the wife listening to the slave and then the man, the powerful man, the man living in a very patriarchic society, listening and heading the words of his wife?

Is it not a miracle that this man was bold enough to approach the king with such an outlandish possibility? Miracles, that which transcends human nature and understanding, abound. There is the miracle of the prophet hearing of the Israelite king's fit; the miracle of the man traveling further once the initial promise plan fell short. We must name the miracle of the servant who was bold enough to suggest the man not

give into to his righteous indignation, and the imaginable miracle of the changes which occurred in all who were involved.

Cured of leprosy, that is a temporary gift, but changed hearts and minds, changed understandings and appreciations; open ears and compassion which extends even to those who do us harm; these are eternal, these exemplify transformation, these point to our God's goodness and greatness.

Limiting the proclamation of miracle to temporary cures also limits the wonder of God which such stories convey. Such stories tell us that God's cares and that God is aware. God cares for and is aware of the servant girl, and of the king. God cares about our physical difficulties and about how we are accepted. Namaan's story tells so that God continues speaking, guiding, reaching out and caring even when human nature and actions get in the way.

aware and about The Gospel story assures that God, known through Jesus Christ, is not only about social change, but that Jesus pauses for us, for each of us. This story reminds us that our desires can and should be voiced, with faith and trust. Yet is also reminds of the anti-miracle – the ignoring and defying of that which is of God, which occurs when we make any one aspect or moment of life all about us, all about our experience and understand. For though the Gospel leper received a physical cure, the story does not convey the embracing the acceptance of self or neighbor.

In his disobedience, in his being so wrapped up in his own story that nothing else mattered, the Gospel leper not only limited his miracle, he hindered the work of Christ. He created a hunger and expectation that the power of Jesus had only to do with the here and now, and that once one received what one desired; listening, obeying or even heeding what others might need in order to experience the miracle didn't matter. He indicated that God revealed in Jesus was a comic Santa, who passed by and granted wishes, sometimes, for some people, and if you didn't get your wish granted, well that wasn't his problem.

Miracles abound, today, all around and in us. When we share, show compassion, reach out, or respond to an opportunity to be in ministry, those are miracles which are too great, too strongly in indication of God's presence and power to be ignored. When we heed the voice of one of the least, the lost, the lonely and the looked-over, there is a miracle which opens the door to the further movement of God's Holy Spirit. When we move past "what about me" into how can I share God's love" healing which lasts for an eternity occurs.

The church and the world is badly in need or miracle stories, of stories which defy human explanation and remind us that there is more. That God is with us, that surely God is with us. Let us embrace and embody the mysterious miracle of the power of the cross, of the power of our unity with God through the birth, death, resurrection and Spirit of Jesus. Let us tell the stories, the whole stories, the stories of redeeming love.