

Big idea: What's more important the miracle or the message.

Intro

Aren't miracles great? Pure expressions of the power of God that seemed to be captivated in a single moment of time. Whether it be a healing or a resurrection these events have always amazed mankind, be they Christians claiming the event is an act of God, or an Atheist seeking to provide a scientific explanation of the event miracles have always held a certain fascination in the human psyche. The 62,100,000 entries for miracle on Google are testimony to that.

So, in an effort to amaze you I wanted to share two out of the 60 million recorded miracles with you. The first story is about this young man, Li Peng, who was a student at the University of Victoria, Canada. In early 2004 he was found unconscious lying on the bottom of his pool. His friends dragged him out and rushed him to the nearest hospital where he was put onto intensive life-support. He fell in and out of consciousness, had numerous cardiac arrests until finally all that sustained him was the life support systems. Things looked pretty grim until the arrival of Laurence Wan, the local Chinese Pentecostal pastor. After anointing Li with oil, Lauren then prayed, and as he prayed, Li's heart and blood pressure returned to normal, and his temperature began to come **down until finally he opened his eyes for the first time in weeks**. Li made a full recovery and returned to his studies with only a slight balance impairment marking his ordeal. No other word can describe this other than miracle. Story 2 Comes from 1947 and the healing of Gemma Di Giorgi. Gemma was born blind: there were no pupils in her eyes. When her grandmother called upon a monk named Padre Pio to heal her, he said that she must first go to confession and receive her first Holy Communion. Once he had attended to that, he gently rubbed her eyes. A few minutes later she was able to see. The cure remained permanent, although her eyes still had no pupils!

Two absolutely amazing stories showing the power of God over sickness and disease. And each of the other 59,000,098 is just as amazing as these two. And these kinds of stories, with their power and emotion, lead me to just one question. **So what?** Couple of million people get healed of various afflictions, the lucky ones may even get resurrected! But I can tell you with certainty that the amount of people each year who die as a result of disease and war far outnumber these miracles healings. Often even the people who undergo these amazing events turn their back on them, choosing to forget about the miracle. So in end we can ask of these healings, of these resurrections of all these miracles so what?

Miracles

Make point

So we come to the miracle in Acts 3. Luke begins the story with Peter and John going to the temple to pray. On the way however they meet a beggar who asks them for money. Now this beggar had been crippled since birth and was so utterly helpless that he needs his friends to carry him to the temple to beg. In spite of this Peter looks at the man as says "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And, to the amazement of everyone there, the man gets up. But he doesn't just get up, he jumps around, he walks, he runs. Even though he would never of

been able to walk, suddenly he can! But if Peter had left it there, said something like “Was worth looking at me wasn’t it!” and then gone on his way, what good would that of done? Once again we could of asked of the miracle, so what?

Illustrate point

It’s like when my tech savvy brother comes running into the house boasting that’s he’s just bought a _____ (I’m going to get Andrew to tell me a bunch of really good computer stuff). My reply is something like “That’s great?” which is my standard response when I have absolutely no idea what was just said. It all sounds very impressive. It looks very impressive. But in the end I have no idea what its all about.

Explain Point

It’s the same with miracles. They sound impressive. They look impressive. But if the miracle does not come with a message, what good is it? What possible long term purpose is it going to serve in the lives of those who either are healed by it or witness it?

Transition

Peter however, as the rest of the chapter reveals, does not leave the miracle to fend for itself.

Purpose behind Miracles

Make Point

No peter gives a message to go with the Miracle. And what does it focus on? Does Peter focus on himself? Something like “You know, I do what I can”. Does he focus on how the man’s life is now changed because of the miracle? Does he actually focus on the Miracle at all? Well, he does focus on a miracle, but it’s not this one. While he has an opportunity to boast about this healed man, he chooses not to. Instead he boasts of the gospel of Jesus. He completely reorients the focus of the onlookers away from both the healed man and himself, and gets them to look squarely at Jesus saying “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified Jesus.” He uses the miracle to preach the gospel of Jesus. To preach the gospel of forgiveness of sins. The preach the gospel of eternal life. The miracle is nothing more than a stepping stone. Peter clearly shows that it’s the message that it’s the message, not the miracle that’s important.

Illustration

It’s like starting a car. You put your key into the ignition and then turn to start up the engine. A number of times if you’re in my car. So then the engine starts up and then what? The actually starting of the engine is not going to get you to your destination. It’s only going to provide a catalyst through which you will be able to drive and reach where you’re going. If you continue to focus on the start-up of the engine, even after it’s happened, you’re not going to go anywhere. Without redirecting your focus to the destination, you’re not going anywhere. Your just wasting fuel.

Explain

Miracles are the same. If people focus on the miracle itself without redirecting their focus, their faith will be going nowhere. They'll be stuck on that single moment, not able to move forward because they are focused on that one event, not the message behind it.

Transition

They'll have no concept on what their supposed to do with the miracle.

Response to the Miracle

Make Point

Fortunately Peter knew this. He led the crowd by the hand to the foot of the cross of Christ revealing to them the forgiveness of sins. Instead of focusing upon a simple healing he sets their eyes upon forgiveness and eternal life! Only then, once they had reached this point, did Peter call for them to respond. If the miracle had been left by itself, what response could the people of had? "Wow, that was really cool!", and then forget about it a couple of days later! And what good would that be?

Illustrate Point

It would be like showing somebody only the first chapter of a book. While they get an idea about what the book is about, they have no idea where the story goes. They have no idea about the people that become involved, and most importantly, they don't know how the story ends. So when it comes time at the end to reflect upon what they have read, they can't give a full response because they have heard almost nothing of the story.

Explain Point

Because Peter gave the crowd the full story he was able to call them to have a have a response that was based upon the entire message, not just the first chapter. V 19 "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out". Instead of having an experience that they will remember for a long time, Peter offers the onlookers a chance to change their entire life! And in the end, as Jesus pointed out, what is the greater miracle in this passage – the healing of a man who had been crippled since birth, or the forgiveness of sins that was poured out on to all who believed on that day?

Conclusion

Miracles. There such powerful stories, whether they come from 2000 years ago or today's modern world, and yet by themselves what good are they. By themselves what power do they have to change lives? What Peter teaches us in this passage is that we need to readjust our focus. ... So when you hear about these miracles or read them in the bible try and ask yourself this question. What is more important, the message or the miracle?