

Gospel According to Luke
September 2, 2018
Reading: Luke 5:12-26

Sermon #16
Luke 5:12-26

Why Miracles?

Purpose Of Miracles

What was the purpose for the miracles Jesus performed, the miracles the disciples performed and miracles performed by others? Why did Jesus empower the disciples to have the supernatural power to perform miracles? Our passage this morning is straightforward and direct – let’s see if we can answer these questions through Luke’s passage and a few other scripture passages.

Jesus’ main reasons for performing miracles was first to glorify God the Father and second, to announce that the Kingdom of God had arrived in the flesh as the Son of God, the long awaited Messiah, and Jesus is the messiah. Both Jesus’ teachings and miracles were witnesses to who he truly is, the Son of God and Savior of the world. Luke records this at the end our passage this morning, *Jesus “said to the man who was paralyzed—‘I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.’* ²⁵ *And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶ And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, ‘We have seen extraordinary things today.’ ”* (Luke 5:24-26)

In essence, Christ’s miracles happened as an expression and proof of God’s plan for salvation. Jesus came to fulfill God’s plan of salvation for mankind – this required that it be established beyond doubt that Jesus was the Messiah or Christ. Once this was done God’s precepts for holy living by individuals and for his new covenant creation the “Church” was taught and then written as the New Testament.

Jesus' ascension to heaven was the ending of direct earthly ministry, but at the same time it was a beginning, it was the miracles of miracles - Jesus dying for all sins and being resurrected to have power over sin and death for eternity.

There are about 40 miracles recorded in the New Testament performed by Jesus beginning with turning the water into wine and each miracle had the purpose of glorifying God his Father, and establishing that he is the Son of God. Of course, what is written in the Bible is not the totality of all Jesus did while on earth, but the New Testament was written that every generation might believe.

Proof Through Miracles

Jesus' ministry included miracles to give proof he was the Messiah. Early in Jesus' ministry and not long after choosing his 12 disciples, he commissioned the 12 and empowered them with the authority of God for a short mission to the Jews, he instructed them to **“proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.”** (Matthew 10:7-8) The disciples were obedient and followed Jesus' instructions. When they returned, they shared about all the great miracles they performed in His name. Jesus then expanded beyond the 12 and sent 72 disciples chosen from his broader group of followers on a similar mission. Reading from Luke chapter 10, **“the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go.”** (Luke 10:1) They returned excited and filled with joy about what they were able to do in the name of Jesus Christ, **“saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!’ ”** (Luke 10:17) This demonstrated both Jesus' power and the authority he had to empower others. However, Jesus warned them that he had given them powers but it was not about them – it was

about God's glory being revealed. So Jesus tells them, three verses later, "Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20) Again, not all the miracles the disciples and others performed in the name of Christ are recorded and but we are given a glimpse in Mark chapter 6, "they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them." (Mark 6:13) In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke does give some details of miracles by Peter and the others. Peter is recorded in Acts chapter 2 saying after Jesus' ascension, he is "exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." (Acts 2:33) In other words, their power is from Jesus and given to them as the gift of the God in the form of the Holy Spirit and this power is for validating both Jesus as the Christ and that the disciples are given authority by Jesus for the purpose of revealing God's glory and thus bringing people to salvation and planting his churches.

From Miracles To Proclamation

Where there was no church and no gospel witness, Jesus empowered the disciples and others to perform miracles in order to validate that Jesus is the Christ and the disciples had his authority to demonstrate Christ's power for the purpose that people would believe and be saved and become the foundation of Christ's Church in each new area. Joyce and I also observed this. When we were in a country where there was no church and the Bible was not yet in their language people came to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior through visions and dreams and miracles. Once the church was established and the Bible was accessible in their language these supernatural testimonies of Christ dissipated because they were not longer needed. The believers had the responsibility to proclaim the gospel and expand the kingdom by witnessing to people and letting

God use them to bring others to salvation and planting new churches. This is your role as believers also.

Last week we studied spiritual gifts and saw their purpose is to bring God glory and serve others. Miracles are similar in that they are to bring God glory, validate his authority over the physical world and creation, and establish that Jesus is the Christ so that people will believe. The person who uses a spiritual gift from God or performs a miracle is only the instrument God uses and is not to be the focus.

Luke wrote more of the New Testament than any other writer. The 4 gospel accounts record miracles along with Luke's Acts of the Apostles. Paul wrote more books than anyone else but slightly less in volume than Luke. Paul was given great power and authority by Jesus to be an apostle who planted churches, yet Paul wrote very little of the miracles he performed. Paul's concern was always for the glory of God through Jesus. How did this great apostle stay humble? Possessing this power would have corrupted most people. As one observes people today who claim to have these special powers given by God – the focus is how special they are and salvation through Christ is secondary. God wanted to keep Paul humble so he gave Paul a gift to help him. Let me take us to 2 Corinthians chapter 12 beginning in verse 5, where Paul boasts of others but not of himself. Reading about halfway through verse 5, “on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses—⁶ though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me.” Paul has done great works in the name of Jesus Christ, yet he knows if he boasts in himself and his abilities it will take away from people seeing that the only answer for their state of sin is Jesus Christ. Today there are some claiming to do great and miraculous works. Often, however, there

is little hard evidence of these great and miraculous works and the focus is on how special they are and they are the anointed one to help people find salvation. God wanted Paul to remain humble so that his ministry would consistently bring God glory, so he gave Paul a “thorn in the flesh.” Many would say, poor Paul this was a curse or punishment, but I believe it was a blessing given by God because it resulted in Paul staying focused on his ministry mission and on God’s glory and not his own abilities and thus he remained humble. Reading now at verse 7 of chapter 12, “So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” It was this experience that led Paul to remaining humble and writing, “we have this treasure in jars of clay (*salvation through Christ and the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit – God is strong and we are fragile like jars of clay*), to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7) At least partly because of the gift of the “thorn in his flesh” Paul maintained and understood an important truth, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. ¹⁸ For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.” (2 Corinthians 10:17-18) It is all about Christ and the servant of Christ is not the focus.

Paul was a man who could have truly boasted, yet he did not in order for the focus to remain on Jesus. If God uses you to bring his light to people the focus

needs to be on Christ and not on you. The same spiritual principle that was in Paul's life is to be in our lives. Paul wrote and we should be able to say, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

There is a message of truth God's wants the world to know, it began with the disciples and continues with us and it is this; the Gospel or Good News proclaims that Jesus Christ died for our sins and all who repent and believe in his name will be saved. I do not want to diminish the miracles that bring God glory, but the most important thing to grasp is God's love for his creation and his plan of salvation that cleanses us of our sins that we may be in relationship with him.

The supernatural is real and is for the purpose of glorying God and the person of Jesus Christ and the greatest of miracles is the salvation of one who is spiritually dead because of their sins and by God's grace they are given spiritual life, their soul is regenerated and filled with God the Spirit giving faith to believe in Jesus as the Christ. Let God use you today to share this miracle of salvation with the lost world.