

Media and Graphics Notes

Sermon Starter Video?	Yes
Sermon Notes?	There are both text and scripture to go on screen.

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about miracles in the Bible and today.

Why is this sermon important?

This sermon is important because God continues to be at work in miraculous ways today. When we pay attention, we see signs of God's kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven.

What is the context of this sermon?

This is the first of a five week series which addresses the top five questions from a survey on Candlelight Christmas Eve.

What are the next action steps?

Look for miracles this week:
Signs from heaven and earth
Basic human needs
Healing

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that miracles happen today. They are signs of God's kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven.

What are other key takeaways? (140 characters or less)

- "In the Bible, a miracle most often functions as a sign, a communication of God's relationship with humankind and history." - Wendy Cotter



Metadata

Topic(s)

1. Changing Lives
2. Transformation of the World

Epiphany Sunday
FAQ - Do miracles still happen?
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1T6IIMM>

January 3, 2016
Luke 8:40-56
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,000
Audio Online at <http://j.mp/1YZ3sXk>

Sermon Books of the Bible

1. Luke
2. Matthew
3. Psalms

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, Eldorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, FAQ, question, questions, healing, miracle, miracles,

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Luke 8:40-56, CEB

When Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they had been waiting for him. A man named Jairus, who was a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his house because his only daughter, a twelve-year-old, was dying.

As Jesus moved forward, he faced smothering crowds. A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had spent her entire livelihood on doctors, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the hem of his clothes, and at once her bleeding stopped.

"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

When everyone denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are surrounding you and pressing in on you!"

But Jesus said, "Someone touched me. I know that power has gone out from me."

When the woman saw that she couldn't escape notice, she came trembling and fell before Jesus. In front of everyone, she explained why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed.

"Daughter, your faith has healed you," Jesus said. "Go in peace."

While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader's house, saying to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. Don't bother the teacher any longer."

When Jesus heard this, he responded, "Don't be afraid; just keep trusting, and she will be healed."

When he came to the house, he didn't allow anyone to enter with him except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. They were all crying and mourning for her, but Jesus said, "Don't cry. She isn't dead. She's only sleeping."

They laughed at him because they knew she was dead.

Taking her hand, Jesus called out, "Child, get up." Her life returned and she got up at once. He directed them to give her something to eat. Her parents were beside themselves with joy, but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Introduction

Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

Series Review

We all have questions. Sometimes the answers are easy. But, sometimes, our questions are complicated and the answers are difficult to see and even harder to articulate. Join us for worship at First United Methodist Church in January as we address some of the most frequently asked questions about the Christian faith.

Take Notes

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today.

God Speaking

I pray that you will hear God speaking to you sometime during the service today. Listen for God's word for you – something that helps you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Whenever you hear it, write it down.

Tool for Spiritual Growth

Then, take this bulletin home with you so that you can grow in your faith outside of worship by reflecting on what you heard today, praying for others connected with our community and reading scripture.

Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Opening

Miracle Story

Alamo Bowl - TCU vs. Oregon

Last night in the Alamo Bowl, TCU won in one of the greatest comebacks in the history of college football. At halftime the Horned Frogs were down 31-0. Then they scored 47 points, 38 of them in a row to win 47-41 in triple overtime. ESPN Staff writer, Max Olson, said this:

.....
"For a team that won on a miracle tip at Texas Tech, needed a bomb to beat Kansas State and somehow stuffed Baylor in a monsoon in overtime, this was the masterpiece."¹
.....

¹ Max Olson, "How TCU pulled off the impossible in Alamo Bowl comeback," January 3, 2016, accessed January 3, 2016, http://espn.go.com/blog/big12/post/_/id/108481/how-tcu-pulled-off-the-impossible-in-alamo-bowl-comeback

It seems that sports are filled with these kinds of stories. One incredible play is marked up as a miracle.

What is a Miracle?

While it does seem that there are some plays in sports that could only be possible with divine intervention, I am not sure that God is taking action on behalf of one team or another. Certainly, the miracles that we see in the Bible are not sports miracles.

Everything is a Miracle

"In the beginning, everything was a miracle. Before the year 500 or so, people believed that everything within the cosmos and every activity was an act of God's intervention. The rising of the sun every morning, the breeze that came up on the sea, the nighttime panorama of moon and stars: all this was miracle."

Quote - Wendy Cotter

Theologian Wendy Cotter writes,
"In the Bible, a miracle most often functions as a sign, a communication of God's relationship with humankind and history."

Transition

There are many miracles recorded in the Bible and they fall into three main categories:

Signs from heaven and earth

Basic human needs

Healing

[Leave up until the next scripture verse goes on screen]

Each of these throughout the Bible So, let's take a closer look, beginning with the Old Testament.

Miracles in the Bible

Old Testament²

Signs from heaven and earth

"In the Old Testament, it is clear that God is directly involved in miracles. Sometimes, God speaks directly to human leaders, giving directions as well as interpretive messages to the people. More commonly, God uses creation to intervene in ways that are dramatic and extraordinary."

- The **sun** stops, moves back and is darkened.

² Cotter, Wendy "Miracle." In Volume 4, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Katharine D. Sakenfield, et al. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.

- **Thunder** and **lightning** signal that God is here.
- **Clouds** gather to conceal God's presence.
- **Fire** is used to instruct, express favor or destroy.
 - God speaks to Moses from a bush that is blazing with fire but is not consumed.
- **Rain** is sent to flood the world in the story of Noah.
 - At times, it is withheld as a sign of God's anger.
- **Hail** destroys on a large scale and is one of the **plagues** sent to the Egyptians.
- Moses parts the **water** of the sea as they escape from Egypt.
 - The **water** of the Jordan River parts as the people enter the promised land.

Basic human needs

There are also miracles that provide for human needs.

- God provides **drinking water** for the people of Israel in the desert and
- **manna** (bread from heaven) for something to eat.

Healing

- offers **healing** of illness, and
- brings the **dead back to life**.

New Testament³

Signs from heaven and earth

In the New Testament we read of heavenly miracles in which:

- The **heavens are opened** at Jesus' baptism.
- **Clouds** cover Jesus, Elijah and Moses at the transfiguration.
- **Tongues of fire** signal the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
- Jesus **stills a storm, walks on water** and turns **water into wine**.

Basic human needs

Some of the most well known miracles in the New Testament are when Jesus meets basic needs. Jesus provides **food for thousands** of people from just a few fish and loaves of bread.

Healing

He also, **healed** a great number of people in a wide variety of ways, including the woman and the girl in the scripture passage for today.

Transition

So, how do we make sense of these miracle stories from the Bible?
And, our question for today - do miracles still happen today?

³ Cotter, Wendy "Miracle." In Volume 4, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Katharine D. Sakenfield, et al. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.

Let's take a closer look at these three categories

Miracles Today

Signs from Heaven and Earth

Biology Major

I was a biology major in college with a particular focus on genetics and molecular biology. In the 100 level classes, learned about the fundamental processes and principles that shape the way the world works. I learned about the sun, thunder, lightning, clouds, rain, hail, fire and water. I learned a bit about the forces that keep the earth circling around the sun and the moon orbiting the earth.

I know all this and yet, there are still times when I at the world see a miracle - just like those who lived in ancient times.

Moonlight on Christmas Eve

When I arrived home after the Christmas Eve service, I got of my car and I looked up at the moon. It was full and bright and the clouds were moving slowly around it. I remember thinking, this is incredible.

Key Bible Passage - Psalm 19:1

I am reminded of the words of the Psalmist who wrote in Psalm 19:1:

"Heaven is declaring God's glory; the sky is proclaiming his handiwork."⁴

I believe that God still works miracles in heaven, on earth and throughout all creation.

Basic Human Needs

Food Drive and Salvation Army

One of the ways that we help meet basic needs in the community is having a non-perishable food drive several times a year. Each time we collect 400 or 500 items that aren't sent to Wichita or boxed up to send on a truck somewhere. We take what we collect to the Salvation Army here in El Dorado. They handle distribution for El Dorado and the surrounding areas with food boxes available every week.

Back to School Clothing Giveaway

We host a back-to-school clothing giveaway each August. This fall we partnered with other local churches and organizations to collect 355 coats and give away 276 at Trick or Treat with Main Street. There have been hundreds of people who have received clothing through your work.

⁴ Psalm 19:1, CEB.

The depth of gratitude in the words and faces of some who received a warm coat was powerful - as if God had intervened in some way. I believe that one of the ways that God continues to work miracles is through people - through you and me.

Key Bible Passage - Matthew 25:35-36

It makes me think of Jesus words in Matthew 25:35-36:

[Jesus said,] "I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me."⁵

I believe that God still works miracles in heaven, on earth and throughout all creation.

Healing

Personal Story: Hospital Visit with Cassie

Before coming to El Dorado, I served at a United Methodist church in the Kansas City area. During my time there, I remember a particular woman who I visited in the hospital, her name was Cassie. She had long term ongoing health issues. She had been in the hospital several days and the last time that I spoke with her, she had asked if I would be able to bring communion.

Of course.

So, I had a small case with me with communion elements.

When I arrived in her room, we had a conversation and then I got out the communion set and set the things up on her hospital tray – tiny cups of juice and little pieces of bread. I read from Psalm 23, then prayed with her for healing and to bless the bread and the cup.

Just a few moments after she took the bread and the cup, the nurse came in to check her vital signs. After the nurse took her blood pressure, she exclaimed, "What happened? Your blood pressure is normal!" You see, they had been having trouble controlling her blood pressure.

Cassie said, "Well, I just received communion."

Cassie came home from the hospital in a few days. She continued to have health challenges, but it seemed that she had been healed.

First UMC Examples

I have had conversations with some of you here in this worship service who have indicated that you, a family member or friend has been healed in an amazing and miraculous way.

⁵ Matthew 25:35-36, CEB.

Prayers for Healing - Holy Spirit and Modern medicine

Today, whenever I pray for someone in need of healing, I pray that God will bring healing through the power of the Holy Spirit and that God will work through the doctors, nurses and all those that are providing care. I believe that God heals with the cooperation of modern medicine, but I also believe that there are times when God heals miraculously today.

No Miracle

Of course, there are times when miracles don't happen.

Personal Story – Jonathan's High School Friend

When I was in high school, one of my brother's best friends was diagnosed with leukemia. The outlook was not good for him. I remember praying and praying that God would heal him. The symptoms did not go away, they got worse and he died of the disease. No miracle happened.

Quote – John Wimber

As I think about him and other people who have not experienced miracles for which they had hoped, I find some help in words from John Wimber who said,

"You know, the real gift is the gift of salvation, eternal life, all the things that Jesus gives. And if we're healed in this life, that, if you like, is a bonus."

Cure vs. Healing

Of course, I believe that there is a difference between a cure and being healed. Our physical bodies may be cured of an illness or disease. However, even if there is no physical cure, there can still be healing that takes place - forgiveness, reconciliation - with God and other people. This type of healing is always possible and, at times, may be even more miraculous than physical recovery.

Transition

Signs from heaven and earth
Basic human needs
Healing
All of these miracles still happen today.
And, just like in the Bible, these miracles are all signs of God's kingdom.

Conclusion

God's Kingdom of God

God's kingdom is the rule and the reign of God. And this kingdom is both now and not yet.

Jewish Expectation

The Jewish expectation was that this age that we are living in would come to an end and that would be followed by the age to come. The age to come would be when the messianic king arrived and there would be a completed kingdom.

Jesus Teaching about the Kingdom

Jesus' teaching was a modification of this. What Jesus was saying, in a nutshell, was that this age would not come to an end with his arrival. When Jesus came he inaugurated the kingdom, so the age to come started which they were expecting. It started, but the previous age, this age, continues — until the second coming of Jesus. Then the kingdom of God will be complete.

Example: Summer Breaking in to Spring

Let me use an analogy. Imagine the weather in February or March. It is still cold. Winter has not quite over in March and definitely not over in February. However, there are days when we have unusually warm weather — 70 or 80 degrees, fantastic sunshine and it feels like summer has arrived — but it hasn't: a week later it is back to freezing cold, frosts at night. But those days are like summer is breaking in to winter. It is a foretaste. It lets us know that summer was coming; it wasn't that far away.

Good News

The good news is that miracles happen today. They are signs of God's kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven.

Call to Action

Look for miracles this week:
Signs from heaven and earth
Basic human needs
Healing

Miracles still happen.
God continues to be tangibly at work in the lives of people - even you and me.

Invitation

Will you pray with me?

Closing Prayer

[Text here]
Amen.