

(PP1) The Jesus we never knew x24.

11th June 2017 10.30 am.

(PP2) Jesus and Miracle. READ *John 6: 1 - 14. Feeding of 5,000 households.*

Today we think again about “Jesus and miracle” – the “signs and wonders” of the Spirit. (*Dunn, Vanier and Yancey* all write about this).

Too many Christians think of Jesus as some sort of Great Magician (Magic – dark side – Beelzebub) OR that he no longer performs miracles. You and I can be left confused when bad things happen to good people and our prayers are not answered in the way we want. Theists like us don't accept a closed universe and expect God to intervene. Deists and Dispensationalists don't.

Jesus performed about 3 dozen (recorded) miracles. (I have listed 40 NT so called “miracles” – categorized as healings, deliverances, nature miracles). This feeding of the 5,000 households is the only miracle that is recorded in all 4 of the Gospels. (*Matthew 14: 16-20; Mark 6: 30 – 44 and Luke 9: 10-17*).

Miracles by definition are NOT ordinary everyday occurrences BUT prayer and response from God can be every day occurrence's.

Some of Jesus' miracles were witnessed by just a few of his closest friends and disciples. Jesus refused to perform miracles on demand. His miracles did NOT easily convert people into life changing faith in him. Jesus showed great restraint: in his life he did not raise all the dead – but he says he will one day. Miracles are not magic -they are signs pointing to God in Jesus.

“Miracles are early glimpses of the restoration of the universe.” (new heaven and earth) *Yancey p86 Study Guide.*

The word “miracle” is not always the one that is used in the NT of these events.

- 1) **DUNAMIS** – powers, works of a supernatural origin and character which could not be produced by natural agents and means. (*Acts, Corinthians and Galatians. Galatians 3: 5 powerful works – both physical and moral*).
- 2) **SEMEION** – signs of divine authority – signs and wonders sometimes translated as “miracle”. (*Gospels esp John, Acts and Revelation*). POINTERS to those seeking the Way.
- 3) **Paul in Corinthians** talks of gifts and manifestations of the spirit in the church congregations as “miracle” or displays of divine power. He identifies gifts of faith, gifts of healing, and the operation of miracles.
- 4) **Matthew 16: 4 A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign!** Says Jesus when someone asks for a display of his powers. A sign is NOT A PROOF

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it is a pointer for someone genuinely seeking the way. Jesus understood that some people only come around for the miracles and especially the food (*John 6: 26 fol*). He says – *I am the Bread from heaven!* I am a much deeper miracle. *He won't provide bread and circuses on demand!* (Yancey p177).

JESUS refused in the wilderness temptations to turn stones into bread. He also refused on other occasions to do what people demanded – ask yourself why.

On this occasion, however, he had already planned what he would do. He was caring and compassionate at the site of hungry people – hungry and tired physically but also perhaps of greater long-term significance hungry and tired spiritually. This miracle or sign (v14) POINTS to Jesus as the One who can satisfy human hunger.

We know that the feeding took place on the grassy hills near the shores of Lake Galilee. It was a lonely or wilderness place and a beautiful time of year – Spring just before the Passover festival. The disciples of Jesus were like the people tired and wanted Jesus to send them away to find food locally. But Jesus encouraged the disciples to provide for the peoples' hunger. Andrew was clear that was impossible: one boy had declared he had 5 barley loaves and 2 fish but as Andrew scoffed (v9) that wasn't enough to feed the large crowd (v2).

Jesus told the disciples to marshal the people into orderly groups and rows and so they arranged the 5,000 households. Jesus gave thanks to his Father God and broke the bread and fish, gave it to the disciples who moved among the peoples and kept feeding them until each was full up. I rather imagine they started by saying – only take a little, there are a lot of people and ended up by saying – take as much as you want, there's plenty food. Infact it was a sign of the grace of God – of excess – there were 12 baskets filled at the end just with left overs and Jesus didn't let that be wasted.

We know that a large crowd witnessed this sign and that they were impressed. An old Jewish tradition taught that when MESSIAH came he would renew Moses' practice of serving manna. So John tells us that *“the crowd wanted to seize Jesus and make him King by force”* – *“so he went off into the hills by himself”*. He refuses to be made into a temporal king. He doesn't even take the 12 with him. His is a lonely road and involves resisting any temptation to take temporal power.

Significance of this miracle? It is a sign (v14) pointing out JESUS as the true BREAD from God – the Bread of Life.

John of all the Gospel writers makes this the clearest and really unpacks the sign for us. In 6: 32 following Jesus declares that the manna of Moses' era was not the true bread. In a way it was a pointer – signing the coming of messiah – the living Bread. He is the real bread from heaven and those who feed on him will live forever v58.

(PP1) The Jesus we never knew x24.

Jesus used a child's picnic lunch and multiplied it to show that he was God's provision for the hunger of humanity in every generation. *Psalmist 23: 5 You prepare a picnic for me in the wilderness in front of all my enemies.* Jesus is the abundant provision that comes from the heavens.

Jesus wants those who follow him to know him and trust him – not follow him because they have seen the healing miracles and been fed on physical bread. It's the responsibility of every king or ruler to see that their people have daily bread but Jesus is more than any temporal king or ruler. (So he comes to his disciples in the boat by walking to them on the water). What's more he is calling for his disciples to provide more than bread. The people that are to become his community, his church need to be able to SIGN JESUS as the One who satisfies the inner human need. People may come because they like our bread and food but we must also POINT TO Jesus as the Bread of Life. (This Communion meal points to Jesus as the Bread of Life).

V22 the same crowd that were fed with bread and fish the previous day come back for more! Jesus this time tells them that they are seeking material bread (and indeed a physical solution or king) -but physical bread will not last forever or satisfy forever. John plots the journey of this crowd following Jesus and the reasons why they come to him. Jesus teaches v29 *the work of God is that you trust (believe in) the One God has sent – the Bread of Life.* The word of God is clear from Deuteronomy onwards and reiterated by Jesus in the wilderness temptations – **human beings can NOT live on bread alone but need every word that God utters. John of course in his Gospel had made plain his conviction that Jesus is the very eternal WORD that God has spoken.** Jesus goes on to speak about the bread of his body – his material body v51 as being the living Bread. **Jesus – uses the separation of his flesh and blood to signify his death** (Varnier p126). A vivid point – no body that is separated into flesh and blood is alive! Jesus becomes the Paschal or Passover Lamb that we consume in our Covenant meal.

Mutual indwelling: v56 *Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood live in me, and I live in them.* This amazingly speaks of a deep friendship and not just our adoration of God the Son. This is similar to the mutual relationship that the Son Jesus has with the Father v57.

This is just too difficult for many in the crowd. The same crowd that had witnessed the miracles but maybe not understood them as signs pointing to Jesus as the Bread of God. They had come back for more but then they turn away from Jesus (vv66 and 67). They reject his offer of closeness of him living in them and them living in him. Jesus' loneliness is sensed as he questions whether even the 12 may leave him as well.

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Many are interested in Jesus if he will turn around the miracles of healing they want or maybe if he provides the material satisfaction and food they want. Not everyone in the crowds is willing to pay the cost of knowing Jesus intimately and being willing to open up fully to the life changing presence of Jesus in our lives. Not many are eager to live in Jesus – following his ways and being acquitted with the things and people he is acquainted with.

But to those who will eat the Bread of Life (symbolised here in physical bread and wine) there is eternal life – knowing God the Father and the Son.