
24th Sunday after Pentecost 2020

Ephesians 2:14-22 & Luke 8:41-56

What would you do if your doctor gave you some bad news about your health? Do you suddenly break down and cry, or do you take that information courageously and try to deal with the problem? How should we react to tragedy or bad news?

Well, it is nice to know God is still in the miracle business and is approachable. And when God is on our side, all is well! Jesus said, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'move from here to there' and it will move." (Matthew 17:20). But today, many Christians have given up believing in miracles. They say miracles belong to the early Church when Moses parted the Red Sea, a virgin gave birth, and Jesus arose from the dead. But just because we don't see such astounding miracles happening today, it doesn't mean that God has abandoned the working of miracles.

You will note that even today, with these powerful examples, nothing is impossible with God. Pope Francis is often called the pope of surprises. Could he also be the pope of miracles? Someone martyred St. Gennaro in A.D. 305. Today, Gennaro serves as Naples' patron saint. During the three feast days for St. Gennaro celebrated each year, the people believe that enough prayer can liquify a vial containing the saint's dried blood. At Mass held on March 21, 2015, Pope Francis was given the vial. When the pope kissed the vial, the blood in the container became half-liquified. The cardinal called the scientifically inexplicable liquefaction a miracle. This action was the first time a pope had liquefied the blood since 1848 when it did so in front of Pope Pius IX. You may say, well, the pope has a direct line to God, but what about the laity?

That same year, a "mysterious voice" led rescuers to find a child who survived for 14 hours in a submerged car. In March 2015, Lynn Jennifer Groesbeck, 25, lost control of her vehicle and landed in the icy Spanish Fork River in Utah. Fourteen hours later, first responders found her 18-month-old daughter, Lily, hanging upside down just above frigid river water in her car seat. Before discovering Lily, both police officers and firefighters report they heard an adult voice yell, "Help me!" from inside the car.

They discovered that the voice could not have come from the young mother, who likely died from the impact. The rescuers still can't explain the voice or how the girl survived hanging upside-down for 14 hours in freezing temperatures without being dressed for the cold. (7 Modern Miracles That Science Can't Explain God is still in the business of miracles.) <https://www.beliefnet.com/inspiration/7-modern-miracles-that-science...> 2017-10-05. Miracles happen when you believe in God. Your faith can move mountains.

Luke also presents us today with two miracles. Both miracles focus on Jesus' power over disease and death with a strong emphasis on faith. After crossing the sea, Jesus was again in familiar Galilean surroundings. The crowds quickly gathered around Him, unlike the Gerasene's people on the eastern side who feared His presence. The people here knew about Jesus' miracles, so their hope of a cure brought these two worried people to seek His help.

By faith, these two people approach Jesus for a miracle. Faith pushed them forward and carried them through difficult times. The first was a man called Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue. Jairus played a prominent role in the congregation, though his leadership was mainly administrative and not spiritual. Jairus fell to the ground at Jesus' feet and begged Him to cure his seriously ill daughter. As Jesus turned to go home with Jairus, they learn that his daughter has just died. The people believed Jesus could do nothing more and didn't want to bother Jesus any longer. Yet Jesus insisted they go.

But while Jesus turned to leave with Jairus, amid this crowd, a woman pressed toward Jesus with one purpose in mind. Her sickness had been with her for many years and made her life miserable. Along

with this, her problem made her ceremonially unclean. According to the law, "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days,... all the days of the discharge, she shall continue in uncleanness" (Lev. 15: 25). The Pharisees regarded this uncleanness as transmissible to others.

The woman had faith Jesus would cure her, so she touched His garment. She did this because she had heard of Jesus' healing power and shared the ancient view that the person's body was potent and that his clothing or even his shadow could serve as bearers of his power. When she touched Jesus' robe, she felt that the flow had stopped, and her body finally healed. Luke tells us that Jesus immediately felt that "power had gone forth from him." The woman was grateful and courageous. It required a great deal of courage to tell the whole truth in front of the large crowd. She then realized what had happened to her and was fearful. Jesus' accepted the woman's faith in him. Trust in God becomes real and powerful due to the divine inworking.

After this incident with the woman, Jesus and Jairus proceed to the synagogue leader's home to check on the dead girl whom Jesus said was only sleeping. When they arrived, Jesus permitted only three disciples to go along with Jesus and the girl's father. Jesus told her to get up. The girl answered Jesus' command by standing up and walking again. Truly, God made two miracles happen that day!

Through affliction, grace brings out what we cannot see when we are healthy. Distress helps us to depend on God and not only the world. If we can look at illness in this way, it will strengthen our faith. Christ is the Good Physician.

We try to stay healthy by exercising regularly, sticking to our diet, and see our doctors. We know this helps maintain our good health. However, many in our world suffer from illness, wars, poverty, and sickness they cannot cure. If we spent a fraction of the time and energy on others that we spend on ourselves, we could help those who cannot help themselves. We find happiness by giving it away. From second chances at life to scientifically unexplained mysteries, miracles are potent reminders that God is at work in modern times and that we must never give up hope and faith.

Amen!