

## Notice the Miracles

July 30, 2006

(Pentecost 8 - Year B)

Mark 6: 45-52

*St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas*

Last week, as I was reading the Gospel passage for this Sunday in preparation for this sermon, I noticed a line in the story that I had never seen before.

The writer of the Gospel of Mark says:

“When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and Jesus was alone on the land.

When Jesus saw that the disciples were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, Jesus came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea.

*He intended to pass them by.*

Walking on the water, Jesus intended to pass them by?  
Like the disciples wouldn't notice?!

I can just picture the scene:

The disciples are out on the water, pulling on the oars, straining against the wind.

And then, Jesus just cruises on by on the water, intending to pass them by.

I mean, did Jesus just pull his robes over his head, thinking that the disciples wouldn't recognize him?

Did Jesus really think that no one would even notice if he was walking on water?

It makes me wonder how many times Jesus has walked right past me, walking on the water, performing another miracle,  
And yet, I don't notice as he cruises right past me.

Many of you know that I just got back from Camp Allen yesterday. Last week, Susan and I were Camp Directors for a children's summer

camp session at our Episcopal camp and retreat center near Navasota.

For one whole week, I was ‘Papa Jeff’ to 58 kids who are going into the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

We sang silly songs, we canoed, we swam, we did arts & crafts and we celebrated the Holy Eucharist together.

So, if you see me start doing hand motions to some of the hymns today, it is only because I am still a bit in “camp mode.”

The theme for our week at camp was: “The Miracles of Jesus.”

Each day, we taught the kids about a different miracle that Jesus performed.

We learned about when Jesus changed water into wine.

We learned about the feeding of the 5,000 from 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish.

We learned about how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

One day at camp, I asked the kids to tell us all what the definition of a miracle is.

One of the kids yelled out:

“A miracle is something that makes you say: ‘WOW’!”

We then asked the kids to draw pictures of things that they thought were miracles in their life, we asked them to draw pictures of the things that make *them* say ‘Wow.’

One boy drew a picture a spider web.

One girl drew a picture of her new baby brother, in a crib next to her mother in a birthing and delivery room.

And, another camper drew a picture of a zebra, with a caption underneath that said:

“How does God do that?”

From my experience with children, both as a father to my sons and as Papa Jeff here at St. Alban’s School and as Summer Camp Director,

I have experienced that children seem to notice miracles more easily

than adults do.

As an adult, when was the last time you gazed up at the moon and noticed the miracle of how the earth and the moon are so perfectly sized that the shadow of our earth causes the different phases of the moon?

As an adult, when was the last time that you noticed the miracle of how a caterpillar becomes a butterfly or how a snake sheds its skin?

As an adult, when was the last time that you said: "Wow!"?

Adults are accustomed to using to science and politics and medicine to solve all of our problems.

Yet, we must always leave room for the possibility that Jesus will come walking on the water, intending to pass on by.

We must leave room to notice him.

We must leave room for miracles.

For, it makes me wonder how many times Jesus has walked right past me, walking on the water, performing another miracle.

And yet, I don't notice as he cruises on past me.

I have noticed something when I go to be with people at the hospital who are there for surgery or some other kind of medical procedure.

Sometimes I am there when folks go in to surgery,

And sometimes I am also there when folks get out of surgery.

And, I have noticed families, huddled together, waiting to hear any kind of news from the operating room,

Then, the doctor appears, and the family and I gather into a circle around the doctor to hear the report:

I listen as the doctor says:

"The tumor was benign, or

The bypass was successful."

Then, I will hear family members breathe a sigh of relief and say out loud, with their heads pointed up to heaven:

"Thank God. It's a miracle."

But then, within a matter of minutes, I will hear these same family members spreading the good news on their cell phones, saying such things as:

“Well, I don’t know if I would *really* call it a miracle. You know, we *do have* the best cardiologist in town.”

Our childlike faith is willing to notice a miracle,  
But, our adult sensibilities search for a concrete reason and an explanation.

It makes me wonder how many times Jesus has walked right past us,  
walking on the water, performing another miracle;  
And yet, we don’t notice as he cruises past us.

But, we come into this church on Sundays and we proclaim that we *have* noticed God’s miracles.

In the Nicene Creed, we say:  
We believe in one God, and of all that is, seen and unseen.

We proclaim the mystery of faith and we say:  
Christ has died.  
Christ is risen.  
Christ will come again.

In this church, in our worship of God, we *do* notice God’s miracles.  
Our childlike faith sees that God walks on water.  
Our childlike eyes see that there *is* mystery in our faith, a faith in all that is seen and unseen.  
And, in St. Alban’s Church, we come together each Sunday to say:  
“WOW!”

In this week ahead, I invite you to take the time to slip into the mind of a child and notice Jesus walking on the water.  
Take time to notice the miracle of a sunset.  
Take time to notice the miracle of two people falling in love.  
Take time to notice the miracles of healing, forgiveness and

reconciliation that have happened in your life.

You don't need to over-analyze or explain miracles.  
All you have to do is to notice.

For, when we are in the boat out on the sea,  
When we are straining at the oars,  
Jesus comes walking to us on the water, intending to pass by.

Yet, to those who take time to notice him with childlike eyes,  
To those who see the miracle and say: "Wow!"  
To those Jesus gets in the boat and says:  
"Take heart,  
It is I;  
Do not be afraid."

AMEN.

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