

Miraculous Life



As I prepared to for my day, I was listening to a presentation on ' Life Lessons ' , a recording from Jim Rohn, (a well-known Author and motivational speaker. He was speaking on a topic , “the measure of one’s life”.

He stated,

"Life is not about the length of time but the collection of experiences".

He went on to say,

“.. not just the collection of any experience but the variety of experiences with both magnitude and frequency. A man can die in his 40's and still could have lived many (full) lifetimes".

This made me ponder on how we can understand the quality of living our lives. Certainly, jumping from a plane, skiing down a steep powdered slope, climbing a rocky wall of a very tall cliff are vastly different than wasting hours in front of a television set or spending a life as a recluse, removed from family and friends. I am not saying that all mundane experiences rob the quality of life. In fact, these subtle times are just a small part in the vast variety of experiences that life has to offer us. However, if the mundane is where the boundary of one's life remains, it would certainly not provide the full range of color in our experiences and can leave us lacking all that our brief existence can yield.

The takeaway here suggests that it may be best to not dismiss unfamiliar opportunities never experienced, but consider every different event as a new hue in life's color. Just as shades of grey can bring detail to a black and white image, the range of experience can offer vibrancy to our life.

As I considered this topic, I thought about a discussion I once had with some friends at my church. We were talking about "Miracles" and the question came up on how we would define a Miracle.



Often when we discuss Miracles in the Bible, a good example would be the story where our Lord raised Lazarus from the dead. Clearly, to all who believe this account, this would qualify as a Miracle. There seems to be many examples of 'Miracles' offered in the scripture. But what about today? Most, if not all people have heard of remarkable personal stories from people. We hear of those who were facing a life-threatening disease , restored to health, or someone troubled by a business loss that somehow lead to a new direction, blessed with riches, or a barren spouse, despite complications eventually was able to conceive. How about a less epic situation, like having a flat tire on an unsafe roadside that received aid at the hands of an unexpected stranger? Do not these also constitute "miracles"?

Reflexively, we tend to consider miracles as supernatural events. We expect some desired need was fulfilled by something supernatural, or that it was somehow 'beyond what is considered a "natural event" , outside of what occurs in the known physical world. But could we be diminishing activities that are just as wondrous, just less dramatic in our everyday lives?

Maybe a miracle is not as exclusive and separate from natural occurrence as we tend to believe. It is true that Christ had performed many miracles. Even by historical records, Josephus, the Greek historian of the time wrote about this Christ who was a man well known to many, "performed countless miracles".



The very first public Miracle of Christ that recorded was where Christ turned water into wine. If we attempt to isolate which part of 'changing water into wine' was a miracle and what part was not a miracle, we will run into some problems. We can say the water poured out as wine is the 'supernatural' part but then we are compelled to say the other activities (mother making the request, having servants to assist, filling pitchers with water, giving the first cup to the wine taster, etc)

were not supernatural. We then must understand that all that occurred in this activity and the items employed in this miracle were necessary to define the miracle. If items and actions were necessary for this miracle to occur, then the actions and items around the “miracle” also had a role in the miraculous.

If we take a very limited view of what we define as a miracle, we would leave many aspects of the miraculous out of the story. It was not a single cup like a parlor trick. These were jar containers which had a large volume of water, which was changed to wine in composition in its molecular form.

We must forget to consider how time played a part of the miracle. The story tells of a “wine taster” present at the feast whose role was to evaluate the quality of the drink, which was deemed of the highest quality.

Quality wine takes time and careful management to assure it is of the highest quality. This allows us to see yet another part of the miracle. The necessary time and care required to age the wine was completed at that moment.

There were jars, there was a volume of water equivalent to the volume of wine transformed and cups which brought the aged drink to the lips of the guests. Were these not also a part of this miracle? Yet were these not a natural aspect of the of this particular miracle?



Let us consider another miracle presented in scripture about the “feeding of the five thousand “, with five loaves and two fish. Here, a young boy donated his meal which was blessed by Christ before he broke it to disperse to a hungry crowd that gave Christ audience. After everyone finished eating to their satisfaction, the scraps of food were collected, and found to be over 12 baskets of leftover food. Was this a miracle? Yes, it was. But it was not just the incredible volume of food that occurred from such a small-donated meal. Every bite of food was a miracle. The donated fish and loaves were a miracle. The faith of a child was a miracle. The joyful collection of remaining food was a miracle. Every part of this event was a miracle and resulted in praise to God from all who were there.

Sometimes, people report having some miraculous event and later discover a natural process behind the situation, which may also explain the “miracle” . However, it does not mean the special experience would be any less a miracle. Consider the following account also from scriptures.



The Bible shares the account of the pool at Bethesda? There were many diseased, lame, blind and paralyzed people gathering at this pool. They had a belief that angels would stir the water at infrequent times and the first one to descend into the water is healed from their illness.

The story tells how Jesus was passing by this pool and observed a lame man who was alone near the pool. Jesus was moved with compassion and approached the man and asked, "Why are you here?". The man answered, "Sir, each time the angels stir the water I have no one to help me into the pool first".

Jesus then asked, "Do you want to be healed?". The man said "yes" and Christ said, "Your faith has made you whole, take up your bed and walk". . The man picked up his bed and walked, immediately healed. Was this a miracle?

Yes. A lame man walked after his encounter with Christ. What was the miracle? All of it; the water, the stirring of the water, and the faith of a lame man.

I learned some years ago that this same pool was excavated by an archaeologist. They found that this pool had a crack in its base where an underground spring caused the water to occasional stir. Does this information change the miracle? Even though it was discovered to be a natural event that stirred the waters and not the stirring of angels, it was still a miracle. Did Christ condemn the belief in angels stirring the water or the belief that the first one to descend the waters would be healed? No. But he did ask a direct question, "would you like to be healed?" and followed it by, "Your faith has made you whole..".



I bring this particular story to emphasize a point. Just because we are able to explain an event in natural ways at the time, it does not take away from the miracle. Natural events are often a part of the miracle, a significant part, connected intimately to the very miracle itself.

I would offer that even though we may regard a miracle is “supernatural” activity, it is likely to still be a natural activity , that is not understood and grasped immediately by the limitations of known natural laws. Furthermore, I tend to believe that if we understood all the laws whereby Christ healed the sick, it would not pale as a miracle. It remains a miracle even when we consider the background of the event as less miraculous, or a common phenomenon based on our present understanding.

The factors that promote an event to a the status of a miracle, introduces the background by comparison, of what is natural and presently known into the scene. Water is not routinely changed to wine, lame people do not naturally walk. Through our journey, we have considered some factors that help define a miraculous event. There is the deviation of the naturally evolving (timing), the scope of the event (intensity) and the frequency (rarity). These are the factors which help stage the miracle, separate from commonplace events .

Now, if we really apply these factors to our everyday events, we need to concede that we are surrounded by miracles often. It may be a kind word at the right time(timing), or an act of generosity from a neighbor(intensity), or a warm meal on a cold day(rarity). Under the same lens, all such events are equally considered as miracles, or connected to the miraculous.



I challenge you my readers to live miraculously by seeking the new experiences of adventure , to broaden your investment in the lives of others and add to your life the adventure of the miraculous. If we really observe the events that occur in our day and grasp the wonder of how unique each event is in our meaningful life, we will recognize the miraculous. Recognize that when we participate in the miraculous, just by association, we can be miracles in the lives of others.

Thanks for sharing the miraculous with me.

Greg

