

## I. Welcome

- A. Thank you for joining us today at Neighborhood.
- B. As you will notice, my pulpit here is different. Our stage is different. I'm wearing a tie—don't get used to it. The whole point was to go old school. The reason for this is to remind us that we believe an ancient message. It is the same message the people of God have clung to since the beginning of our faith.
- C. Welcome to part number 5 in our series called Christus Victor. It means Christ the Victor, Christ triumphant. We are re-laying an old foundation this year. Who is Christ? What does Scripture say about him? This series is all about looking at the key events in the life of Christ. So far we have seen his birth, his childhood, his baptism, his temptation by the devil, and last time Travis gave a great teaching on how Jesus called his disciples.
- D. Today, our topic is the Miracles of Christ.
  1. The Bible tells the story of about 40 miracles in the life of Christ (39, unless you count his virgin birth and ascension).
  2. Jesus turned water into wine, healed the sick, caught fish where there were no fish, raised the dead, cast out demons, made lame people walk and blind people see. He controlled the weather and stilled the storms. He fed 5,000 people with too little food. He withered up a tree, and reattached a severed ear.
    - a) He did miracles involving NATURE (storms, multiplying food).
    - b) He did miracles involving PEOPLE (healing, reading thoughts).
    - c) He did miracles involving HEALING (casting out).
    - d) He did miracles involving HIMSELF (birth, resurrection, ascension).
  3. He was a wonder working mystery machine.
- E. If you're anything like me you're thinking, I'd like to see one. God, for just once in my life, can you drop down one undeniable miracle. Just one supernatural, unforgettable miracle. Heal my kid. Make me rich. Solve my problem. Fill my gas tank. Make my flat tire not flat. Clear my complexion. Fix my car. Fix my mother in law. Do something, God, anything! God, do a miracle!
- F. But he doesn't.
- G. It hurts. I'm just confessing here.
- H. There's a great line from an old movie where the character looks up at heaven, and asks God... "Would it spoil some vast, eternal plan, if I were a wealthy man?"
- I. I use that line on God all the time.
- J. So let's talk about the miracles of Christ and what they mean. Here's our case study for today.

## II. Scripture

- A. *Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people." (Luke 7:11-16, NKJV).*
- B. It's easy to look at the Bible like it's a bunch of disconnected parts. Jesus went around doing random stuff. His parables were random. His teachings were random. His travel was random. And his miracles were random.
- C. But there was nothing random with Jesus.
- D. Everything he did, everything he said, everywhere he went... it all meant something. Like an artist putting strokes on a canvas, he was painting not many pictures, but one.
- E. He was painting one, singular, coherent, united, mind-glowingly beautiful picture of grace.
- F. Grace.
- G. So think with me about *Five Purposes of the Miracles of Christ*. I want to make sure that we don't see these as five separate purposes, five disconnected, unrelated purposes, or five parallel purposes...
- H. It's more like layers. Like we're peeling an onion only without tears. Each purpose is based on the ones that come after. So let's dig down through the layers to core purposes of the miracles of Christ.

## III. Five Purposes of Christ's Miracles

A. *Christ's Credentials*

1. A while back, I went to a hospital to visit somebody. I wore my official holy man pastor uniform: blue jeans, tee shirt, and unshaved face. It was outside of visiting hours, and I had to get the room number. I stopped at the visitor's desk for the info.
2. "May I please have the room number for so and so?" I said.
3. Two little old ladies in blue smocks to match their hair looked me over and frowned, "It's not visiting hours," one of them said.
4. "Oh, but I'm a pastor." Pastors can visit any time.
5. The one on the left said, "You're not a pastor. You don't look like a pastor."
6. I told her, "Very sorry, but I forgot my halo at home."
7. She said, "Do you have ID?"
8. I said, "Well, I have a shiny pastor badge, but I left that at home too." When you become a pastor, you don't get a badge, or a card, or an official pastor ID or anything. No credentials.
9. That's when the other little old lady chimed in. I had this giant Bible with me. And she nudged the first lady and said, "Millie, he has a Bible."
  - a) She whispered it, like a Bible was the ark of the covenant or something.
    - (1) "He has a Bible..."
10. These miracles were the ID Card of Jesus Christ, Savior of the World.

- a) Every miracle Jesus did proved his identity as the Savior of the World.
11. When Jesus raised that boy to life, the people said, "a great prophet has risen up among us" and "God has visited his people."
    - a) The miracle was an ID card.
  12. He blew their minds. They realized he was like them, but he was unlike them too. They've never met anyone like him before. He was one of a kind.
  13. And, if they knew their Bibles, they would have seen him coming. Because the Old Testament predicted the New Testament, and the Savior who would come.
  14. In fact, one of the great prophets named John was in prison. He heard rumors of Jesus. So he sent his followers to ask Jesus if he was the coming Savior.
    - a) *And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. (Matthew 11:2-5, NKJV). (see Isaiah 35:6 and 61:1)*
  15. Why did he mention that stuff? Because the Old Testament predicted a Coming One who would do that stuff (Isaiah 35:6, 61:1). And when John asked who he was, Jesus showed his credentials.
  16. And if they had read their Bibles, everybody would have accepted him the minute he showed his credentials.
  17. But most people rejected him.
  18. Why? Why do you think?
  19. Well, it wasn't for lack of proof, that's for sure! He had the credentials! The miracles proved who he was. But they also gave us a glimpse into something else.

#### B. *Christ's Worldview*

1. There's been a long pie fight between philosophers, scientists, and theology experts over the nature of the universe. The most basic question is simple: is the universe all there is, or is there something bigger.
2. It's the battle between a supernatural worldview and a natural worldview.
3. Either this universe is a mechanical universe, based on interactions between matter, energy, and subatomic particles... OR this universe is a divine creation, subject to the laws of nature, but not only the laws of nature.
4. The naturalistic worldview says it's all explainable by physics, chemistry, and biology.
5. The supernatural worldview accepts all that, and then sets it all in the hand of God.
  - a) You might know I grew up in a wonderful little church in Chicago. I grew up knowing about God, learning the Bible, and believing in Jesus. It's an awesome heritage, that I know a lot of people never got. I'm super grateful for that.
  - b) I was smart kid—I know, what happened, right? I was always reading and always thinking about stuff. And as I got to my senior year of high school, I had a ton of doubts over this very thing. I was learning about evolution, and it didn't square with what the Bible said.
  - c) It was my first real crisis of faith.
  - d) So I did what I always do. I studied it and wrote about it. A senior year term paper on creation and evolution, where I argued that the only universe worth living in is one where humans have value, and that can only happen if we are something more than complex matter and energy.
  - e) I still believe that today.
  - f) There's plenty of empirical and rational evidence there for anybody open minded enough to take an honest look.
  - g) A world without a supernatural God and Savior is a world not worth living in.
6. Here is a widow. She has previously suffered the unspeakable heartache of burying her beloved husband. And now, she's burying her only child, her son. Words cannot convey the pain of this moment. The loss, the heartbreak, the numbness and darkness she feels.
7. In the natural order of things, death is final. All the data points that way.
8. But here comes Jesus. He sees beyond the natural order of things. He sees a supernatural realm. By faith, he sees his Father. By faith, he sees heaven. By faith, he senses the presence of the Holy Spirit. By faith, he believes the written Word of God. By faith, he knows that this world is not all there is. Jesus knows that humans have immortal souls. He knows that death is never final.
9. Jesus saw her there - bent over, too tired to cry anymore. Broken, desperate, and afraid. Trapped in a worldview that offered no hope.
10. And he felt compassion for her. He loved her. He went to her. He looked at her with tender eyes—this stranger, this woman who knew so much pain. "Don't cry. Please don't cry."
11. And he stepped over to the coffin, and touched it, and said, "Young man arise." And he sat up and began to speak!
12. Every miracle Jesus did proved the existence of a realm beyond nature's realm. A universe that telescopes can't peer into and mathematicians can't reduce to a formula.
13. The world you see is surrounded by a world you can't see—a realm of angels, demons, heaven, hell, God, the devil, truth, and lies. It's a real world, and Christ's miracles proved it.
14. What is a miracle?
  - a) A miracle is a temporary suspension of the ordinary laws of nature, when God reaches in to startle people into re-investigating their assumptions about their lives and their world.
  - b) Every miracle Jesus did overruled the laws of nature, and offered a glimpse into another realm where heaven reigns supreme.
    - (1) Life isn't random.
    - (2) Death isn't final.

- (3) Your soul is more than matter and energy, and is immortal.
- (4) Your destiny isn't subject to luck, fate, or the stars.
- (5) God sits on his throne.
- (6) God is good and he loves you.
- (7) The world is difficult. Pain happens. Heartache happens. Death happens.
- (8) But the world has a Savior who is greater than pain, greater than heartache, and greater than death.

c) That's heaven's physics.

15. And that's why Jesus did miracles. To prove this life isn't all there is. You live in a supernatural universe.
16. That's the second layer in. Let's dig deeper.

#### C. *Christ's Mission*

1. Do not miss the incredible way that Luke sets up this story.
2. Here comes Jesus. He's going into this city called Nain.
  - a) Here comes the woman. She's going out of this city called Nain.
3. Jesus is swarmed by disciples... Luke says "a large crowd."
  - a) The woman is swarmed mourners... Luke also says "a large crowd."
4. Luke paints a picture of two large crowds of people. They are going in opposite directions and they are about to collide. One crowd represents death. One crowd represents life.
5. The nucleus of one crowd is a dead man in a box.
6. The nucleus of the other crowd is Jesus Christ, who gives life to the dead.
7. That's the set up. That's the story. That's the mission of Christ in a nutshell.
8. He came to seek and to save the lost.
  - a) Every miracle Jesus did proclaims his mission to rewind the devastation caused by Sin and the Fall.
    - (1) He cast out demons, because his mission was to defeat the forces of darkness, and cast the devil into everlasting oblivion.
    - (2) He stopped the storms, because his mission was to redeem all creation from the devastation of a godless existence.
    - (3) He healed the sick because sickness only entered the world after the Fall into sin.
    - (4) He released the oppressed, because sin is the greatest oppressor of all.
    - (5) He raised the dead, because that's the goal of it all.
      - (a) All the miracles he did pointed to the singular mission to save unsaved people from sin.
9. That was his mission, and his purpose, and his driving force.
10. He didn't have to. He didn't need to. God wasn't lonely, please stop saying that. God didn't need somebody to love, please stop saying that too. The Father loved the Son who loved the Spirit who loved the Father.
11. He came because he chose to, and it was his good pleasure, to redeem lost people and bring them back to God.
12. It's always been that way. The two large crowds I mean. You're in one or the other. We all are. The crowd of death or the crowd of life. And it's only Jesus who makes the difference.
13. You do not understand Jesus if you only see him as a teacher, or as a moral example, or as love personified.
  - a) Jesus was a man on a mission, and that mission was to save everybody in the world who would accept his acceptance of them. He was relentless. You couldn't deter him. You couldn't distract him. You couldn't stop him.
    - (1) Peter tried to stop him from dying, and Jesus called him Satan. He called his best friend Satan.
      - (a) Nice guy?
        - i) Not if you tried to stop his mission. He was relentless.
14. Because Jesus knows a glorious secret:
  - a) When the large crowd of death embraces Jesus, God performs the biggest miracle of all: he transmogrifies the crowd of death into a crowd of life and a party happens forever.
    - (1) I've come to a point where I don't care if I ever see any other miracle than salvation. There is nothing like that moment when the sunlight of God's grace kisses a person's face, and Jesus floods in with new life and light. That's the miracle that matters, when all the rest are forgotten.
15. Church, we are called to perpetuate that miracle. We are to be that large crowd of life delivering Jesus into the large crowd of death. We're all there is. There ain't nobody else.
16. And I have to remind you that in a church, this is the first thing to die without constant reminders from leadership. The mission to save the lost. Evangelism. Outreach. A heart for outsiders. That dies first if you let it.
17. I've been in churches long enough to see it. Churches turn into social clubs. Country clubs. We study the Bible. We enjoy good music. We have programs for our kids. We are happy. We are well fed. We pray for each other. We are a family.
18. Yes.
19. But we are an army too. Don't forget it. We have a mission.
20. We so easily forget the tearful crowds we rub shoulders with every single day. We forget their heartbreaking destiny, and their unspeakably sad eternity.
21. We so easily forget the mission.
22. Let's not do that, okay? Let's have hearts that beat with love for the lost and dying world, and let's go get 'em, amen?

#### D. *Christ's Finished Work*

1. It's called Work, because it was blood, sweat, tears, and death.
2. It's called Finished, because it was once for all, done, complete, and there's nothing left to add.
3. What Jesus did when he died on the cross was absolutely enough to purchase eternal salvation for every person in all of history who would believe in him as their Savior.

4. And when he was done, he cried out IT IS FINISHED, and he died.
  - a) Every miracle Jesus did foreshadowed his sacrificial death on Calvary's Cross.
    - (1) This is getting so close to the core, it's sizzling hot. Almost as close as you can get.
5. How did Christ's miracles foreshadow his death on the Cross?
6. Because they cost him.
  - a) The miracles cost him emotionally.
    - (1) When he saw this widow of Nain, he felt compassion for her. The word means to have a gut-level reaction, to feel something in the pit of your stomach. Jesus let his heart feel what her heart felt. He was all in.
    - (2) When he came to the tomb of his friend, Lazarus, the Bible says Jesus wept. He didn't harden himself.
      - (a) His miracles came at an emotional cost.
  - b) The miracles cost him physically too.
    - (1) There's a story where Jesus is pressing his way through a crowd, and a woman with an illness pushes in to touch him in his garment, having a deep faith that just a touch will heal her. And it did. That very moment, Jesus stopped, and he asked, "Who touched me?" His disciples looked at him like he was nuts. What do you mean? You're in a crowd! Everybody's touching you!
      - (a) *But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." (Luke 8:46, NKJV)*
  - c) There was a cost to his miracles, they took a toll on him. And those were simply mini-previews of the ultimate cost he would one day pay.
7. But there's a deeper reason: the miracles also foreshadowed his death because only he could do them.
  - a) Every miracle was an act of GRACE, in which Jesus did something by his own power, and at his own expense for somebody who didn't deserve it, and couldn't do it for themselves.
8. And if that doesn't point to his death on the Cross, nothing does.
9. The big missing element to so much thinking and writing and preaching is the preaching of the Cross of Christ.
10. Listen: the heart of Scripture is Christ.
  - a) The heart of Christ is Grace.
    - (1) The heart of Grace is the Cross.
      - (a) The cross is the heart of the heart of the heart of everything we believe.
      - (b) So I'll cherish the Old Rugged Cross  
Till my trophies at last I lay down.  
I will cling to the Old Rugged Cross,  
And exchange it some day for a crown.
11. So we're almost to the core of the miracles of Christ.

#### E. *Christ's Glory*

1. Remember how the story ends:
  - a) Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people."
2. All creation exists for the glory of God. To honor and praise him. You exist to glorify God. I exist to glorify God. Glorify God in your single life, in your marriage life, in your family life if you have it. Glorify God at work, at school, in the hood, wherever.
3. How do you glorify God best?
4. Dissect this miracle:
  - a) Who was hopeless and helpless? The woman.
  - b) Who did the miracle? Jesus.
  - c) Who raised the dead? Jesus.
  - d) Whose power was on display? Jesus.
  - e) What price did the woman pay? Nothing.
  - f) What effort did the woman put forth? Zero.
  - g) What do you call all this? Grace.
  - h) What's the result? GLORY.
5. Every miracle Jesus did brings glory to God, because God is glorified by what he does for us, not by what we do for him.
6. Do you want to glorify God?
7. Grow deeper in his grace, and grow wider in your experience of the magnificent blessings that are already yours in Christ.

#### IV. Conclusion

- A. You have a mind-blowing Savior, and a miracle-working God. You have the best friend a person can ever have. You have a salvation richer than words can describe. You have hope. You have true love. You have found the treasure at the end of the rainbow. You have the certainty of heaven. A salvation You cannot lose. You have a mansion in heaven with streets of gold. You have the presence of God in your life. Promises for every situation. A lamp for your feet and a light for your path. You have the Spirit to comfort you, the Word to strengthen you, and grace to see you through. You have perfect armor against the devil's devices, and a power greater than the pain machine called earth. You have strength for today and hope for tomorrow. You have love. You have acceptance. You have new labels and a new name. You have Jesus.
- B. And if that's not a big enough miracle for you, I just don't know what to say.
- C. But I know, it's a legit question... what about miracles today? We'll have to cover that next week when we talk about the teachings of Christ.