
Miracles

**A sermon by the Rev. Deacon Juan Sandoval
Proper 13 – Year B**

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Amen.

God is a genius. God is a genius.

I have worked in hospitals and clinics for more than 45 years and I have seen what God has created. Look at the magnificent creation called the human body. How often do you stop to think about its complexity and all that transpires?

How often do you think about breathing? I would say that most of you don't really stop during the day and say "oh, I need to take a breath". How many times a minute do you take a breath? Fourteen, eighteen? Lungs are a complex mechanism simply put, that bring in oxygen and blow off carbon dioxide and yet life is dependent on a narrow band in which we maintain life. Certainly, much more complex than just that, but a function necessary to life. One of God's miracles.

How often do you think about your heart beating? Again, probably don't think about it because it just continues. Yet the heart, a muscle that pumps blood to and fro throughout our bodies insuring we get that oxygen to all parts of our body. Lub, dub, lub, dub goes the heart 60, 70, or 80 times a minute, whether we think about it or not. So amazing and so elegant. Another one of God's miracles.

The whole of our human bodies is a miracle especially when we look at all the complex intertwined functions. God **is** a genius.

During my time in hospitals, I have had the honor to observe some of God's miracles. Miracles that happen more often than we might think. God is constantly with us and performing these miracles. During the Vietnam War, I worked in a critical care unit specifically for those coming from Vietnam. I will share two miracles with you.

Jeff, a 22-year-old soldier was wounded in a battle. He was shot in the head and had been in a coma for a few days when he arrived. He remained in the critical care unit for several months and the neurologists gave him little to no chance of recovery. We cared for him, bathed him, fed him tube feedings, turned him religiously to prevent bed sores. Jeff had now been with us for about three months and had just been given a bath. We went about our morning routine when all of a sudden Jeff sat up in his bed. He looked around the room and said loudly "I would like a hamburger." His doctor said "Well, give the man a burger." A miracle of God.

During the Tet offensive of 1967, received a soldier, Jimmy, who was burned over 80 percent of his body with 2nd and 3rd degree burns. The burns were a result of a phosphorus grenade. The on-duty doctor looked at Jimmy, turned, shook his head and said, "he is not going to survive this." Jimmy came into the hospital at about 168 pounds. We began treatment of his burns with the medications and treatments available to prevent loss of fluid and to prevent infection. Jimmy was also started on dialysis as his kidneys began to fail. Jimmy, after six months of treatment, care and daily tube feedings was now at 67 pounds. Our hope for Jimmy was minimal, but we continued to pray for him in the chapel across from our unit. Amazingly, Jimmy survived this massive ordeal and trauma. He was stable and was sent to a military hospital near his home in the United States, where he continued treatment. When another medic and I were sent to a new stateside assignment, we stopped in Los Angeles to visit Jimmy and his family. Now he had gained weight and with rehab had also regained strength.

An almost unbelievable miracle of God and one I experienced through my own eyes.

There are many miracles in our lives and throughout the Bible. God uses and used those miracles to strengthen faith in believers and to instill faith in unbelievers. We see these in the Old Testament and in the New Testament through Jesus, God Incarnate.

Perhaps one of the more important miracles was God introducing self, the ***"I am, who I am"*** from the burning bush. Then Moses with God's help, performs several miracles.

Moses puts his staff over the Red Sea when the Hebrews are cornered by Pharaoh's army and the sea parts. Then God's people walk through to the other side to safety. When I first saw the parting of the sea in the Cecil B. DeMille version of The Ten Commandments, I was in total awe. I was ten years old and it left an indelible impression as to the Miracles and power of God.

Today, in the Gospel of John, Jesus uses the words God used at the burning bush, I AM. Jesus emphasizes the "I Am" each time he uses these two words like his Father, the God of Creation, the God of the Exodus, the God who was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. It is clear that Jesus is truly identifying himself with God when he says, "I am the bread of life Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty". This is one of several times in his ministry that he uses an "I AM" statement: And **Jesus** said to them,

- **I am the Bread of Life** (John 6:35)
- **I am** the Light of the World (John 8:12)
- **I am** the gate (John 10:9)
- **I am** the Good Shepherd (John 10:11,14)
- **I am** the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25)
- **I am** the Way and the Truth and the Life (John 14:6)
- **I am** the Vine (John 15:1,5)

Today, we continue to hear about *after* the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand with two fish and five loaves of bread. He took the bread and fish, and when he had given thanks to God, he distributed them to those who were seated and they ate much as they wanted. Jesus taught by his example for all to be thankful and also taught them to share with others as the disciples gathered what remained, 12 baskets after all had their fill. Then the disciples got in their boats and left, but Jesus was not with them.

The people go looking for Jesus and find him to the small town of Capernaum. Then, Jesus starts teaching in the synagogue about a different food, a spiritual food that will last, a sustenance that nourishes and strengthens our *earthly* life, but also our eternal life. Jesus concludes by telling them, *It is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.* "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Did you miss the Bread of Life, the Holy Eucharist during this pandemic? Did you miss this outward and visible sign that provides us that spiritual food that sustains us, that fills us? I know I did, and I cried tears of joy the first time I received it again. We receive the manna from God and the bread of life as oft as we shall in memorial of Christ.

Whatever miracle we think about or perhaps experience, like the parting of the waters, the healing of the sick or the raising of the dead, our faith, like the mustard seed, may be the smallest, the least or the tiniest, but our faith can continue to grow and grow to fill our spiritual void. Our faith and belief in our God and his son Jesus the Christ can continue to grow into eternity. Jesus **is** the bread of life. Feast on his love and you will never go hungry.

Another miracle that we can feast on.

AMEN.