**St Martins C3 – October 29, 2023**

**Miracles – Miracle worker**

**Sermon Summary:**

In this Miracles series, we are reminding ourselves that we serve a God who does miracles in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Miracles happen because God’s Kingdom has come. The purpose of those miracles is to draw us into a trusting relationship with God. There will be times we see our prayers answered and other times God doesn’t answer our prayers in the way we expect, but either way, we trust in God.

Alongside helping you appreciate our miraculous God; we have also encouraged you to pray the way Jesus taught us to pray: *“your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*

*(Matthew 6:10)* The practical application of this series is the encouragement to make this an everyday prayer. ***“Lord, what does your Kingdom look like in this situation?”*** God doesn’t just want us to believe that He can do miracles, He is inviting us to do those miracles with Him.

1. **Praying for God’s Kingdom to come, highlights our reliance on God.**

God is the miracle worker. We simply get the privilege of being part of the process. Scripture and history reveal that God does miracles through ORDINARY people who seek Him and His purposes. God is looking for ordinary people like you and me.

(2 Chronicles 16:9) Ordinary people prayerfully seeking an extraordinary God. (Many examples in the book of Acts) In seeking God and His Kingdom, it aligns us with His purposes and God sees a child of His who is open to the miraculous.

1. **Praying for God’s Kingdom to come, also highlights our need to hear specifically from God in that moment.**

Again, this is something we see all the way through scripture. Those who God used were given specific instructions in the moment to partner with God to facilitate a miracle.

We will come across many tricky situations in our lives, where it will be hard for us to know how to pray, or what to pray for, in that moment. The best thing to do, is not assume too much, but just ASK God, HOW to pray. This is particularly true when it comes to praying for someone for physical or emotional healing.

1. **Praying for God’s Kingdom to come, also highlights our willingness to cooperate with what God is doing.**

Jesus was clear that disciples would not only be the recipients of miracles in their lives, but also the FACILITATORS of His miracles in others lives. When Jesus commissioned them He said: *“Freely you have received, freely give.”* Freely you have received the life of my Kingdom, now freely impart the life of my Kingdom to others. When the disciples willingly cooperated, they were amazed at what God’s Spirit did through them. Likewise, you will be amazed at what God does through you.

As you pray for God’s Kingdom to come to those around you, God will open up opportunities to pray for others. That may feel like unfamiliar territory for you, but start small and start simple. Practice praying for others in your Connect Group and in Church. When you pray, simply pray for God’s Kingdom to come to that person. Pray for the God to reveal Himself to them. As you keep it simple and personal, God will guide you and use you.

**Suggested questions for Connect Group discussion:**

*From what we see in scripture, what types of people does God use to facilitate the spread of His miracles in the world?*

*What are some consistent attitudes that God loves to see in people who seek Him and His purposes?*

*How might praying for God’s Kingdom to come in everyday situations help our hearts align with God’s purposes?*

*Are you nervous or confident in praying for other people, and what makes you nervous or gives you confidence?*

*What might the next step look like as you seek to be used by God to bring His miraculous purposes to others?*

Songs we sang in church on Sunday:

* Battle Belongs
* Holy, Holy, Holy
* Yet, not I, but though Christ in me
* That’s the power
* Way Maker

**Monday’s Devotion – Courage and deliverance**

**Esther 4:14-16**

*For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai:**“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”*

This week we are looking at what we can learn from Kingdom seekers in the Bible. Those who prayerfully sought to do God’s will. As we will see, they sought God’s purposes and because of that, God used them to facilitate a miraculous work.

Esther and Mordecai are the first examples that we will look at. Notice here that Esther is very anxious. She is putting her life on the line and doesn’t know how this will all turn out. Esther inspires us with remarkable courage in this situation.

This account also highlights, how God places us in situations where we can be used by Him. We, like Esther need to appreciate the environment God has placed us in and the opportunities that are there.

Lastly, Esther, Mordecai and others prayed and God miraculously delivered the Jews from genocide. Through courage and trust, deliverance from God comes when needed.

**Tuesday’s Devotion – Highs and lows.**

*(If you have time, read 1 Kings 18 &19, where Elijah defeats the prophets of Baal and is then pursued by King Ahab)*

As I said on Sunday, I admire Elijah. His courage to boldly stand for God’s purposes and oppose that which was not of God is inspiring, to say the least. God consistently proved to Elijah that He would protect him and deliver him. The miracles God did through Elijah were extraordinary.

Also, consider how untouchable Elijah was. On several occasions soldiers were sent to kill him, but God intervened. Not only that, but Elijah is one of the few people in history who never died. God protected him to the point of avoiding physical death!

With a life filled with highlights such as these, you would expect that Elijah would be a man filled with confidence in God and an absence of fear; however, we learn that is not the case. We read in chapter 19 of Elijah on the run and wishing he was dead.

These real stories of real people in the Bible highlight to us that we are all human. We all have our emotional ups and downs. We all have our highs and lows. We like to think we can courageously trust in God fully in every moment of every day, but our emotional reactions can surprise us at times. That just makes us human.

What we see through it all, is the reality, that God was there for Elijah. In the highs and the lows, God was there. God will never leave us, or forsake us. We will go up and down, but He won’t.

**Wednesday’s Devotion – Right place, right time.**

**Acts 8:26-27**

*Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch.*

As we have already seen this week, God lines up His people to be in the right place at the right time. Elijah was needed in the time of King Ahab, and Esther was needed in the time of Xerxes. In this example, God wanted Philip to be in a very specific place at a very specific time. (Interestingly it is on the road to Gaza, which is pretty topical at the moment)

Philip did not know why God was directing him to go on that road until he got there. Philip simply took the next step of obedience and God unfolded the plan as Philip obeyed.

There are a couple of powerful life lessons for all of us here:

1. God will orchestrate things in such a way to have you in the right place at the right time. We may wonder why our flight was delayed, or why we randomly bumped into someone, but God has His ways and means to put us in the right place at the right time to serve His purposes. So, let us look for opportunities wherever we are.
2. These accounts also show us that obeying those little promptings we get matters. We may not know the full picture as to why God is leading us into a certain situation, so we need to take the first step and then prayerfully consider the next one. Like Philip we might be surprised at how God uses that obedience.

**Thursday’s Devotion – The power of prayer**

**Acts 12:11**

*“Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating.”*

I love how detailed this account of Peter’s miraculous release from prison is. Right down to the detail of who answered the door and the people inside not believing her.

From our perspective we read a story like this and may be a little surprised by the reaction of the Christians in the prayer meeting. Why, did they not believe Rhoda when she testified to the very thing that they had been praying for?

Well, let’s be honest. That could have been us, right? There have been and will be times when God surprises us with His miraculous work and we almost miss it. We need to pray expectantly and celebrate when we hear the testimony’s.

Another important thing that God was doing here, was giving reassurance to Peter that he was on the right track. Peter had started preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, but was still on the journey of being convinced that this new direction was the will of God. God delivering him from prison and potentially death, reassured Peter that God was with him. God was miraculously protecting him, because Peter was needed for more ministry to the Gentiles. How is God’s work in or around your life encouraging you today?

**Friday’s Devotion – Trust me**

**Acts 27:22-25**

*But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me* *and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.*

There are many aspects of what happens here with Paul that line up with what we have been exploring this week. Paul heard from God, because he was prayerfully seeking after God and seeking to follow His will. God has Paul in the right place, at the right time to minister to the rest of the crew. As Paul obeys, he is able to reveal God’s miraculous deliverance to others.

In this and in many other occasions, what we see in Paul’s life is a tremendous trust in God. Like, Elijah and Esther, he had his ups and downs, wins and challenges. However, these circumstances didn’t through him off course. Paul simply trusted in Christ and sought to do His will.

Let’s be honest, we don’t know what life will throw at us. We also don’t know what opportunities are going to present themselves today. However, we serve a God who does know. We serve a God who does deliver us. So, let us put our trust in Him and seek Him and His Kingdom every day.