

Have You Ever Missed a Miracle?

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John: The Jesus I Never Knew Series

John 5:1-24

One of the most interesting characters to emerge from the Iraqi war is the Information Minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf. In the last week or two of the war, it was almost as if this Information Minister was living in a parallel universe with an entirely different reality than the reality of our space-time continuum.

When the Americans secured the Baghdad Airport, there was the Information Minister, Baghdad Bob, claiming that the Airport was firmly in the hands of the victorious Iraqi troops and that they had slaughtered the invaders in the desert. When images to the contrary were presented to the Information Minister, he claimed that it was all a Hollywood staged trick. When the Americans were marching through Baghdad, the Information Minister claimed that they were nowhere near the city. One British reporter said, "All you need to do was look over your shoulder and you will see an American personnel carrier." But this Information Minister refused to look over his shoulder. And right before he fled, one of his parting statements was that the Iraqi forces had achieved total victory everywhere.

It was a surreal experience listening to this man. He became a running joke not only in the US, but even throughout the Arab world. He was so out of touch with reality that he made even the Arab world wince when he spoke. He became an embarrassment. They even have a website that's getting tens of thousands of hits a day on this guy.

One of the jokes that is making the rounds in Cairo goes something like this: Did you hear that the Iraqi Information Minister just died and God had to send 63 angels to get him. 3 to bring him to the place of judgment and 60 to convince him that he was in fact dead.

Have you ever talked with someone and wondered, "What planet is this person living on?" Their view of reality is so diametrically opposed to the facts.

I want to tell you a story about my friend, Mike. This is a story that I tell at Newcomers' Class. So those of you who have been through the class, which is a prerequisite for membership here at Vineyard, have heard me tell this story before. But it is a remarkable story of a miracle. In fact, it may be the most remarkable miracle that I have ever personally had the opportunity to witness in my 30 years of being a Christian.

Mike was a member of our church for about a decade. He had epilepsy from the time he was about five. Tragically, his father used to hit him in the side of his head and tell him to “stop it” when he had a grand mal seizure. By the time we began praying for Mike, about 20 years later, he was about 25 years old and he had grand mal seizures virtually every week of his life. He was having about three grand mal seizures a week and hundreds of petit mal seizures each week. Mike used to come to church with his face bruised and beaten up because when he would have a seizure, he would often fall and hit the pavement.

Because he had such a severe case of epilepsy he was unable to drive. He suffered a significant degree of social isolation. He wasn't dating anyone at all. He was embarrassed about his condition. He had a very low paying job as a hospital orderly. But the hospital was threatening to fire him because he was a danger to himself and patients. He would sometimes fall through equipment and hurt himself and others. Mike was looking at the prospect of being on permanent disability. He was taking 62 pills a day, truly a witch's brew of various medications that left him in a constant state of mental confusion.

And to top things off, the neurologist that Mike was seeing was recommending that Mike have brain surgery to literally sever his brain into two hemispheres, cutting through the corpus callosum in order to decrease the brainwave activity that was creating his seizures. The physician said that after the surgery Mike would have to undergo physical therapy for a minimum of two years to regain body functions.

When Mike began to get prayer from our church, he was devastated in every way a human being could be devastated. He was physically ill, mentally confused, emotionally anguished, relationally isolated, vocationally underemployed and facing a future without virtually any hope whatsoever except further decline.

We prayed for Mike continually over the course of 4-5 months. We saw God do some amazing things in Mike's life. But the seizures still continued. That's when I called a friend, who was the founder of the Vineyard movement, a man named John Wimber, who had a spiritual gift of healing. Now, I believe that every Christian is called to pray for the sick. And every Christian who knows Jesus Christ will occasionally see healing. But some people are more regularly used by God to heal the sick. Those folks, we would say, have a spiritual gift of healing.

John met with Mike and John and another man prayed for Mike for about an hour in my presence. It was one of the most remarkable things I have ever had the privilege of witnessing. Without anyone other than God telling John Wimber about my friend Mike, John addressed in his prayers many of the secret things in Mike's life – past experiences, people that he had met that had hurt him. Mike said that in the hour that he received prayer, it was as if a tornado was whirling through his body.

At the end of the prayer John Wimber said, "Mike, you are 90% healed. The last 10% will come slowly. Go back home and get an EEG from your neurologist and confirm what I'm saying to you medically." See, if a person is healed by God, physicians should be able to confirm it, don't you agree?

In any case, Mike came back to Columbus and the very next day his physician called him and said, "We are doing a study of our patients with epilepsy here at OSU. We'd like you to come in for an EEG." Mike thought, "Isn't that curious, I was going to call him." Mike went in. To make a long story short, Mike had the EEG. His brainwave patterns had totally changed. The physician said, "You know, Mike, you are showing marked improvement. I would estimate about 90% improvement in your brainwave activity."

Here's the good news. From the day Mike received prayer from John Wimber, which was back in 1989, until today – 14 years later, Mike never had another grand mal seizure again ever. He had had his seizures for 20 years and then one day immediately following prayer in which he felt God touch his body, Mike's seizures absolutely stopped.

A few years later, Mike got a driver's license. You've never seen a prouder guy drive up to church than Mike. He pulled into the parking lot honking his horn, yelling at me, "Rich, Rich, check it out." He was something like 30 years old and because his seizures had stopped, he was finally able to drive. He met a young woman in our church shortly after that. They fell in love and got married. Because Mike was able to be weaned off his medications, his mind got clearer. He started to move up at his job. His social circle increased. In every single area of Mike's life – physically, emotionally, relationally, vocationally, romantically – Mike experienced a miracle.

Well, Mike went back to his physicians and tried to talk with them about the prayer session that he had with John Wimber. Now, it was unmistakable that Mike was healed. No more grand mal seizures. It wasn't just "I think I feel a little bit better." But one day Mike was desperately ill and the next day he wasn't. And so he said to his physicians, "Here's what happened to me. Do you believe it?" They smiled at Mike and said, "Mike, the only explanation for your healing is that your medication finally has kicked in."

Here was a guy who was on 62 pills a day and was medicated for 20 years.

You know, Christians toss around the word "miracle" too easily. Some Christians, if they find a parking slot in a crowded parking garage near to the place they want to shop, call that a miracle.

But on the other hand, there are lots of people who in the face of overwhelming evidence of a true miracle cannot see it. Like the Iraqi Information Minister, they

are missing the obvious. I've called today's talk "Have You Ever Missed a Miracle?" Let's pray.

John 5:1-9

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

I've called this series "The Jesus I Never Knew." My basic thesis throughout this series is that the Jesus we meet in the gospel of John is far more radical, far more revolutionary, far more unsettling than the Jesus we think we know. It's in order to provide us a refreshing look at Christ that we are going through this series from John's gospel.

Now the setting for this miracle that we read about in John 5 is a pool called Bethesda. Verse 2, *Now there was in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.* Archeologists have in fact, dug up this pool and if you were to go to Jerusalem today you could visit the particular pool that is talked about in John 5. In fact, the name of "Pool of Bethesda" was confirmed in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the ancient scrolls found in Israel back in the late 1940's. One of the scrolls that had been hidden away for 2000 years contains a reference to this healing pool at Bethesda.

You see, friends, the Bible is not simply a book of good moral stories like Aesop's Fables, that never really happened, or a book of philosophy like Plato's "Republic." The Bible is a book of history. So in other words, if you dig down in the ground in Israel, as archeologists have been doing for the last couple of centuries, you are going to be able to dig up the stuff that the Bible talks about. It's right there. You can see it. Touch it. This is reality. This is not an alternative universe.

Now the Bible gives us the lens, the spiritual lens, through which we look at that reality. The Bible interprets the reality for us. But it doesn't fabricate the reality. If you go to Jerusalem today you can visit the pool that John is talking about here in the 5th chapter of the gospel of John.

Well, apparently there was this legend that this pool had some healing properties. Some of the people believed that the water would occasionally get stirred by an angel. And if you were the first person in the pool, you would be healed. So we read, *Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years.* Let me just stop there.

One reason we often miss a miracle is because the miracle is delayed, so we believe it will never come. There is a tremendous mystery in the activity of God. I don't know why this man had to wait 38 years for his healing. We are not told by scripture why Jesus didn't come to him the day before or the week before or the year before and heal him, or three weeks later. I don't know why Mike had to wait for 20 years to receive his healing. Why now and not some other time?

It is simply impossible for us to fully comprehend the ways of God. Someone sits in church for a decade. They listen to 500 sermons and on the 501st sermon something happens. For some reason listening that day the penny drops and for the first time that individual says, "Yes. I see now that my need is Jesus Christ," and that day having heard that 501st sermon, the person gives their life to Christ. Who can explain the miracles of God? Why the light suddenly goes on?

How many of you would say that you sat in church for years, you attended different churches growing up, you heard about Jesus maybe 50-100-1000 times. It had no impact at all. And then suddenly the light went on and you finally got it. Why? Why that day? That moment? And not the week before?

One of the problems we have with the miraculous is that we sometimes give up too soon. Because the miracle is delayed, we believe it is denied. Those of you who are followers of Christ, have you ever worked at a job with a person who is really obnoxious, really annoying, someone you just had a hard time being around? You simply had to pray for endurance. And then you left that job and found out that the person who was so annoying gave their life to Christ a few weeks after you left, or a few months after you left. Someone at work led them to Christ or invited them to church and it was there that they gave their lives to Christ. How many of you have had the experience of hearing that some big druggie at your high school, the most promiscuous girl, the biggest partier, has given their lives to Christ and is now serving Christ faithfully?

You stand back and shake your head and say, "that's amazing! That person? That person has become a Christian?" Sadly, you didn't get to participate in the miracle.

You know, two chapters earlier, the apostle John, when speaking about the Holy Spirit, said, "the wind blows where it wills. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it's coming from or where it's going."

Friends, it is so easy to give up and say, “Well, the wind is not blowing. Therefore God will never do anything in this other person’s life. Therefore, I will never see the miracle that I’ve been seeking God for.”

The apostle Paul told his young assistant Timothy, “Timothy, preach the gospel in season and out.” In other words, preach the gospel when it is easy and it is harvest time and preach the gospel when the ground is hard and you are not seeing any fruit at all. Go to the gym when you feel like it and go to the gym when you don’t feel like it.

Sometimes you feel like you are just marking time with God, don’t you? There’s nothing special. You don’t have a nice tingly feeling in your body. You are not feeling particularly warm and gushy inside when you pray. You are getting up in the morning and spending time reading your Bible and praying. And then for some reason that we cannot explain, one particular morning you get up mark time and the wind blows in the room. God is there.

Listen, friends, we cannot make the wind blow. But we can put up our sails and catch the wind when it blows. We have a ministry here at VCC of wind catchers. There are several dozen people who have joined what we call our Healing Prayer Teams, but I’m going to call them wind catchers. We have 8 teams here at Vineyard. They pray at the church on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights for people who have chronic physical conditions and want to see God break through.

Now, our experience as a church is that we see a very, very small percentage of folks get instantly healed as a result of one time of prayer. Percentage? I don’t know what it is, but it is probably something like 1 in 20 people get instantly healed. Jesus just comes and heals them in that moment.

There is a very large percentage of people who feel a little bit of the breeze. They experience a little bit of improvement as a result of receiving prayer, but they aren’t totally healed. We’ve done various conferences here on healing and one of the conference speakers on healing, a man named Ken Blue, said something very simple. He said, “Well, if a little prayer produces a little improvement, maybe a lot of prayer will produce a lot of improvement.”

So these wind catchers in our church put their sails up and they are catching the Holy Spirit on behalf of those who come to receive prayer. Just in the last few months, let me share with you some of the things they’ve had an opportunity to see.

- A young woman who has had epileptic seizures for years has had her seizures stop. She’s been able to get a driver’s license after receiving prayer for five months.

- A woman who suffers from chronic fatigue syndrome and who wasn't able to work for nine months, after being prayed for has now returned to work.
- A man with MS has seen his condition significantly improve, so much so that he's been able to return to work.

We miss the miracles of God because we underestimate the power and the compassion of Jesus Christ. We read in verse 6, *When Jesus saw him lying here and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"*

It is difficult to know in what condition this man was in. I assume that he was a paraplegic. We don't use the word "lame" any longer. But I just read a story about a paraplegic who described the life changing affects of being in a motorcycle accident a few years ago. As a result of this accident, he lost the use of his legs and most of the strength in his right arm. He said he has constant chronic pain in his shoulders, neck and arms. He gets terrible headaches 24 hours a day and requires painkillers every four hours around the clock. Because he is confined to a wheelchair, he's gained quite a bit of weight, over 40 pounds a year. He pretty much lives his life on his personal computer because he can't do much else. He gets some physical therapy. He has difficulty with bladder control. For the first seven weeks after his accident when his head was wrapped up, he couldn't have his hair shampooed and he smelled awful. Even though he's married, he feels socially isolated.

Whatever a paraplegic goes through these days, multiply it many times over in the ancient world. There were no wheel chairs or physical therapists. There were no nurses visiting your home to assist you with personal hygiene. Hygiene problems would have been enormous. People probably stayed away from him. If he was moving himself around, his hands would have been rough and torn from the streets. I've seen these people in India, pulling themselves along on a board that has some wheels on the bottom. Their legs are totally shriveled like little tails.

We miss miracles because we believe that there are some cases too difficult for Jesus Christ. My friend, Mike, suffered for 20 years. Doctors basically declared him to be hopeless. And then after 20 years Christ came.

The man in this story is socially isolated, emotionally broken, suffers from hygiene problems that probably rendered him loathsome to the general public, certainly unclean according to Jewish law. His life was reduced to begging. There is no one in your world, no one you care about whether it's you or a family member or your mate or a close friend whose case is too difficult for Jesus.

And we miss miracles because we look everywhere but to Christ for healing. We read, *When Jesus saw him lying here and learned that he had been in this*

condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" Some people don't want to get well. "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I'm trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

Yes I want to be healed. Why do you think I'm lying here by this pool? Here is the Son of God standing in front of this man, and yet the man does not recognize who Christ is and doesn't know that Christ is the source of his healing. He says to himself, "I've got to get into the pool. My healing is going to be found in the pool."

I can't tell you how many times in a counseling situation I feel like I'm talking to this paraplegic in John 5. We have so many pools of healing that we look to other than to Christ.

"Well you see, if I'm going to be emotionally well, I've got to figure out why I am the way I am; why I do what I do; why I made this choice; why my father did what he did to me. I've got to figure it out. I've got to gain some insight regarding my past." The healing pool of insight. The book of Proverbs says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."

You say, "I've got to get insight into my past in order to be well." We're leaning on our own understanding and we're not leaning on Christ.

"Yes, I want to be well, but first my mother or my father has to ask forgiveness for what they did to me. They never acknowledged their sin against me." "If only my husband or wife would change and work on their stuff then I'd be happy." "If only I can find the right therapist for me and my child." "I just need to find a husband or a wife and stop being single, I'll be complete." Another healing pool. Your healing doesn't depend on Jesus Christ, but on some other human being. And so we pray and pray for Christ to carry us to our chosen healing pool and then we, or someone we care about, will be well. But Christ is not focused on carrying you to a healing pool. His focus is to bring you to himself. Jesus Christ enters a dialogue with this man to get him for a moment to look away from the place that he's seeking healing and to look at Christ.

Friend, what are you looking to for healing - physical healing, emotional healing, relational healing? What are you pinning your hopes on? The ultimate issue is not your past, your parents, your marital status, the label some doctor or therapist has pinned on you.

John 5:9-16 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." But he replied, the man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and

walk?" The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. So because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.

The Pharisees come along and begin to berate this man because he is violating their Sabbath regulations. The Ten Commandments, of course, forbid working on the Sabbath. But the Pharisees went further than simply forbidding work. They defined work into 39 separate categories of activities that were forbidden. Carrying something a certain distance was forbidden as work. Instead of being thrilled about the activity of God, the Pharisees missed the miracle because it didn't conform to their standards. This dialogue proceeds in a really humorous way.

In verse 10 we read, *The Pharisees [that's what it means when it says the Jews, it is a certain sect of the Jews. This man would have been a Jew himself.] said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." But he replied, the man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'*" They emphasized the Sabbath breaking, he emphasized the healing miracle. They come back and say, *Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?* Not who is it who healed you. But who is this Sabbath breaker? And John says that the man who was healed has no idea who Jesus was.

It is very common for people to miss miracles because the miracle doesn't fit in the box that we have God in. I remember reading some years ago a book by a very famous Christian pastor who denied modern claims of healing miracles. He said if these healings really took place, then we would see them in our church. But because we don't see them happening in our church, I know the claims must be false. Because God does not work in this particular box, the box I've set up for him, that my group has set for him, then it is impossible for me to believe that it is really God at work in your life. God can only work in my Baptist box. God can only work in my Roman Catholic box. The only place God can work is in the box of my Pentecostal background, or my Presbyterian background, or my Vineyard background. God will only work when the church has stained glass windows, or a pipe organ, or no pipe organ, or the people look like me, my race, my group.

God is so much bigger than our boxes, friends. Last week I spoke about Jesus being a barrier breaker. This week I'll call Jesus a box jumper. He is bigger than the box of scientific rationalism that excludes the possibility of miracles. He is always jumping out of the box, challenging your standards of how, when and why he should do something. Some people are so busy defending God that they

erect defenses against God and they miss what he is doing. Have you ever done that? You wanted to be so careful to get it right that you missed it all together?

God tolerates a lot more mess than we do. I've noticed that in life there are, generally speaking, two types of people. One type are standard setters and other type are standard breakers. Now both types have their particular weakness. Easy going standard breakers tend to be spiritually gullible. They often lack discernment. They tend to be open to every kind of silly teaching. They pass along things on the Internet that are pure Christian urban legends and are excited about them. They are constantly reading and repeating half-truths and spiritual myths. Standard breakers in the extreme have a spiritual form of AIDS. By spiritual AIDS I mean that without standards, the body has no defenses and it can be preyed upon by every kind of infection and invasion.

But then there are the uptight standard setters. They are the people who can't enjoy what God is doing because the person from whom it's coming is smoking a cigarette or doesn't have 100% perfect theology. And in the extreme, standard setters can have a form of spiritual lupus. Lupus is a disease in which the body's defenses are so exaggerated that these defenses don't only attack infection, but the defenses begin to attack the body itself. Sometimes, extreme standard setters find themselves attacking other Christians on the radio, in print, face to face, and they miss the miracle.

Do you know, friends, there are lots of people through whom God is doing something amazing. There are people in whom God is doing something amazing. But these people are in process. They are still being formed. They may be emotionally immature. They may not have their theology totally straight. They may not have the best communication skills. They may come from broken families and so have relational deficits. They may have problems with their grammar or with their teeth or weight. Can God do a miracle through someone whose grammar and teeth are bad?

We learned in ch. 1 that Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth. Christ is patient with the processes in people's lives. And you know, Jesus doesn't seem to be in as big a hurry to get people straightened out and to get everything buttoned down as we are. Isn't it frustrating how patient Christ is? But he's not only full of grace. He's also full of truth. Sometimes when easy going standard breakers talk about Jesus, they seem to talk about a Jesus made in their own image, a Jesus without a spine, a Jesus without limits, a Jesus without hard edges. Jesus is a Golden Retriever. I've heard people say, "I can't imagine Jesus ever making someone feel bad. I can't imagine Jesus ever confronting a person the way you confronted me." You are just a mean person.

Really? Look at verse 14 with me. *Later Jesus found him [the man he healed] at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."*

Occasionally, the Bible links up sin and sickness. Very often a person's sickness is not related to anything that he or she did. The sickness is simply part of living in a fallen world. We're not any more responsible for our sickness than someone else is responsible for their wellness. But occasionally, a link can be drawn between a person's own behavior and their sickness. If you have cirrhosis of the liver as a result of your heavy alcohol consumption, if you have hepatitis-C as a result of injecting drugs, if you've got a sexually transmitted disease as a result of being promiscuous, or emphysema as a result of smoking, or high blood pressure as a result of overeating, then a link can be drawn between your behavior and your physical condition.

But Jesus is not merely wanting to draw a link between sin and sickness – you will get sick again if you keep this up, he is threatening this man with something worse. He says to this man, "Stop sinning, or something worse will happen to you." What's worse than being a paraplegic for 38 years? Christ says, "I'll tell you what's worse, being eternally condemned by God on the Day of Judgment is worse."

Would Jesus ever confront someone with a hard word? He would. He does it all the time in the Bible. Would Jesus ever make someone feel bad? He does. Would Jesus ever hurt someone's feelings? Yes. He probably made him feel very uncomfortable, very threatened and intimidated.

Friends, Jesus' words extend to us today. May I ask you a question? In how many of your lives has Christ worked a miracle? Maybe by all rights you should be dead. You had a near miss in a car accident. You narrowly avoided being run over. You almost drowned as a child. You had a heart attack, or cancer. Yet Christ healed you. Christ rescued you. You have narrowly avoided terrible consequences for something you've done. You almost lost your marriage, or your job, or your home, but Jesus Christ, rescued you, he protected you.

Let me ask you a question. Have any of you experienced a miracle and yet, if you are honest with yourself, you would say, "But I haven't changed. I haven't really changed and really given my life to Jesus Christ." You know, Christ can do so much in someone's life. You can join the church and get baptized and yet we continue to practice the same sins we used to before Christ intervened. I think that's what's going on in this story. I wonder if there is anyone here that Jesus Christ might be saying today the words of verse 14, "Stop sinning or else something worse will happen to you."

Well, Jesus Christ fulfills the Sabbath in verse 17 when he said, *Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."* We miss the miracle when we allow ourselves to believe that Christ is not working in our lives.

From chapters 5-10 John shows how everyone of the Jewish festivals points to Jesus. Jesus is the true Sabbath. He is the Passover. He fulfills the Feast of Tabernacles. He fulfills the Feast of Dedication.

The Jews in Jesus' day engaged in a great debate about whether God was active or inactive on the Sabbath. Back in the book of Genesis, it says "on the seventh day he rested from all of his work." Does that mean, the rabbis ask, that God completely ceased from doing anything in the world? The rabbis said, yes, God completely ceased his activity. Other rabbis, the majority, said no that that was impossible. If God stopped working in this world, the world would grind to a halt. God upholds the world. He preserves the world. His providence is seen everywhere – in the provision of rain, sun, and wind; in the continual activity of the very cells of our bodies.

Jesus goes along with the majority of opinion among the rabbis and says not "God is still working," but "My Father is working to this day, and I am working." My work is coextensive with the Father's. It is in partnership with the Father's.

Do you know it is easy to believe as some of the rabbis did that God is not working. You are praying for your child, but you don't see any improvement, you don't see change. Friends, verse 17 is for you, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."

You are praying for your marriage and you don't see any improvement, you don't see any hope, verse 17 is for you. "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."

You may believe that because you still remain in pain that your Father isn't working. He is working, Jesus said. You may believe that because you don't see evidence that your Father isn't working. He is working Jesus said. Because you've prayed about a matter 50-100 times and the miracle hasn't come fully forth that God is not working. He is working, Jesus said.

Finally, to have Jesus as your Sabbath means that you can rest upon him for your salvation. Being saved, being pardoned by God for your sins, having God adopt you as his son or daughter, knowing that you know that God's Spirit lives in you and you are a changed human is not a matter of trying harder, being a good person. It's a matter of totally resting, trusting in the activity of Christ who died for your sins on the cross. Christ who pardoned your penalty, who bore God's wrath, who stood in your place. You can lean upon him. You can trust in him, knowing that he continues to work.

And finally, how may you and I see the miracle. There are so many ways to miss the miracle, how can we see the miracle? Verses 19-20, *Jesus gave them this answer, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only*

what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.

Let's just stop there. Jesus says that he is a partner in this world with God the Father. He extends God's kingdom, God's reign in this world. The Father shows kindness to an individual and so Jesus comes up to that same individual and blesses them. The Father is in the process of healing an individual, and so Jesus seeing that, prays for that individual and heals them. The Father is at work in a teenager's life and so Jesus partners together with his Father and saves that teenager, or that husband or wife, or parent.

How does Jesus know what the Father is doing? Verse 20 tells us, *For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing.* Jesus continually stands in the circle of the Father's love. And as he stands secure in his Father's love, his heart is entirely open to hearing and seeing, and feeling what the Father is doing in the world.

Let me close with this. Years ago, I was praying and I said to God, "I want to see more miracles. I want to see your activity in this world. But I don't seem to see at all what you are doing." I felt the Lord directed me to John 5:20. "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he does." As I read over the words, "For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does" I felt the Holy Spirit speak to my heart and say, "Rich, whenever you completely trust in my love for you and in my love for the person you are praying for, you are going to see something happen. You are going to see my activity. Whenever you doubt my love, whenever you wonder are you fully in the circle of my love, or is this other person an object of my love, you are going to find it hard to see the miracle."

Friends, my I close with this encouragement? God loves you. He loves the person to the right of you and to the left of you. He loves the person behind you and in front of you. God loves the people in your family. He loves the people at your workplace. He loves the people at your school. As you get more and more rooted in the love of the Father for you and for the people around you, you will have eyes to see what Jesus saw – the miracles of God. Let's pray.

Have You Ever Missed a Miracle?

Rich Nathan

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John: The Jesus I Never Knew Series

John 5:1-24

I. Jesus of History (John 5:2)

II. Jesus Our Healer (John 5:1-9)

- A. We miss miracles because we believe God's delays are God's denials.
- B. We miss miracles because we underestimate Christ's compassion and his power.
- C. We miss miracles because we turn everywhere but to Jesus for healing.

III. Jesus Full of Grace and Truth (John 5:9-16)

- A. We miss miracles because they don't conform to our standards.

IV. Jesus Our Sabbath (John 5:16, 17)

- A. We miss miracles because we believe Christ is not working.

V. Jesus the Revealer of God (John 5:19-24)

- A. We miss miracles because we don't live in God's love.