

Making Miracles

Scripture Readings: *1 Kings 18:17-39; John 20:30-21:19*

Suggested Hymns: *“Dear Lord and Father of Mankind”*
 “More Love to Thee, O Christ”
 “Breathe on Me, Breath of God”

INTRODUCTION

Following the death and resurrection of their teacher, the disciples were dissolutioned and confused. Jesus had not achieved the revolution against Roman authority as they had expected and they feared for their own safety. The little band of followers had gathered by the Sea of Tiberias, probably licking their wounds of disappointment. They seemed to have no purpose or direction for their lives and they no doubt considered returning to their former professions. Perhaps more as a distraction from recent events than his commitment to the vocation, Peter said to the others, “I’m goin’ fishing.” James and John, Andrew and Matthew, Thomas and Nathanael said, “We wanta go too.” They fished all night and caught nothing. How despondent could one be?

Not only was it easier to catch fish at night because the fish could not see the nets, but this was also a dark night of the soul for the disciples. Suddenly at the break of day they noticed someone on the beach. He called out to them, “Have you no fish?... Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” And the story is a miraculous one, if for no other reason than that it was at daybreak. There were 153 large fish, so many that they were unable to pull the net into the boat. John recognized the apparition on the beach and said to Peter, “It’s the Lord.” Peter was so excited that he jumped into the water and waded ashore while the others struggled to get the boat and

the net full of fish to land. There they saw a charcoal fire with fish and bread on it. Jesus said, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught... Come and have breakfast.” And celebrating the Lord’s Supper for the second time, the first being before his death, Jesus took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. And the text says that this is the third time now that Jesus has appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

I. SHALL WE CONSIDER THIS A MIRACLE?

In order to answer this question, perhaps we must first answer another question, “What is a miracle?” I like Webster’s definition: “Miracle is a divinely natural occurrence that must be learned humanly, an event that apparently contradicts natural law.” What confounded the disciples in this event was that Jesus pulled together the divine work of God and the human work of the disciples. As in much of John’s gospel, this is an allegorical symbol of mission for the disciples. It is Jesus’ desire that people be fed, as is emphasized in his threefold challenge to Peter: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter replied, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” And Jesus then gives him the mission three times: “Then, feed my sheep.” It is well to remember here that Peter denied his Lord three times before the arrest and crucifixion. And this questioning of Peter is the story of his restoration: “Do you love me?” While Jesus is concerned about providing bread for those who are hungry throughout his ministry, he is also concerned that the disciples feed the world spiritual food. Therefore, I do not think it presumptuous for me to translate Jesus’ words, “Feed my lambs” to “Love my children.”

Providing food and drink was paramount in Jesus’ ministry, probably because of its scarcity in his day. The first of his miracles was that of changing the water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. Then there was the feeding of the 4000 and the 5000, the parable of the beggar who desired the crumbs from the rich man’s table, Jesus eating with Zaccaheus, the Last Supper and eating with the two on the road