

OTITLE: "The Third Miracle"

TEXTS: John 3:1-13 (NT pp. 93-94) and 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NT p. 181)

Introduction -

Two Sundays ago, I preached on creation. My point was that a person does not have to give up rational thinking to believe that God created the universe. In *The Shack* by Wm. Paul Young (Page 69), Mack says:

There are times when you choose to believe something that would normally be considered absolutely irrational. It doesn't mean that it is *actually* irrational, but it surely is not rational. Perhaps there is suprarationality: reason beyond the normal definitions of fact or data-based logic; something that makes sense only if you can see a bigger picture of reality. Maybe that is where faith fits in.

In other words, there is the rational set of parameters that scientists are familiar with and, for most scientists, miracles or events that are OUTside those parameters, are not possible, so either they did not happen as recorded or there is a rational, explanation.

My premise is that God lives in a whole DIFFERENT dimension where what we would call a miracle, is actually well within the rational parameters of that other dimension. A person miraculously healed or someone raised from the dead would be miracles in our dimension, but in GOD'S dimension, where there IS no sickness and where there IS no death, they a piece of cake. So, when Jesus, God's Son, came to earth, of COURSE he could make miracles happen.

This may be helpful to some people who struggle with faith and it may not. If not, I have something else for you this morning. Scientists and other rationally-minded folks require verification before they accept something as true. Well this morning, I am going to give show you a miracle and you will have the opportunity to verify it.

What else will I preach on this morning? In the sermon a couple weeks ago, I said that some Christians believe that God created the universe in six 24-hour days and other Christians believe that God created the universe through the process of evolution over many ages. A couple people wanted to know what I thought about creation. So I will tell you what I believe.

I also have a challenge for those who are Christians. Like all good challenges, it will be scary when you first hear about it and awesome if you decide to accept the challenge.

1. The first 2 miracles

First, I would like you to consider three miracles this morning. The miracle of life; the miracle of Jesus' entry into human history and the miracle of the new birth. If you don't believe in these miracles at this point, that's OK.

First, let me emphasize what I said a couple Sundays ago: God LOVES atheists and God loves agnostics. God loves all honest doubters. In fact, one of Jesus' disciples is known as "doubting Thomas." Faith, after all, is NOT the absence of doubt. The absence of doubt is defined as certainty. Faith believes in spite of doubts. I would even say that faith is doubting something until God shows you that it is true.

Let's get back to the 3 miracles. The first is the miracle of life. ...Nobody has been able to produce life out of inert matter. Scientists can clone life and they can genetically alter life, but they cannot produce life out of dead matter. Some believe that it is only a matter of time before this can be accomplished. That's OK.

The second miracle is Jesus Christ. Jesus is God. Jesus came from heaven, from that suprarational dimension, and he arrived on earth and not only DID miracles, he was himself a miracle.

Those who do not believe in miracles often think that Jesus may have been a great teacher, but nothing else. This is exactly what we may not believe. Why? Because it is simply not true. Jesus said he was alive long before Moses who died a couple thousand years before, he forgave sins and said he and God were One. In other words, Jesus believed he was God and that is what he told people.

What if one of your children came home from school saying that the teacher said he was God? You may initially think that the child misheard, but if you spoke to the teacher and he said, "Yes, I have been alive for thousands of years and I am indeed God," what would YOU think? You'd head for the principal's office and try to have the teacher removed from the classroom lickity split.

There are really only two choices in regard to Jesus Christ. Either he was mentally ill and you should not listen to anything he has to say or ...or Jesus actually IS who he says he is ...Jesus is God. That is the second miracle and if you do not believe that at this point, that is OK too.

2. The 3rd miracle

The third miracle is the new birth. In this regard, I will read two passages. The first is from John Chapter 3:

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born [anew].’

Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, “You must be born [anew].” The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’

Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can these things be?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? ‘Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

Here Jesus says that he has come from heaven and that only those who have been born anew can see who Jesus really is and can understand things like miracles.

The second passage is 2 Corinthians 5:17: “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”

I was not there for the first miracle of life. My nieces and nephews kids think I am pretty old, but I am not THAT old. How old AM I? Well, there are four stages in a man’s life. First he believes in Santa Clause. Second he doesn’t believe in Santa. Third he IS Santa. Forth, he LOOKS more and more LIKE Santa. I am in stage four. But I STILL wasn’t there when the first life came into being.

I was not there to see Jesus either.

But one thing I CAN tell you about this morning, is that I WAS here for the new birth. It happened to me. And that is the miracle I invite you to witness this morning. When I said out loud to God when I was 17, "Come into my heart and guide my life," the presence of Jesus came into me. I did not FEEL anything. In fact, I didn't realize that anything had happened at all. But from that point on, I have been aware of the Lord's presence and when I have listened to the Lord, and followed the Lord's direction, I have known where to go and what to do.

And I have changed. God did not choose a person who was very talented when he chose me. I had quit high school. I was shy. Being able to fish and hunt were my two primary qualifications. In case you think that what you see was the result of my own efforts, all I can say is that this is not true. If I do not stay connected to the Lord, I fall apart pretty fast. I can no more be who I am, or do what I do as a pastor than a deflated balloon can inflate itself. If the breath of God left me, I would fly around like an untied balloon and wind up in a heap on the floor.

Now, you may not believe in any of the three miracles I just described. But, I am a witness to the miracle of new birth. And now I will give you the as I said, you the opportunity to verify that miracle. ...ASK Jesus Christ to come into your heart. If you have doubts, you can say, "Jesus, if you DO exist, come into my heart." You don't have to say it out loud. God will hear you. Everyone bow your head and close your eyes.....

If you already DO believe, you may be thinking that you will get out of things easily this morning. No way. Here's my challenge to you. Ask the Lord to come into your life in a new and powerful way. This can be scary. But it will be awesome when the Lord hears you and DOES start using you in a new way. Once again, let us bow our heads and close our eyes.....

Let me know what happens. Please....

3. What I believe about creation

When I first asked the Lord to come into my life, I did not believe in miracles. I believed there WAS a God, but I did not believe that God cared about me or anyone else. I was an agnostic. As a matter of fact, I blamed God for a LOT of things in my life and in the world. But since the third miracle, the new birth, happened to me, let me tell you, I started to believe in miracles.

Genesis begins with these words: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the Spirit of God swept over the face of the waters."

That was me. I was a formless void filled only with incredible self-centeredness. Darkness covered my life and the Spirit of God swept by me and I ran from God. Now, when I see what God has created out of the nothing that was in me, I BELIEVE that God can create anything.

I believe that God COULD have created all there is in 6 mille seconds, in 6 days or in 6 ages. HOW God did it I don't know. Do I accept evolution? Yes. Life forms do evolve. That's why germs are developing resistance to antibiotics. Is there an unbroken line of evolution from primordial slime to human beings? I don't know, but if there is, God was entirely responsible for the process.

The second miracle, if you remember, is Jesus. Do I believe that Jesus is God? Yes. Why? Because I know that my life could not have happened this way by itself. And I am aware of the presence of Jesus in my life. And the more I pray, read the Bible, talk with other Christians, help others and worship God, the deeper my relationship with Jesus grows. It's great!

The third miracle, the new birth, I already told you what I believe. And I also believe in another birth. The birth from this life into the next. For those who have faith, this will mean migrating from this dimension to the suprarational dimension of God, to heaven. And if you think THIS dimension is beautiful and wonderful, wait to you see THAT one. And we will have eternity to explore it and enjoy it right along with Jesus.

Conclusion – Jay Leno's quote

Let me close with this quote is by Jay Leno from last summer: "With hurricanes, tornados, fires out of control, mud slides, flooding, severe thunderstorms tearing up the country from one end to another, and with the threat of swine flu and terrorist attacks. ...Are we sure this is a good time to take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance?"

With all that is going on your life, are you sure this is a good time to go on without God? ...Ask Jesus into your heart. Recommit your life to the Lord. You will soon be glad you did. And a million years from today ...you will be even MORE glad. ...Amen.