

**The Reverend Marjo Anderson**

**Narrative Lectionary 2.34 – Easter 4**  
**Acts 2:42-47**

**3 May 2020**  
**Salem, Bridgeport**

**“Signs and Wonders? YES!”**

*“Many wonders and signs were being performed by the apostles...  
With joyful...hearts they...prais[ed]...God and...  
Day by day God added to their number those who are being saved.” [Acts 2.43-47]*

This week our Lutheran clergy’s Talk and Text Study had many things to talk about so we didn’t have a lot of time left to discuss the text and so I joined one of their congregation’s Bible studies later that evening for a more in depth discussion.

One of the people in the group said, “It says here that many wonders and signs were being performed. So if Jesus’ disciples could perform signs and wonders then, why can’t we now? Has the church become so diluted that there’s no power left?”

At which point the pastor who was leading the group said, “Marjo, do you want to take that one?!”

He asked me because he knows I have experience different from many, maybe most, Lutherans and other mainline Protestants.

And so I explained that there is a part of the Christian church that celebrates signs and wonders all the time, a part of the church that doesn’t feel disconnected from the experiences of the early church, a part of the church that does not see its power as being diluted.

It’s the Pentecostal part of Christ’s church.

I told them that at the Pentecostal congregation that worships in our building I had heard testimonies of all kinds of signs and wonders – from a young woman who didn’t have enough money to go to college receiving a last minute scholarship, to a number of people being suddenly forgiven tens of thousands of dollars of hospital debt, to broken bones being spontaneously healed, to the pastor being pronounced dead in the hospital and being raised back to life by his praying family 10 minutes later.

I told them that I had personally witnessed the miracle of a young mother who, due to a surgical mistake, had spent weeks in a coma, months in the hospital, a year in rehab, & another year at home in a wheelchair. She had been told she would never be able to conceive again, but she got pregnant, and then she was told that neither she nor the baby would survive the pregnancy.

Many times she thought about terminating the pregnancy but she kept getting signs that she was supposed to have the baby.

She did.

And one month later I saw her walk for the first time – into the church, carrying her new baby – and both of them were 100% healthy!

The next week she was serving at a church dinner, and a few months after that she was dancing at her baby son’s christening!

“So why don’t we experience miracles like that?” the man asked me.

“Well maybe you do”, I answered.

“I know people in my congregation who have experienced pretty miraculous healings. It’s just that Lutherans tend to keep quiet about their miracles.”

“But broken bones immediately healed? People being raised from the dead? Do those things happen in Lutheran churches?” he asked.

As I answered such questions that night and later as I reflected on this text,  
I realized that there are 4 principles I'd like to share with you.

First of all, we tend to get what we expect.

It's part of the creative power that we have as creatures made in God's image.

If you believe yourself to be susceptible to illness, you'll be susceptible to illness.

If you believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that you don't get headaches, you're just not going to get headaches.

So if you don't believe in signs and wonders, you're probably not going to get any.

The more you believe in them, the more likely you'll experience them.

You want signs and wonders?

Expect them!

Second, you've got to do more than imagine signs and wonders –

you need to speak about them, and pray with others about them.

God didn't just think creation into being – God spoke it. God broadcast it. Made it public.

And the disciples?

They weren't each out there on their own, doing their own thing.

They lived together, ate together, talked together, prayed together.

The more they talked and prayed and shared their faith,

the more faith they had to share, and the more signs and wonders they saw.

The people I know who have received miracles declared up front and in public

what they believed God was going to do for them.

I remember one young woman saying,

“I owe \$60,000 to the hospital and I don't have the money to pay it,

but I KNOW that God is going to take care of this debt for me.”

And 2 years later, the entire debt was forgiven.

If you expect a miracle, tell people that you expect one.

And if it doesn't come right away, don't stop expecting it. Keep expecting. Keep praying.

And keep on telling people.

As soon as you stop expecting it, as soon as you stop telling people you're expecting it,

you've moved away from faith.

You want signs and wonders?

Don't just expect them. Tell God you want them. Tell others that you expect them.

And keep on telling yourself, and God, and others!

Third, when you get your miracle, when you see your signs and wonders, give thanks!

How do you feel when you go out of your way to do something for someone

and they just take it for granted, don't thank you, and don't let you know how much they appreciated it?

You may not be all that eager to go out of your way the next time.

It's the same way with God.

If we act like we got something on our own, didn't say thanks,

didn't make it clear how much we appreciated it, God might not be so eager to jump at our best request!

We need to be grateful, and to express our gratitude to God

And finally, just as we need to do more than imagine our desire in our minds and go on to speak about it,

we also need to do more than give thanks silently – we need to give thanks publicly.

We not only need to be grateful and to express our gratitude to God privately,

we need to do it publicly, to give God thanks and praise, to give God the glory.

Whenever David prayed for God to deliver him,

he declared his faith that God would answer his prayer

and he promised that he would give thanks in the congregation,

that he would sing of God's deliverance, that he would proclaim God's mighty acts.

If we don't give God the glory, if we don't publicly thank and praise God,  
if we don't celebrate with all our hearts and souls and minds and bodies what God has done for us,  
then we do God a disservice,  
we disempower Christ's church,  
and we hinder the work of the Spirit in each other's lives.

If we don't expect God to be able and willing to perform signs and miracles  
than why put our trust in such a God?

If God does perform signs and wonders in our life and we don't give God the credit,  
then how is anyone to know about God's power and love?

If we don't expect and celebrate the signs and wonders of God's power and love in our congregations,  
then why would anyone care to join them?

If no one is telling me about the great things God has done for them,  
how am I to believe that God will do great things for me?

If we are to truly be the church we need to be more than a community of like-minded individuals  
who believe in caring for each other and for those in need.

We need to be connected to the Source of all power and love.

And when we're connected to that Source, that Source is able to provide for our every need.

What is it that you need this day?

Do you need protection from this virus? healing from sickness? comfort from grief?

Do you need to be set free

from fear or frustration? from depression or despair? from anxiety or anger? from stress or strain?

Do you need a job? money to pay the bills? food?

Do you need a new relationship? mending of a broken one? protection from abuse or neglect?

Whatever it is that you need, know that God is powerful enough and loves you enough to provide it.

God will do God's part.

Your part is to have faith and live out that faith in 4 ways:

Believe in your heart that God wants nothing more

than to satisfy the deepest desires of your heart that God has placed within you.

Declare and decree in the presence of others what you expect God will do for you.

And when your prayer has been answered,

when you've received your miracle, when you've seen your signs and wonders, thank God.

And don't just thank God privately but tell everyone – especially those who first heard your prayer –  
what great things God has done for you.

In the midst of the congregation glorify and magnify the Lord,

give God thanks and praise, sing of God's salvation, proclaim God's mighty acts.

Are signs and wonders still happening?

Oh yes!

Expect them. Pray for them.

Give thanks for them. Celebrate them.

And the more signs and wonders you see and celebrate,

the more signs and wonders there will be to see and celebrate.

Make known your needs.

Make known God's deeds.

And let's celebrate the signs and wonders together! **Amen**