

How can miracles help us believe – do we need them?

Looking through the bible it is littered with miracles, Abraham and his wife have a baby in their old age, this miracle baby becomes the father to the Jewish people, they escape captivity in Egypt through a series of miracles and settle in the promised land where after many generations Jesus is born – the son of a virgin. Jesus' non-miraculous cruel death pays the price for humanity's wrongdoing in a once and for all way that the Old Testament's animal sacrifices never could, and gives way to his miraculous rising clearing the way for people to relate directly to God. If we look at the bible in this way, then the answer to the question of whether we need miracles to believe is a very definite YES – without them what would we have to believe in?

But what about miracles that have happened since then? Alison mentioned last week that there have been many miracles accredited to Saints since the time of the New Testament and how these are often miracles of healing. But there are all sorts of other miracles, for example: St Aidan found himself on Lindisfarne when the settlement at Bamburgh was attacked and set on fire, he prayed and the wind changed direction meaning that the fire did no further damage. There is a legend that St Clare once 'saw' a Christmas service which she could not attend because of illness, an event which led to her being made the patron saint of television, or if you prefer more extreme examples St Brigit reputedly turned her bathwater into beer and Saint Finbar crossed the Irish Sea on horseback! And miracles happen now, a friend of ours was in intensive care at Addenbrookes, his pacemaker had failed he had a severe infection in his heart and lungs – skilled and experienced as the staff were they doubted he would last more than a few hours, the church organised 24 hours of prayer, he survived and was preaching again a few months later

Stories of miracles are quite easy to find, but what about the impact they have on us? Do they affect our faith and the way we look at the world? If we see something amazing do we attribute it to God or do we look for a 'logical explanation'?

In her pastoral letter this week Lynda mentioned a "recent study [which] reported that *'a regular dose of childlike wonder, achieved by taking a weekly 'awe walk', can help maintain a healthy mind'* (*The Times*, 22 September 2020)." She went on to talk about looking around us, appreciating the amazing things in our world and using that as a way to worship.

I think a lot of us have lost our sense of awe and wonder, as we find out more about how things work and load ourselves up with adult concerns that sense of "childlike wonder" is somehow squeezed out - we begin to explain things rather than respond with surprise.

I would like to suggest that we all need to try it the other way round, welcome God's involvement in your life, attribute things that happen to Him and you may still find your logical explanation but you will also find that it becomes easier to let the everyday miracles influence your relationship with God and allow it to grow.

It is entirely possible to explain how the internet, our laptops, tablets, phones and Zoom work – but does that go any way to showing how so many of us have come to feel that our time together on a Sunday evening is a time when we meet God? A botanist could tell you how at this time of year a tree disposes of unwanted chemicals and they react with leaf pigments turning green to red, orange or yellow but that goes no way to explaining the glory of this seasons colours or the simple joy of kicking a pile of dried leaves around.

I want to challenge us all to go out and spot the little everyday miracles in our lives this week. To thank God that we are encountering them, then to stop and reflect and see if it changes the way that you think about God and relate to Him