

## Invest in a Miracle

Matthew 14:13-21

June 3, 2007

The age old formula for preaching was three points and a poem. I've never been all that big on poetry, but I thought that I would begin the message this morning with one I picked up somewhere. I wish I could give credit for this, but I don't remember where this came from. Nonetheless, it probably gives us some food for thought.

Jake the rancher, went one day to fix a distance fence.  
The wind was cold and gusty and the clouds rolled grew and dense.

As he pounded the last staples in and gathered his tools to go,  
the temperature had fallen and the snow began to blow.

When he finally reached his pickup, he felt a heavy heart.  
From the sound of that ignition, he knew it wouldn't start.

So Jake did what most of us do if we'd have bent here.  
He humbly bowed his balding head and sent aloft a prayer.

As he turned the key for the last time he softly cursed his luck.  
They found him three days later frozen stiff in that old truck.

Now Jake had been around in life and done his share of roamin'.  
But when he saw heaven he was shocked – it looked just like Wyomin'.

Of all the saints in heaven his favorite was St. Peter .  
Now, this line, it ain't needed but it helps with rhyme and meter.

So they set and talked a minute or two or maybe it was three.  
Nobody was keepin' score – in heaven time is free.

"I've always heard," Jake said to Pete, "that God will answer prayers.  
But one time I asked for help, and well, he just plain wasn't there.

Does God answer prayers of some and ignore the prayers of others?  
That don't seem exactly square – I know all men are brothers.

Or does he randomly reply, without good rhyme or reason?  
Maybe, it's the time of day, the weather or the season.

Now I ain't trying to act smart, it's just the way I feel.  
And I was wonderin' could you tell me – what the heck's the deal."

Peter listened very patiently, and when Jake was done.  
There were smiles of recognition and he said, "So you're the one!

That day, your truck it wouldn't start, and you sent your prayer a flying.  
You gave us all a real bad time, with hundreds of us trying.

A thousand angels rushed to check the status of your file.  
But you know Jake, we hadn't heard from you in quite a while.

And though all prayers are answered, and God ain't got no quota,  
He didn't recognize your voice, and started a truck in North Dakota."

Now I believe in the power of prayer. I don't always understand it, but I'm not sure you have to understand it to believe in it. I believe that God still works miracles in the lives of people he loves. The Scripture lesson for this morning is about a small prayer of blessing which resulted in a miracle of such proportions that it was almost unbelievable.

Jesus had withdrawn to a quiet place, but as was so often the case, the crowds followed. He had compassion on all of the people and just did what he did naturally. He ministered to all who had needs. He walked among them and cured the sick.

The hour became late and the people were hungry. The disciples told Jesus to send the people away so that they go into the surrounding towns and villages so that they could find food for themselves. Jesus told them that that wasn't going to be necessary. "You give them something to eat," he said.

They replied that they didn't have anything to eat except two little fish and five loaves of bread. Jesus told them to have the crowd sit down. When they were seated on the grass, he took the little bit of food he had, lifted it up to heaven, gave thanks for it, and hosted a dinner party that would rival the great feasts of Herod's palace.

And when everyone had eaten their fill, they collected the leftovers which filled twelve baskets. Five thousand people, plus women and children, were fed on the hillside that sunny day.

The disciples thought that the problem confronting them was too big to fix. They had all of these hungry people and not enough to feed them. But even more telling about their attitude is that they didn't even consider that Jesus could find a solution. They didn't even ask him what they should do. They simply told him to send the people away to find their own lunch.

They never considered that they had the power to do anything about this problem. But Jesus just naturally assumed that they did.

The disciples assumed that in the face of the huge problem which they faced, the fish and loaves were really nothing. I'm not sure we ought to be all that tough on them because after all, they were human and didn't see the full potential for the power of God. We do the same thing, don't we? We find all sorts of excuses as to why we can't do something.

- I have nothing
- I'm too old for this sort of thing
- I'm sorry, but I have issues
- I'm too busy
- I've already given and done my share
- We should let the younger people do it
- I'm not ordained
- I don't know too much about the Bible
- This is not my gift
- I've got too much on my own plate right now

When the disciples were told, “you give them something to eat,” they were not aware that they had the resources to fulfill that expectation. They didn't think they had anything. Jesus told them to give what they had and let him worry about the distribution issues.

Feeding the crowd that day was an honest-to-goodness miracle and miracles can't be explained. They just have to be accepted. Perhaps just as great a miracle as the feeding of all those people was the miracle of the opened eyes of the disciples who saw what was possible through faith.

Our God is a lavish God who deals generously with all of humanity. Through the power of God, we are given much out of little. God is a God of great abundance. We learn that the things we get back are far greater than the things we give. With God, a little investment goes a long way.

I believe that there is such a thing as a divine law of investment. First of all, the divine law of investment tells us that we have to stop saying that we have nothing. The truth of the matter is that, when we combine what little we do have with the power of God, we end up having everything. The disciples finally came to understand that truth that day on the hillside up in Galilee.

Another principal of divine investment is that the people of God do the work of God. The people of God act as the hands and feet, the eyes and heart of the Lord. The disciples that day served as the means by which the work of God was carried out. They didn't make the miracle happen, but without them, it would never have happened.

We worship a God of abundance, a God of miracles, and a God who increases our small investments exponentially. The disciples provided a couple of fish and a few small loaves of bread – and a miracle of abundance took place. What resources do you have to place before God? Are you willing to do that? Are you ready to place whatever resources you have – time, talents, abilities, treasures – at God's disposal in order to watch miracles happen? Our spiritual return on investment will be plentiful and eternal.