

Christmas 2016 Serendipity

Introduction:

1. What is serendipity?
2. A definition might be: events that occur in our lives which bring us great benefit yet defy logical explanation. Some would describe such instances as miracles
3. We probably have had such instances in our lives and not recognized them as such
4. We may witness the supernatural intervention of God more frequently than we realize.
5. If we will but open our hearts and be more alert to God's protection and provision in our lives, we will be aware of God ever present in our lives

Bending the Rules:

1. As Christians--who enjoy the benefit of biblical revelation, and the confidence of Christ's unspeakable power in our lives--our basis for believing in miracles should be solid.
2. It is hard to read the Bible and not conclude that our belief in the possibility of miracles needs to be much stronger than it typically is.
3. the God who created the rules of nature can overrule them if He wants.
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5. It is in fact hard to read the Bible and not conclude that our view of what *constitutes* a miracle needs expanding.
6. Consider the fact that Jesus referred to his miracles as "works."
7. After healing a man born blind, for instance, he declared to his disciples, "***we must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day***" (John 9:4)
8. This miracle was Jesus' most impressive one next to raising Lazarus because Jewish history had accounts of blind persons regaining their sight, there was no record of anyone blind from birth being healed.
9. This was a miracle of miracles to the people of Jesus' time. But Jesus just called it "work"
10. It was just part of the *ordinary* activity of God and not the extraordinary.
11. As you read the gospels you will see that Jesus' language prods us to recognize the extraordinary in the ordinary events of life.
12. While a miracle involves God's bending the rules, these "rules" are not only those of physical nature but of other areas of life as well.
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14. I would encourage you to reflect on your own life and recognize where God intervened and "bent the rules"
15. As our conviction that God is willing to perform miracles grows, we are more alert to the practical ways he may work in our lives.

Faith vs Presumption:

1. It is not healthy to think that all belief in miracles is healthy
2. There is an important distinction--and a thin line between reverent respect for God's ability to perform miracles and presumptuous expectation that they will occur.
3. While the Scriptures challenge us to a deeper conviction about miracles, they emphasize just as strongly our need to take responsibility, to be good stewards of our lives and to grow in our ability to solve problems.

4. By the same token, I am wrong to think that I ever know for certain that God will perform a given miracle or act in a way I understand

Miracles and Motivation:

1. Sometimes the challenge seems too great – it is then that faith in God’s ability to do miracles can be critical
2. The story of Jesus walking on the water – they were out of hope
3. The actions of Peter should be a challenge to us
4. How many of us anticipate and expect the Lord to be intimately involved in our lives?

The Four Miracles:

1. Our confidence and faith can be built from reflection on our own past miracles and by meditating on the countless examples in scripture
2. Some examples of God moving supernaturally:
 - a. ***The Carte Blanche miracle*** – where Christ solves a problem instantaneously
 - b. ***Abundance from meager provisions*** – 5 loaves and two fishes
 - c. ***Sudden lift towards our goal*** – Jesus steps in the boat and instantly they are there
 - d. ***Strength for the long haul – Deut 29:5 “your clothes did not wear out...”***

The New Birth:

1. The greatest miracle of all is the new birth
2. God considered us and sent His Son so we might live with Him forever
3. But more than that – God personally invites us to live bigger than we are now
4. He has designed in your DNA not to just live our mundane ordinary lives, but to be involved in the great design that He has for you and the world you live in
5. Light of the World Painting
6. ***Revelation 3:20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me”.***
7. Are we rightly prepared? - Is our heart willing to become God’s dwelling place?
8. Could it be that the modern enlightened mind has relegated God to some or celestial buddy or sometimes to be forgotten object that has no relevance in the fast-paced world we live in?
9. Our God wants to always be with us – in our sin, in our suffering and death.
10. We should rejoice - God’s goodness at Christmas reminds us of His unending love
11. ***Ps 24:7 says “Behold I stand at the door! Open wide the gates!”***
12. He stands at the door – but we have to open it
13. Our response to the knocking must be ***“yes come Lord Jesus”***

Prayer:

1. When Jesus said the word Father – Abba – it changed everything
2. He has invited us into that reality into the place of belonging where we call God – Abba
3. To have that close and intimate of a relationship with God is a special gift that can ground us and help us to remember that God is loving and is in control.
4. Folks we *belong* to Him and God furiously longs for us.
5. That fully grasping that reckless, extravagant and jealous Love and loving God back is how lives are changed.

As Thomas Merton put it, ‘A saint is not someone who is good but who experiences the goodness of God.’