

Miracles

1. Warm up: Election season is upon us and, this past Sunday, we held a voter registration drive in the Social Hall. Are you registered to vote? If not, go to [IndianaVoters.in.gov](https://www.IndianaVoters.in.gov).
 - a. Who is a political leader from the past that you admire – and why?
 - b. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of our life, do you think Jesus will care whether we voted regularly? Why or why not?
2. On Sunday we resumed our “Dinner With Jesus” sermon series by studying one of the most famous dinners ever in the history of the world, *i.e.*, the dinner where Jesus fed a crowd of 5,000. Let’s read John 6:1-13, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. This same story is also told in the other three Gospels. Those accounts indicate that Jesus and his disciples went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in hopes of resting and recuperating. Instead, people from the surrounding area flock out to the wilderness to find Jesus. Think about a time when you needed rest, but just as you settled in, someone needed you for something. How did that feel? Do you think Jesus felt the same way when he saw the crowds coming for him?
 - b. When Jesus and his disciples ended up with 5,000 hungry people on their hands, Jesus saw this as a learning opportunity for his disciples. So Jesus asked Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people?” Philip replied, “Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” How would you describe the disciples’ state of mind as they faced the prospect of feeding all these people? When in your life have you found yourself in a similar state of mind?
 - c. When Jesus was told that there was a little boy who was offering to share his five barley loaves and two fish, how do you think Jesus felt?
3. In our Gospel story, Jesus was somehow able to miraculously feed 5,000 people! But nowhere are we told how this miracle took place. Jeff suggested two possibilities. The first possibility is that, as each person took a piece of bread and fish from a passing basket, an additional piece of bread and fish magically appeared – spontaneous multiplication – what Jeff called a “Classic Miracle.” A Classic Miracle is when power from outside our natural world – supernatural power – momentarily impinges on our natural reality and causes something to happen that defies rational explanation.
 - a. Many people are skeptical that Classic Miracles actually occur. How about you? Do you believe Classic Miracles happen? If so, how would you explain to a skeptic why you believe Classic Miracles occur?
 - b. Look again at the above definition of “Classical Miracle.” Have you ever experienced a Classical Miracle or known someone who did? Tell us what happened.

- c. In your view, how often do Classical Miracles occur? Would you say frequently, occasionally, or rarely? Explain your answer.
 - d. Most of us would probably say that Classical Miracles are only occasional or even rare. Why doesn't God give us Classical Miracles more frequently?
 - e. Why do Classical Miracles at all? Since God created the laws of nature, why would God ever choose to interrupt the laws of nature? In your view, what purpose do Classical Miracles serve?
 - f. Jeff suggested that one of the key lessons we can draw from Classical Miracles is: **We are not alone!** Biblical miracles (like the feeding of the 5,000) and modern miracles (like the story of Barbara Snyder spontaneously recovering from advanced M.S.) remind us that the physical reality in which we find ourselves is itself surrounded by a much greater reality that's wonderfully beyond our ability to understand. When you hear a credible report of a Classical Miracle, how does that make you feel? What thoughts or feelings arise within you?
4. A second possible explanation of how Jesus fed 5,000 people is an "Unconventional Miracle," which Jeff defined as an astounding occurrence that does not require suspension of the laws of nature. You might call this a "natural miracle." In this view, the incredible example of the generosity of the little boy in our Gospel story – and his willingness to give what little he had to God and others – inspired others who had food stashed in way to also dare to share in this situation of scarcity, so there ended up being more than enough for everybody. Viewed this way, it was a miracle of the heart.
- a. We tend to always want God to be the primary catalyst in the miracles we seek, but often God says, "No, I want you to be the miracle. Boldly do what little you can with what you've got and see how I turn that into something extraordinary!" Tell us about a time when God did something through you – or someone you know – that left you astounded.
 - b. Conventional Miracles require us to internalize two key lessons. **First, God specializes in taking the little we can give and turning it into something extraordinary. Second, when we give of what little we have, instead of being depleted, we end up with a life of overflowing abundance.** What's something you feel God is calling you to give or share out of an area of scarcity in your life? Are you willing to take that bold step of faith?
 - c. Phillip McGraw said, "If you need a miracle, be a miracle." What do you think that means?
 - d. Think of someone you know (past or present) who gave sacrificially of themselves. Did they end up with a life of scarcity or abundance? What form did their abundance take?

John 6:1-13

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ²A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. ³Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. ⁴Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.

⁵When Jesus looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' ⁶He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. ⁷Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' ⁸One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?'

¹⁰Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' ¹³So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.