

How amazing it must have been to witness the miracles Jesus performed while he walked this earth; the many people who had been living hopeless lives and were restored to wholeness. How amazing it must have been that day in Capernaum to watch the people surround the home of Jesus in hopes of seeing a miracle, hearing a word about the extravagant love of God. How amazing it must have been to be among the crowds who were so blessed to be able to sit at his feet and hear the word of God spoken through his Son. I can only imagine what it must have felt like to hear a message filled with such hope, a message filled with so much sincerity, a message filled with so much unconditional love.

But, to me the most amazing part is that these people had no idea they were listening to the Son of God speak, they had no idea yet of the power of the living God in their midst. They were unaware of what the message really meant, and yet they were mesmerized; and yet they came from all over. I can only imagine who might have been in the crowd that day; those who were devout and pious Jews, those who were rejected by their own society, those who were ill, those who were lame, those who were dying, those who were deaf, those who were blind, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, aunts, uncles, men, women and children of all types. In fact the text says there were so many there was no room inside or outside. Now need I remind us that this was a day and time when there were not television cameras, no speaker systems, not a visual aid of any kind; and they came and stayed anyway. In fact so many stayed one group who really needed help and perceived their struggle to be greater than anyone there put their God given ability to be

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creative to work and found a way to land at the feet of the great healer, Jesus.

You and I today have a great advantage over those who surrounded the home of Jesus that day. While it is true that Jesus is not present today in the flesh in which he was born; Jesus is present today in the flesh you and I each have been gifted. Our advantage is that when we arrive at the home of Jesus we know who Jesus is, we know the power and the extravagant love of Jesus. But sadly, the building isn't surrounded; the people no longer get creative in finding a way to Christ. I ask you what is wrong with this picture?

Let's step back for just a moment. If people who didn't have the advantage of the internet for spreading the word of miracles, people who didn't have television, newspapers or radios could get the word out as fast and as effectively as happened in the day of Jesus, why are we struggling. We have the advantage of all of those remarkable mediums, we have the advantage of knowing who Jesus is, we have the advantage of big and beautiful homes for Jesus, and in some cases two. ☺ Why are we struggling?

Perhaps we struggle because while we know the stories of miracles, we are unable to find them in our own lives. Perhaps we struggle because we get more tangled in the business of church and forget the people are waiting to hear our stories before they decide whether they will make the effort to travel to the house of God for healing and wholeness. Perhaps we have not

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gotten excited enough to tell others, perhaps we have decided we would rather not even make the effort to go and try because the church is full of hypocrites anyway.

Maybe it is like that old cliché about the way you tell if a restaurant is any good or not is by the lack of a place to sit when you arrive, the more crowded it is the better the food must be. In Jesus' day the word spread because something exciting was happening people were feeling hopeful, people were feeling like there was more than what they expected and they were not disappointed. In this text we see at the center of the excitement the living God, love personified, the One great Creator, the salvation of humankind, the great I AM.

Here we are in the home of Jesus and it is filled with some of the most faithful, dedicated Christ filled Christians I have ever encountered and yet in the past 5 years only one person has been at the door. Why do you suppose that is?

Well we could ponder the reasons or excuses for that for quite some time I am sure. The problem with doing that is that it doesn't feed us with what we have come for.

We have gathered at the home of Jesus because we know this is where we meet our sisters and brothers in Christ, this is where we come to join in

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common prayer to lift our collective voices to the great healer, the promise of hope, the gift of salvation and wholeness.

Our task is to spread the word, you see it is almost as if Episcopalians took Jesus literally when he said, your faith has made you well, go home and don't tell anyone. So we didn't!

But we have so much to tell. Miracles are happening all around us each day and we are so accustomed to them we have become desensitized to them, they no longer hold the power they did in the day of Jesus; besides they are not done by the direct flesh had of Christ, they are done through surgeons, doctors, teachers, moms, students, blue collar workers, dog catchers, garbage collectors, people just like you and I.

I think we sometimes forget that Jesus lives! He is risen—he is risen in you and in me!

We know the story, we know the truth, we know how God's unconditional love feels, we know the miracle of life today, in all its richness, in all its fragility, in all its holiness.

As Episcopalians we don't really understand how wonderfully we have theologized the ministry of Jesus and what a blessing it is in the manner in which we understand it.

Every Sunday when we arrive at the door we find our seat, the one we are the most comfortable with, we pray together, we listen to the Word being proclaimed, we pray for each other and those who are unable to be here with us, we confess our sins and those things that keep us from communion with God and each other, we greet each other with the Peace of Christ and then we are called to bring forth our offerings of the fruits of our labors, and at last we are called to partake in the holy meal and to recall the sacrificial love of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Then we all stand in our respective places and as we are presented with our Altar call, we are forced by the logistics of the home of Jesus to merge together as we approach the table of our Lord, where we then together kneel at the foot of the cross to receive the extravagant love of God in the form of the Eucharist. Each week you see we in the Episcopal Church have an altar call; and as you approach as a community of faith you are making your statement of faith, you are testifying to what you have received. Go now and tell everyone of the love of Jesus you have received from each other, go now and tell everyone of the extravagant love of God that is present here and be willing to desire it badly enough yourself that you would be willing to climb on the roof and dig your way through to get it.

How amazing are the miracles Jesus continues to perform.

Amen