

Notes on Ephesians 2 : 1 - 10 'Miracles: Snapshots of the Supernatural'

What do you like to watch on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram? In the first lockdown last March Andrew Cotter, or rather his two Labradors Olive and Mabel, became a social media phenomenon and please look up videos such as 'Game of Bones' or 'The Company Meeting' which I love to bits. This made me wonder how many views and shares would Jesus and his miracles have had? In this chapter Yancy describes how in his church when he was young there would be regular testimonies of miracles in the lives of the Christians such as finding the right parking space, or a fountain pen or of tumours shrinking. But as he writes this chapter, he tells how his view of the miraculous has changed to what he sees as a far healthier and broader perspective but also of why miracles then and now still matter in our Christian life.

My rucksack I carry when we are out on our long walking holidays reminds me why I need wonder in my life, and this is why Jesus is described as a wonder and not a not miracle worker. There is here no 18th century or Enlightenment distortion which separates the sacred from the secular, or the natural from the supernatural. Instead, creation is seen as the Temple, or the House of God, which is filled with God's presence and his countless wonders. The old-fashioned question about whether natural laws can be suspended is irrelevant because we live in a quantum age where such cast iron certainty has been relativised by the fluid nature of this universe. Rather it is better to see miracles, or wonders, as signs of how God is putting the world right, because they are signs of God's redeeming presence and his love.

When we are out walking, we love nothing better than to come across a signpost. It is a sign that comforts, confirms and focuses on where we are to go and this is the best way to understand Jesus' wonders. Yancy thinks Jesus only did 36 wonders but I am sure there were more, as in Mark 1 verses 32 – 34, but all point to the arrival of the Kingdom of God and that the world is no longer the same because Jesus has changed and is changing it. John's famous seven signs are seven ways in which the world has changed, and have they changed you? In John 2 we have the story of the water being turned into wine which celebrates that abundance, not scarcity, is how we are to think of God's world. In John 4 Jesus heals a nobleman's son from a distance and this speaks of the centrality of faith in this new world. In John 5 the man who was lame is healed and his confession of Jesus as the Messiah is key here. In John 6 you have first the story of the feeding of the 5000, which speaks of a new Exodus out of the captivity of sin, followed by Jesus walking on the water and how creation will one day be made whole. In John 9 Jesus heals a man born blind that points to our needing to see Jesus clearly. Finally, in John 11 you have Lazarus raised from the dead which celebrates the

triumph of life over death. But though people usually talk of John's seven signs, there is fact an eighth which is Jesus' death and resurrection from the dead. All of Jesus' wonders act as signposts to the cross and resurrection as being the greatest wonder of them all. It is at Calvary and the Empty Tomb where we stop and stare in awe and wonder at the nature of God's love for us; and this is the heart of Passion Sunday. Here we are all invited to stand in awe and wonder that our sin can be forgiven. Here we are all invited to stand in awe and wonder that death and the enemy have been defeated. Here we are all invited to stand in awe and wonder at how God's promises and purposes have been fulfilled.

Andrew Cotter knows his book depends on one thing; on whether the person reading it is a dog lover, or not. For Paul Ephesians 2 depends on whether we can read the signs right to our becoming a 'cross shaped' person as described in verses 4, 5, 8 and 10; can you? May I really encourage you to read and read and read again pages 180-181. These pages wonderfully describe why Jesus' wonders matter so much. They matter because they demonstrated the truth, the reality and the presence of the Good News and how God was turning this world the right way up. They matter today in helping us know this wonderous Good News in our own lives, which does include our own healing, as well as ourselves being the way this wonderful Good News changes the lives of those who we come into contact with as well as through our ministries as a church when our building can be reopened.

Questions on Eph 2 : 1 - 10 'Miracles: Snapshots of the Supernatural'

- 1 Describe whether your thinking about miracles has changed like Yancy describes in this chapter.
- 2 Do you understand why Andy prefers to call these acts done by Jesus as wonders and not miracles?
- 3 Why are Jesus' wonders like sign posts and to what are they pointing?
- 4 Yancy thinks that Jesus only performed 36 wonders; why does Mark 1 verses 32 -34 make Andy think that Jesus did far more?
- 5 Which of the seven signs in John's Gospel speaks to you the clearest and why?
- 6 Why is Jesus' death and resurrection the 'Eighth sign' in the Gospel?
- 7 How do verses 4, 5 8 and 10 in Ephesians 2 help us to be 'cross shaped people'?