

Christ Lutheran Church

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July 2022

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42)

In our Sunday morning Bible class, we have began studying the book of Acts. In the accounts of the early Church, we see how the Lord blessed the believers in so many ways, as He gathered them together in unity of faith; and through them, He blessed many more as they shared His Gospel.

As seen in the verses above, this gathering and unity in faith centered in God's Word and Sacrament. Earlier in Acts 2, we hear that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers in a special way, enabling them to speak the wonders of God in many tongues, or languages, to people gathered at Jerusalem. Those wonders of God would have centered in the truth that Christ, the promised Savior, had come. Jesus had died on the cross to take away the sins of the world. He had risen from the grave with power to give forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe. Then He had ascended into heaven as the Savior who lives and reigns over all things for the good of His Church.

Just before our passage, the apostle Peter preached these things to the people, calling on all to *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38).

What was result of preaching the Word of God? The Holy Spirit brought many more to saving faith in Christ. *"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them"* (Acts 2:41).

To this day, God continues to bring people into His Church, working faith in the heart through His Christ-centered Gospel, pouring out His Spirit in Baptism. Then, what does the Spirit lead baptized believers to do? He leads us to continue gathering together around His Word and Sacraments, to have our faith built up, and to mutually encourage one another in the faith through Christian fellowship.

This is what it says: *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"*:

- *They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine* – Like the early believers, the Spirit of God leads us regularly to hear His Word and take it to heart. Through His chosen apostles, the ascended Lord Jesus has revealed His Word in all its truth, proclaiming His salvation won for sinners, guiding us in life, giving us purpose and hope in His eternal Kingdom. This Word continues to strengthen our faith.
- *They continued steadfastly in... fellowship* – Like the early believers, we continue to come together to express our God-given unity as brothers and sisters in Christ. We gather with hearts and minds united in God's Word and worship, sharing his truth and love with one another, building one another up in the faith.
- *They continued steadfastly in... the breaking of bread* – In the context of worship, this was more than just fellowship meals; it was the breaking of bread in the Lord's Supper. Today too, we hunger and thirst for this Sacrament in which Jesus gives us His Body and Blood for the remission of sins and strengthening of faith.
- *They continued steadfastly in... prayers* – As the Word of God assures us of His salvation and eternal life in Christ, and of His daily love and care, our faith responds with confident prayer. As we come together in worship, we join our hearts in lifting up our needs, as well as the needs of others, to Him who promises to answer.

As the early Church continued to gather in worship around God's Word and Sacraments, united in the faith, praying together, and working together, the Lord blessed them in many ways. And not only them, but many others. As they shared the Gospel of God's forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life in Christ, it says: *"And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:47).

We pray for His continuing blessing among us too!
Pastor Smith

Do Miracles Really Happen?

July 2022

People offer many reasons to doubt miracles.

A person who does not believe that God exists (an atheist) would not believe that miracles are possible, since miracles are by definition special acts of God. Even many who do claim a belief in God do not fully acknowledge God's interactions in the world today. Such people are like the deists from years ago, who said that God exists and that He expects us to live a good life, but otherwise they regard God as largely disconnected from daily life. Miracles are not quite impossible according to deists, but they are very unlikely. Finally, even many Christians who acknowledge the miracles mentioned in the Bible doubt that miracles still happen today.

The question about whether miracles happen depends partly upon how one defines "miracle." The Old Testament refers often to "miracles," "signs," and "wonders," particularly with reference to the amazing acts Moses performed in the presence of Pharaoh. Similar phrasing is found in the New Testament regarding the astonishing acts of Jesus and, later, of His apostles. The church father Augustine (about four centuries after Christ) and the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (in the 1200s AD) helpfully distinguished two senses of "miracle." Any event that seems astonishing to a person is a "miracle" in the *subjective* sense. When something happens outside the ordinary course of nature, it is a miracle in the *objective* sense.

Even an atheist would admit that amazing things happen—the subjective sense of "miracle." The debate centers on the objective sense of "miracle" as a supernatural event. Is there more to reality than just natural causes? Are there some events that would be impossible without God? If so, then the observed occurrence of such an event would be evidence of God's existence. That's why atheists and agnostics resist acknowledging the reality of objective miracles.

But faithful Christians also have good reasons to beware of miraculous claims. Jesus Himself warned concerning our own time: "False christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." (Matthew 24:24) The Apostle Paul similarly cautioned against "the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and

lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10) The Book of Revelation likewise foretold of Satan's representative as using astonishing signs to mislead people. (Revelation 13:14)

So, ironically, the Christian and the atheist have something in common: a very reasonable desire not to be suckered into believing in miracles.

What makes the Christian's confidence in biblical miracles defensible is not some trite belief that "miracles happen every day," but rather a much firmer foundation of knowledge: eyewitness testimony that those particular miracles happened on those particular days. Nor do miracles just happen at random. Rather, well-attested miracles happen to settle a controversy by certifying an important truth. Miracles establish not merely that God exists, but also who the true God is.

Eyewitness testimony of the miraculous sea crossing in Exodus substantiated Rahab's conviction that the God of Israel truly is God. (Joshua 2:10) Nicodemus's personal observation of the miraculous signs Christ performed proved that Jesus had been sent from God. (John 3:2) Hearing the Father's voice from heaven and seeing Jesus transfigured into a glorious form revealed to Peter and his fellow disciples that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. (2 Peter 1:18)

Although many people observed Christ's death on the cross, including Roman soldiers who specialized in executing prisoners, over five hundred people saw Him alive in the weeks that followed. (1 Corinthians 15:6) This well-attested resurrection miracle signals to the world that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of all people.

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Learn More:
www.els.org/apologetics

<div> <div>July 2022</div> <div>Christ Lutheran Church</div> </div>						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3 <i>Pentecost 4</i> Worship with Holy Communion 9:30 AM Sunday School & Bible Class 10:45 AM Worship at Crystal Terrace 1:30 PM	4 <i>Independence Day</i>	5	6	7 Basic Bible Teachings Class 7:00 PM	1	2
					8	9 Ordination & Installation of Nicholas Lilienthal at Sutherlin (11:00 AM)
10 <i>Pentecost 5</i> Worship 9:30 AM Sunday School & Bible Class 10:45 AM Worship at Crystal Terrace 1:30 PM <i>Happy Birthday Micah Smith</i>	11	12	13	14 <i>Happy Birthday Isaac Smith</i> Basic Bible Teachings Class 7:00 PM	15	16 <i>Happy Birthday William Jay</i>
17 <i>Pentecost 6</i> Worship with Holy Communion 9:30 AM Sunday School & Bible Class 10:45 AM Worship at Crystal Terrace 1:30 PM	18 <i>Happy Birthday Kara Bednar</i>	19	20 <i>Happy Birthday Pastor Smith</i>	21 Basic Bible Teachings Class 7:00 PM	22	23
24 <i>Pentecost 7</i> Worship 9:30 AM Sunday School & Bible Class 10:45 AM Worship at Crystal Terrace 1:30 PM	25	26 <i>Happy Birthday Richard Howard</i> <i>Happy Birthday Randy Bednar</i>	27	28 Basic Bible Teachings Class 7:00 PM	29	30
31 <i>Pentecost 9</i> Worship 9:30 AM Sunday School & Bible Class 10:45 AM Worship at Crystal Terrace 1:30 PM	And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:41)					

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July 2022 Newsletter

Welcome to our
Basic Bible Teachings Class

Thursdays at 7:00 PM

We are studying basic Bible teachings, subject by subject,
searching the Scriptures and answering questions like:

Is there a God, and how can we know?
Why is there evil in this world, and how is God working His good?
How does God guide me in my day to day life in this world?
How can I be sure I am going to heaven?

Students receive a free manual.