

MIRACLES ARE IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

As I read the Gospels, I am amazed at the wonderful acts, the miracles, that Jesus performed. Yet I am also amazed at how it was possible for so many to see these miracles and NOT believe. The only conclusion that I can come to is that miracles must be seen through the eyes of faith. If we do not want to believe something is extraordinary, mankind has apparently always had the capacity to find some other reason for the occurrence. Answered prayers are just coincidence. Unexplainable healings are just the result of a error in diagnosis. In the fourteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, he tells us about the feeding of the 5,000. There are three ways in which we can look at this miracle. We may look at it as a simple multiplication of loaves and fishes. This is an entirely appropriate way to view what happened. But it can be very difficult to understand. We must not be critical and condemnatory of anyone who feels that he must find another understanding.

Another way to view this miracle is as a sacrament. Many people have felt that those who were present received only the smallest morsel of food, and yet with that were strengthened for their journey and were content. People with this view have felt that this was not a meal where people glutted their physical appetite. Rather, they have viewed it as a meal where they ate the spiritual food of Christ. If that is the case, this is a miracle which is re-enacted every time we come to the table of our Lord; for the spiritual food we receive there sends us out to walk with greater strength the way of life which leads to God.

There are also those who see in this miracle something which in a sense is perfectly natural, and yet which in another sense is a real miracle. Imagine the scene. There is the crowd. It is late. They are hungry. Was it really likely that the vast majority of that crowd would set out around the lake without any food at all? But they were also selfish. No one would produce what he had, lest he have to share it and leave himself without enough. Then Jesus took the lead. What He and his disciples had, they began to share with a blessing and invitation and a smile. And, suddenly, everyone began to share. Before they knew what was happening, there was enough and more than enough for all. If this is what happened, it was not the miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fishes; it was the miracle of the changing of selfish people into generous people at the touch of Christ. This is a miracle as real and

powerful as any I can imagine.

It does not matter how we understand this miracle. All that matters is that we understand that Jesus DID work a miracle that day and continues, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to work them today.

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