

Miracle Workers

Jesus and the disciples were walking along on a dusty road. And, as they walked, they talked. Sometimes Jesus taught. Sometimes they discussed what Jesus had taught. And sometimes they argued with each other. Finally, they arrive in Capernaum. John says “Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us.”(Mark 9:38) Jesus responds “Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me.” (Mark 9:39) In other words, “Whoever does mighty work in my name cannot be against me.” And what are some of the “Mighty Works” Jesus envisions being done in His name? He gives he example that is that if someone thirsty is given a cup of water in His name, that person will be rewarded by God.

Jesus concludes this surprising statement with the comment that “He that is not against us is for us.” Being a follower of Jesus is NOT a select fraternity! It is NOT a small group with very high standards of admission. Anyone who does work in the name of Jesus is a Christian, whether he or she worships of acts exactly as we do or not. I have recently reread a book titled “Joshua”. The basic story line is that Jesus comes back and lives in small town. Joshua (Jesus) is accepted by Jewish community. However, unlike the Jewish nation of 2000 years ago, there is no strong central organization and very little power. The Christian churches, on the other hand, have much more power and much more to loose if things change. So the churches, mainline and not, reject Him. Jesus threatens their focus on organization instead of people. He does not conform to their norms. He actually believes that one can worship God in churches of more than one denomination! Indeed, He believes that God continues to be faithful to His original chosen people and can be worshiped in a synagogue as well!! Joshua challenges many of the values of the established Christian denominations. He challenges any organization that focuses excessively on rules and order and loses its focus on people as children of God and free to find and worship God in the way best for them.

This book challenges us to look at ourselves and our churches. But in a broader sense, it forces me to look at all churches that claim the title “Christian.” Are any of us open enough? Are we inclusive of a variety of people, even those that are different from us in background and beliefs? The answer must be for all of us that we are never “there”. We are never open enough. Being open and inclusive is not a place but a journey that we are all on. But it is a direction that we should all be trying to go. In the same way, we can never serve enough. There are always those who need a cup of water. There are always those who need what we could do with a little less of. Christian is NOT a select title; Christian is a daily challenge. We need to look for those in need and for ways to serve. And if we look, we will not have any trouble finding miracles to work.

The Rev. Bert Eaton is Rector of St. Peter’s by-the-Sea Episcopal Church , located at 503 W. Broad St. in Swansboro.