

60 - Believe the Works

John 10:37-38

"If I do not do the works of the Father, do not believe Me, but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (Jn 10:37-38).

Jesus did not try to win people by impressing them with the brilliance of His logic. He didn't try to argue people to faith. He simply performed a miracle that was so solid, so unavoidably real, that it spoke for itself. Any honest person, after examining the evidence would have to admit that God must be the One who did it. Then Jesus would explain who He was and why He had come. There was an order to the way He approached people. First He performed an undeniable miracle, then He spoke truth. Whenever someone questioned the truth that He proclaimed, all He had to do was point to the miracle and say, "There's the proof that God is at work through Me, so listen to what I have to say."

When we read the Book of Acts we see His disciples following this same pattern: First God would perform a miracle, then they explained the gospel (Ac 2:12-16; 3:1-16; 5:12-20; 8:5-8; 9:1-18; 10:1-8; 13:4-12; 14:8-18; 16:16-33; 19:10-12; etc). But at some point during the course of church history we stopped following this pattern, probably because there were fewer and fewer miracles. We replaced Jesus' pattern with logical arguments, and that approach is still with us today. And we've been doing this now for so long, arguing without miracles to prove that God is with us, that many segments of the human population have grown tired of listening to us. In their minds we are just one more voice among many voices, one more religion among many religions. Particularly in our own western culture we're rapidly losing influence, which is why it's time to go back and do what Jesus (and our forefathers and mothers) did: First God does a miracle, and then we proclaim the truth about Him.

The undeniable miracle (Jn 10:19-21)

Jesus' statements about the Good Shepherd and the door divided the religious leaders who were listening to Him. Which statements they found most offensive isn't said, but it's likely that it was His claim that He must die in order to save God's "sheep." A dying Messiah was not a popular concept. John says, "Many of them said, "He has a demon and raves (yells incoherently like someone who is drunk or insane). Why do you listen to Him?" (literal). Others evaluated His words more honestly and acknowledged that He was teaching clear, lucid thoughts. His statements were anything but senseless raving. They replied, "These are not the utterances of one who is demonized" (literal). They reasoned: A person might disagree with what Jesus was saying, but His words were certainly not meaningless rambling.

Then they pointed to the undeniable miracle which had just taken place: A man who had been born blind could now see. A miracle like that could not be ignored. It required a level of power far beyond anything a demon could produce. Such power could only come from God. Even if they found Jesus' teachings troubling, they were willing to admit that it must be God's power at work through Him.

Again as had so often been the case (Jn 6:52; 7:43; 9:16), Jesus divided that crowd. Some received Him, some rejected Him (Jn 1:11-12); some came toward the Light, some preferred darkness (Jn 3:19-20; 8:12); some were hungry for eternal life, some weren't (Jn 6:27, 33, 35); some were thirsty for the Holy Spirit, some weren't (Jn 7:37); some loved Him, some didn't (Jn 8:42); some honored Him, some dishonored Him (Jn 8:49); some had eyes to see who He was, some were spiritually blind (Jn 9:39); and some could hear the Shepherd's voice calling them, and some couldn't (Jn 10:3, 27). And that division still takes place today wherever Jesus is proclaimed.

Believe the works (Jn 10:22-25)

At verse 22 John ends his description of Jesus' ministry during and immediately after the Feast of Booths (Jn 7:1-10:21) and moves forward in time to another encounter with this same group of religious leaders that took place about seventy days later, during the "Feast of the Dedication" (Chanukah/Festival of Lights). That eight-day festival generally takes place in December. Here's what happened:

DBS (Sun-Tues)

And then Jesus said this: (let's hear it again)

"If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me, but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (Jn 10:37-38).

Choosing more

If Jesus didn't expect people to believe Him without some proof, how can we? What right do we have to demand that people believe our message unless we too can point to some sign or wonder that proves that God is really with us? Jesus literally told those people, "Don't believe Me if I can't prove it." But then He could walk over and point to a miracle and ask, "How do you explain this?" That kind of situation, where God breaks in and does a work, changes the conversation. We start explaining instead of trying to convince. No, even miracles so solid no one can deny them, will not convince everyone because some people will refuse to believe even when confronted with obvious facts. That's how many of the religious leaders reacted to Jesus. They had a hidden agenda: They didn't want to lose control over the people, so not even a breathtaking miracle could change their mind. But I think most people aren't that stubborn, if they really know that God is there, and that He will forgive them if they repent, many will gladly come to Him in faith. So we need to ask, "Lord, what do you want us to do, so You can work your wonders among us?"

A prophetic word

Recently God spoke a prophetic word to us as a church. The word went something like this: "I want to do more through Northwest Church, but in order for Me to do more, you must pray more." That statement rings true for us, but frankly it is just as true for any church or person who wants to receive it. Everything starts with prayer. Now, we were already praying, but He said "more," so we've taken steps to obey:

1) We scheduled the third weekend of every month to include a special time of corporate prayer. Rather than add another prayer meeting during the week, we brought a prayer meeting into our main services on the weekend, so we can grow in prayer together.

2) Our staff now schedules time every week to pray together for our church and community. As the Holy Spirit prompts one person after another we intercede for people and situations. We pray boldly, out loud, with faith.



LIFE LESSONS

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the truth of the Gospel

3) Dedicated intercessors conduct many different prayer ministries during the week, such as: Healing and Deliverance (Wed. evening), Intercessory Prayer (Wed. evening), Early Morning Prayer (Tues.-Sat., 5-6am), Emergency Prayer Chain (crisis calls), Prayer Request Chain (weekly requests), Altar Ministries (every main service), "Treasure Hunts" (fourth Fri.), Men's Prayer and Fellowship (Thurs. 7-9pm), Silent Prayer Retreats (quarterly), and we're developing a prayer app to replace the Table Project which is ending service.

4) And only the Lord knows the number of Life Groups and individuals who are regularly asking God for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit.

A word I received

Each new year I ask the Lord to give me insight or a promise for the year ahead. Last year, 2016, He said it would be a year of surprises. Looking back, I think I heard Him correctly. This year, 2017, He reminded me of a promise given in one of the Psalms. This is the promise: "Restore our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the South. Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps 126:4-6).

It pictures the people of Israel returning to a devastated land after the years of exile, and weeping as they walk back and forth scattering seed in fields that had been long neglected. But it says that sorrow will give way to joy when the harvest is gathered in. I believe the Lord said many who have waited in sorrow for the seed they planted to grow will see breakthrough this year. Seeds we have sown and mourned over will mature quickly, because many are praying.

Application

What do these prophetic words have to do with the kind of miracles that prove that God is with us? I believe the answer is this: If we will pray and obey, God will pour out His Spirit and do His works among us, as a church and in our individual needs. Prayer is increasing, not only at Northwest Church but across the nation and around the world. There has been a shaking, and people are waking up. This year there will be miracles to which we can point, not only healing, but chains being broken and people being set free from unbelief, addiction, bitterness and loneliness. These "works" will change the conversation; we'll start explaining Jesus rather than trying to convince people to believe in Him, and people we've wept over and waited for, people in whom we've sown the seed of God's Word will come this year. Why? Because we're returning to the way Jesus ministered: First a miracle, then the truth.

Response

So what do I do if I want God to be at work in and through me this year?

- 1) Look for an opportunity to regularly pray with others, boldly, out loud and with faith.
- 2) Tell the Lord that if He will show you what He wants you to do, you will obey Him. This is an essential step if we are going to see Him work.
- 3) Guard your heart against temptation, bitterness and discouragement. Pray daily and ask for protection over yourself and your loved ones.
- 4) Watch for the Holy Spirit's leading; test what you hear, and if you're convinced it's God, move forward. Do what He says, and do it quickly.
- 5) Stay humble; always thank Him when you see Him work, and make sure you tell people He did it.
- 6) Expect an amazing year!

Questions

- 1) Have you been feeling a need to pray more? Have you been feeling a need to pray with others? Has He shown you how He wants you to do this?
- 2) What is the most amazing miracle you ever saw? What did that do for your faith? How did that miracle affect others who saw it?