

LIVING THE WORD—Week 10 (Sun., March 29 – Sat., Apr. 4)

The God of the Mighty Acts: the Great Story of God's Relentless Love

The Miracles— God Does Mighty Acts in the Ministry of Jesus Christ

Matthew 12:28; Acts 2:22; 10:36-38; John 10:31-38

Key Verse: "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31)

The ministry of Jesus is a series of mighty acts demonstrating that Jesus is the Son of God. Just as parting the Red Sea and providing the manna revealed the identity and character of God, so walking on the water and feeding the 5,000 reveal the true identity and character of Jesus. Healing the sick and casting out demons show the compassion and mercy of Jesus. Calming the storm demonstrates his power over creation. Raising Lazarus and giving sight to the blind demonstrate that Jesus is the source of life and truth. The miracles demonstrate that Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in him (John 10:37-38). We can trust Jesus' spiritual claims because of his miraculous power over the visible, natural world (see Mark 2:1-12).

The mighty acts of Jesus were signs that the kingdom of God was breaking into the world. Jesus said, "if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28). In the person and work of Jesus Christ, we see what the reign of God is all about. It is about opening the eyes of the blind to see the light of God; it is about feeding hungry people and nourishing hungry souls; it is about healing the sick and comforting the grieving; it is about coming to the aid of those in need; it is about freeing people from the demonic forces in life that hold them captive and that keep them from experiencing the blessings of life in the kingdom of God.

Just as God was in Christ doing these signs, so Jesus' apostles would perform the same signs, demonstrating that the Spirit of God was also at work in their ministry. Although God can and does act today, I do not have the power of Jesus and the apostles to perform miraculous signs. Still, as a follower of Jesus, I too should be seen and known for my ministry of compassion and mercy. The kingdom of God has come.

Next Week: Easter—Part 1 (Mark 8:31-38; 10:35-45; Philippians 2:1-11; 1 John 4:7-16)

Memory Verse (for Weeks 9-12): John 3:16

On the Mountain ("*Love God*")—set aside 30 minutes this week for quiet time with God)

1. Find a time when you can sit alone and uninterrupted. Spend a few moments preparing your heart to meditate on your relationship with God.
2. Read John 6:1-40. Meditate on the image of Jesus as the "bread of life." What does that say to you about your need for Jesus?
3. Reflect on the things you hunger for day to day. Do you hunger for the life Jesus gives as you hunger for food?
4. Visualize what it might look like if you had a deeper hunger for Jesus and the life he gives. Pray for a greater desire for a vital relationship with Jesus.
5. Write down 2 or 3 things you will try to do this week to deepen your relationship with Jesus. Put the list where you can see it every day.

In the Gathering (“*Love Each Other*”—discuss with your home church or small group)

1. Was there a time in the Old Testament when God did a large number of miracles in a relatively short period of time? How is the ministry of Jesus similar to that time?
2. How do the miracles of Jesus encourage belief in him? (e.g., Mark 2:1-12)
3. Why do you think so many people saw his miracles and did not believe?
4. What would it look like for the kingdom of God to come in our society?
5. What would it look like for the kingdom to come in our lives?
6. Do you have anything to share from your time with God, your family, or in the world?
7. If there is time, discuss the “In the World” section below.
8. Pray using the Lord’s Prayer as a guide. Pray especially that the kingdom would come in our lives and in the world.

Around the Table (“*Love Your Family*”—sit at home and talk together as a family)

1. See how many miracles of Jesus you can name.
2. Which one is the most amazing to you? Why?
3. What does that miracle tell you about Jesus?
4. Read Matthew 14:13-21. What do we have that Jesus could bless and use to help others?

Into the World (“*Love the World*”—prayerfully consider God’s mission for us in his world)

1. Read the description of Jesus’ ministry in Acts 10:38. How could those words also be a description of the mission of the church?
2. Would those words be used to describe our church? Why or why not?
3. Would those words be used to describe your life? Why or why not?
4. What kinds of things could we do that would look like Jesus’ ministry?