

MIRACLES

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Okay; how many of you do affirmations? Or have a statement of truth that you focus on, hopefully for more than one moment? I really ... One of the ways that I practice affirmations is holding and practicing for weeks or even months at a time until it really feels like it sinks in. Because some spiritual ideas are not "fly bys." You know, sometimes it takes us a little longer to kind of get our arms around it and really live fully into it.

So last week I gave you an affirmation that was, "*Amazing things are coming to me now.*" And it is my new affirmation. For the last several weeks it has been my affirmation. And I want to share it with you one more time, just because I love it. Right?

Together: [with congregation] "*Amazing things are coming to me now.*"

One more time: [with congregation] "*Amazing things are coming to me now.*"

How many of you know that you sometimes have control issues? [Congregation laughs] Right? So, in my experience, when we get wounded by life -- when we get bumped and we get hurt, especially when we were hurt at a tender, young age -- one of the things that we make a commitment to is to be in control, so that nothing gets to hurt us again. Or if we control everything, we can kind of control the environment; we can control the peace; we can control what's going on.

And so when we do an affirmation like that -- "*Amazing things are coming to me now*" -- that's just open-ended, for some of us it makes us feel a little uncomfortable. Because we want to know what those amazing things are before we sign off on them. We would like an inventory list; if there's the VIN number on the car before we are open to receive it. We want to understand that.

And what I like about this affirmation is: There's just a pure implication that amazing things are going to come to you. And that you literally do not have to understand what they are right now. You just have to be open to receiving them. You just open your soul up, and allow amazing things in.

So let's say it one more time: [with congregation] "*Amazing things are coming to me.*" Whether you like it or not! Right? [Congregation laughs] Whether you ask for it or not; whether it's the right size or not. Amazing things are coming to you now!

So tonight I want to talk -- as we move into this Easter season -- I want to talk about miracles. And in a context of preparing for this whole Easter season. And if you had the ability to pick a miracle in your life, what would you pick? If you could have a miracle in any miracle of your life -- or any situation in your life -- what's the miracle that you'd be open to? What is the miracle that you'd ask for? What's the miracles that you'd be willing to experience?

Would it be in health or finances? Would it be in a relationship? Would it be in your work? Would you transform your body into a 20-year-old body? Or what would your miracle be? Right? Because all of us have, one way or another, just really have this opportunity to open to something greater.

Tonight I want to teach into: Jesus had a tax miracle. Right? It's April; I can teach into tax miracles! And Jesus demonstrated a tax miracle. How many of you can think of a time in your life in which you needed or wanted a tax miracle? Anybody? Where you got the tax bill and it was like, "*Oh, ooooooh! Man, I did better than I thought I did this year!*" Right?

And so I want to teach into this tax miracles, because I love it that Jesus taught real-world experiences. Real-world experiences! Because, from time to time, we need miracles in the place where we feel the most vulnerable. In the place where we feel the most insecure.

How many of you have ever just been a little insecure about paying your taxes? Anybody? Right? It kind of brings up our stuff sometimes! So I want to share with you Jesus' tax miracle. In it's in Matthew 17:24-27:

"And Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, and the collector of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and said, 'Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?'"

Now, in my way of thinking, he was being a little snotty about it. Right? Because he was kind of throwing a little bit of shade at him. And so ... [laughs] So Peter replied:

"Yes, he does."

Right? So, in my mind -- in my little world -- like, the guy's throwing a little bit of shade at Jesus and his disciples, and Peter responds with a little shade back. Like, *"Yes, he does."* And then after he says that in Scripture, it says that Peter goes to the house where Jesus is. And I can just see him kind of, like, running to the house, like: *"Okay, Jesus, are we paying our temple tax or not this time?"* Right? And so what Jesus says to him:

"Peter got to the house, and Jesus spoke to him first. He said, 'What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings on earth collect their duty and taxes: from their own children or from others?'"

And Peter said, 'From others.'

'Then the children are exempt,' Jesus said to him. 'But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake, throw a line into the lake. Take out the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to the taxes and pay yours and my taxes.'"

Okay? So I want to break this story down a bit. Right? So if Jesus was a recognized priest at the time, would he have to pay a temple tax? And the answer is no. Right? So there's a little bit of shade being thrown here that Jesus is outside the religious elite, or the religious organization. So when they're asking him if he pays his temple tax, it's kind of an implication that he has to, but if he was a "real" spiritual person -- if he was a "real" teacher -- he wouldn't have to pay.

So what Jesus gave them was this idea that, *"Now, if I was a child of the king, would I have to pay taxes?"* And they said, *"No,"* right? But the whole purpose of this is that there's a little bit of shade. There's a little bit of, *"You're not really one of us. You're not really considered the 'right' kind of teacher. You're not a priest in the temple."*

And what I want us to really go to is all the times in our life where we felt not quite enough. All the times when we felt like we were just slightly just outside the circle. And Jesus acknowledges that, and says, *"But we're going to do it anyway."* Like, that he's bigger, that it's greater, that he's going to do it anyway. That he's going to play by the system.

And then he says this crazy thing to Peter! *"Go to the lake, throw a line in; the first fish you catch, pull it out. Stick your finger in its mouth; pull out a silver coin and go pay your tax and my tax."*

Now, how many of you actually listen for guidance in your life? Does anybody really listen for guidance in your life? Because it's a big step when you really turn your life over, and when you're praying, and during your time of meditation you really listen for guidance. You want to listen for your intuition and your guidance. That God is guiding us in a direction.

And in your time of prayer tonight, if you had a tax need or a miracle that you wanted, and your inner teacher -- your inner guidance; the Spirit of your soul -- whispered in your ear, *"Go to Lake Pleasant tomorrow ..."* [Congregation laughs] *"Throw a line into the lake. And when the first fish that you pull out, open its mouth, stick your little finger in its mouth. Wiggle it around in there. And you're going to find the source of your tax bill for this year."*

How many of you [laughs] would actually get up tomorrow morning and do that? I ... I ... I ... Maybe! Right? But it's a pretty big ... It's a pretty big act of faith to hear Spirit say, *"Go to the lake; throw in a line."*

Because I can imagine some of us saying, *"Okay; Spirit says that if I throw a line in, I'm going to pull out a fish. The fish is going to be able to pay my taxes in full."* How many of you would throw in 50 lines into the lake? [Congregation laughs] Right? Like, if there's a fish in there that could pay all my tax bill, I want it! And I'm working on my faith, so the idea that I could throw in one line; it would be the very first fish. I'd pull it out. And, you know, I'd probably get a big, old big-mouth bass or something. You know, this giant mouth. It would take me all the way down to my elbow. Right?

But most of us would want to throw in 50 lines! We would not quite have the faith to believe that all we needed to do was throw in one line, and believe that one line would be enough.

I want you to see how easy God tries to make it for you to get your miracle. Now there's going to be an act of faith in this. There's going to be a role; there's going to be a responsibility that you're part of the miracle. But it's going to be so much easier than you believe! You just have to be willing to take the steps that are yours to take.

Now, what does the fish mean? What is the spiritual symbolism of the fish?

In psychology, the water represents the depth of the unconscious. The fish are the live material -- the depths of our personality related to fertility or abundance, life-giving powers. Fish represent the unconscious higher-self feelings and motives. And when we throw a line into the deeper awareness, we pull out a greater sense of abundance.

In Jungian psychology, fish are symbols of wealth. Therefore, within the human soul -- what Jung called the "collective unconscious" -- fish have a symbolic significance of harvest, substance and abundance.

And I really want you to open your mind to that! Like, Jesus is teaching us how to live more abundantly in the kingdom of heaven. Like, that there are levels of life that are available to all of us that are greater than we can imagine, but we have to be willing to throw our lines in the lake. We have to be willing to take our faith and put it into action to move this thing forward.

Charles Fillmore, the co-founder of Unity, said, *"Fish represent the idea that there is great possibilities for increase. Jesus used these ideas to represent inexhaustible, everywhere-present abundance."*

And I want you to really get your arms around this. That a miracle in your life is a level of good that is greater than most of us operate from. And that's why it's a miracle, because most of us live in this world of possibilities, and miracles are that level that is actually greater than that.

Thick Nhat Hanh, the Tibetan Vietnamese Buddhist, said this: *"Many people are alive, but they don't touch the miracle of truly being alive."*

St. Augustine said, *"Miracles are not in contradiction to nature. They are only in contradiction to our present understanding of nature."*

And Wayne Dyer: *"You can learn to go way beyond believing to the place of knowing. It is in this realm of your mind that miracles are produced."*

And in Matthew 6:33: *"But seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and everything will be added unto you."*

And this is where I want to take us, especially from the talk last week. I want to move into this realm of possibilities that Jesus called the kingdom of heaven, where all things are possible. Because, for most of us, our methodology for creating a better life is that we work harder. And if we work harder, we have this belief that everything's going to work out.

And I really want to teach into this spiritual significance of the kingdom of heaven and what that really means in our life. Because when we really lay hold of the idea that we live in an infinite realm of possibilities, everything begins to change.

So let's look at four aspects of a miracle.

And the first aspect that I want you to see: I want you to entertain an idea in the mind of God. What does that mean? I want you to see that you live, move and have your very being in this kingdom -- this experience, this dimension that Jesus called the kingdom of heaven -- where everything is possible. Have many of you heard that idea that everything is possible? Right?

Now, we have to really integrate into what that means. Imagine right now that whatever you desire -- your miracle -- it is possible in the infinite kingdom of God. Right? But you have to actually lay hold of it. You actually have to entertain in your mind's eye something that's greater than you've ever known before. Because a possibility that you don't take hold of is just like a check that you never cash. Yes, it's yours; but you never cash it. Right?

If somebody gave me a million-dollar check, I could walk around and say, "*Technically, I'm a millionaire.*" Right? But I'm only really a millionaire if I were to take it to the bank and cash it. They wouldn't give you that much cash nowadays, but it would be fun! Right? To have a million dollars cash! But until you cash the check, you don't really live the promise.

So we have this field of infinite possibilities, and I want you to lay hold of one: one miracle that, in the next few weeks or months, that you'd be open to experiencing. I want you to lay hold of it as a possibility for your life. Just to entertain it as a possibility for your life. That's it. I just want you to entertain it as a possibility for your life. That's the first step. Because if you can't expand to even hold the possibility, it never really shows up in your life. That you have to expand your life to hold the possibility.

Now, the second step is that I want you to actually discover that idea in you. So it's not enough that it's possible for somebody, or it's possible in the world. It's not enough that it's possible for other people. You actually have to be able to take that idea and move it into your soul. Into the possibility for you. You have to lay hold of the infinite possibilities of God, and then move it into a reality -- or a possibility -- for you.

It's like sometimes people say, "*Well, I have this goal or this desire, and it's so much bigger than I am.*" And if it's so much bigger than you are, you'll never really live into it. Because you have to take the infinite possibilities of God, pick one of them, and then bring it into you.

Now how do we do that? One of the easiest ways to do that is visualizing yourself actually living that possibility. That it's not enough to think that it's possible; it has to be possible for you. You actually have to see yourself fulfilling that desire. So that, out of all the infinite possibilities of God, you lay hold of one; you move it into your soul; and you see yourself actually living that over and over. You see yourself feeling what it would feel like. You can visualize it; you can feel it; you can smell it; you can taste it. You actually have to bring it in to a present possibility for you.

And that's where it really becomes the transformational thing. Because, how many of you have ever wanted something? And you want something, you want something and you want something ... but you don't really see yourself in it. You don't really see yourself or it happening in your life. That, when you lay hold of it, then you have to take it and bring it into your core: into your essence, into your experience. And then it actually starts to become real. You actually then begin to surround it in spiritual energy, and it begins to manifest in your life.

So the first one is you have to see it in the mind of God. You have to see it as a possibility. The second aspect of the process is that, when you take it from an abstract and you actually bring it in to a tangible possibility where you can see yourself doing it.

Then the third. How many of you have heard that **you have to ask for what you want**? Right? That is 100% true! You have to ask. Jesus said over 30 times, *"Ask, ask, ask, ask, ask, ask."*

But we are not asking for the thing; we're asking for the way. Do you see the difference? That most of us were taught to pray to a God outside of us, and ask It to drop good stuff into our lap. That's not really what he taught. What he taught was that, when you lay hold of anything -- no matter how big, no matter how great -- and you bring it into your life, what you pray about is the way: the steps that you need to take today to bring that into a reality.

So you don't pray for the thing; you pray for the way. You pray for the process. You pray for the wisdom. You pray for the guides. You pray for the understanding. You pray for the inner transformation. But you're not praying for the thing! Because if you're praying for the thing, you actually still think the thing is outside of you! You're actually not living from faith.

When you actually bring the thing into you, you actually know that's done. So then your prayer, every day, is, *"God, what do I need to do today to manifest this into my life?"* Because it's already done! You've already taken it out of the infinite possibilities of God. You've already brought it into your experience. And then today it's like, *"What are the one or two things I need to do today to make this a reality? To bring this into an experience of my life?"*

See, and when we go back to the story of the taxes, that's what Jesus gave Peter. He gave him the way. Like, he asked, *"How are we going to pay our taxes?"* And Jesus gave him the way. And he had the faith to actually go do it!

That, whatever you desire -- whatever miracle you seek out of the infinite possibilities of God -- lay hold of it! Claim it! Call it as yours! And then see yourself living it. And then, every day, say to Spirit, *"What are the one or two things I need to do today to make this a reality?"*

What I promise you is that God is not going to give you 50 things to do. If you're doing 50 things toward your miracle, you're not standing in faith. You're not believing that every day it's one or two things. It's call this person, or go write a thank you note, or forgive this situation. It's one or two things that you need to do every day to move your miracle into a reality -- that is building your faith that you can live a life that great. But it will never be more than two or three. Even if you haven't done anything for a week, God's only going to give you one thing every day, or two things every day to move your miracle forward. And, as you do those two or three or one or two things every day, you are building your faith. Because your every action that you take -- when you pick up the phone and you call this person, or when you open up this thing, or you forgive this. As you're doing those little steps every day, it is building your commitment. It is building your faith that that is being done for you.

"My miracle is already done."

Will you say that with me? [With congregation]: *"My miracle is already done."*

My miracle is already done, and I take this action today -- this action in faith -- as a way of affirming that I believe that my miracle is already done. Because if you don't believe your miracle's done or can be done, you don't take any action. It's just a wish. It's a hope. It's a dream. It's not real. When you know that your miracle is real, every day you take tangible steps to make that dream a reality.

Alright. That's three.

Four. Four is when we are asked, then, to **surrender the process**. To surrender to the moment. To surrender that it's going to happen in the way that it's going to happen. It's not going to happen the way you think it's going to happen; it's just going to happen the way it happens.

So in step four, you've visualized it; you've brought it here; you've taken tangible steps every day; and then you just let it go. You don't hang on to it; you don't get needy about it. You don't get freaky about it. You just hold it lightly, knowing that it's done.

And the fifth step: **give thanks**. Even before you see it, you give thanks.

See, I want you to have a miracle. I do! I want your faith to be amplified. I want you to be walking in all the goodness that God has for you. And, as we open our mind to this realm of possibilities, we really can lay hold of a higher level of good than we have ever known before.

And you don't have to, right? You don't have to know that level of good. But that level of good is available to you! It's available to all of us!

Like, what would your miracle truly be? Abundance? Joy? Peace? Love? Greater relationships? Greater work? What would your miracle be? Lay hold of it! Grab it! And bring it into your soul. And see yourself living your greatest life. And then, every day: *"God, what are the one or two things I need to do to move this thing forward? Because I know you're the architect; you're doing the work. But I'm building my faith."* And then we let it go! And we give thanks that it's already done.

Will you pray with me?

I want you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the Infinite. And for just a moment, I want you to open your spiritual eyes. And I want you to see all the good that God is all around you. To look up to a higher possibility. To look to the mountains. To look to the possibilities that are so good, so rich, so full, so wonderful. And that all the good in the universe is available to your soul: love and joy and peace; healing power; relationships. Whatever you desire! Look up beyond your current life. Beyond your current experience. Beyond the life that you know today.

Look up and see all that God is. And then lay hold of one thing. *"I want to know greater peace" or "I want to know greater abundance." "I want to know greater love." "I want to know greater joy."* And bring it into your center; bring it into your soul. And feel how it expands you. How it expands your life. How it expands what you believe. It expands who you are. It just makes you smile!

And then, every day, just ask, *"What do I need to do today, Spirit? What's my role in this? What's my walk of faith? What is the action I need to take today?"* Guide me! Lead me! Show me the way! Fill me with your wisdom, with your understanding, that I might take all the right actions without fear, without worry. That I just take them out of faith. And then I just let it go. Every day I let it go to you. Thy will be done. They will be done in the highest and best way, and I give thanks that I know that it will be done. It's already done! And in the hours and days and weeks ahead, it will be fully manifested in my life. Because there is so much good! Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God!

Today I allow Jesus to show me the way. That every one of his miracles was here to teach us something. To empower us. To give us hope and faith. And to show us the way. He said, *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the glory of God is all around you."*

Take a breath. And let your light -- your world -- expand to hold more God than ever before. In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.