

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, September 5, 2023
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Do You Need a Miracle?”

READING: Galatians 5:22-26 – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying others.

In my devotion last week I mentioned that a couple of Saturdays ago while I was working in the study on the second floor, I saw a lady walking in our cul-de-sac and stopping at every door. In her hands she carried something that she seemed to be handing out at each address. I thought perhaps she was soliciting for some campaign or other. When she came to our door, I saw that she had door-hangers in her hand. After she left and went on her way, I went down and retrieved what she had hung on our door. It was bright red with writing only on one side. In bold letters it asked a single question, “Do you need a miracle?” Then there was a QR code that I could have uploaded on my phone to get more information. In small letters below that there was the name of the church. I was not surprised. Since that church first opened its doors, on its electronic sign and its marquee it has touted miracles.

Over the years they have advertised for “Healing Services” and they have claimed a number of miracles as well. One I remember exactly. It read, “Damaged hip healed last Saturday.” They can be very specific about the miracles they claim. What bothers me most about their signs is in all the years I’ve driven by them I do not once recall seeing the name of Jesus. Not once, to the best of my recollections. That bothers me.

In our text for today St. Paul lists all the fruits that come from those who belong to Jesus: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I don’t see a thing about miracles of healing. The “Holiness” and “Full-Gospel” churches look for proof of the Holy Spirit’s presence – in the church and in the individual believer. They believe that if they really try hard enough, pray hard enough, believe hard enough, the Holy Spirit will give them what they ask for. If it doesn’t come, then someone didn’t try, pray, or believe hard enough.

What I do see in Paul’s list are words that point us to caring for and helping others: patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and most importantly – love. What I see there is an understanding that we can exhibit fruits of the Spirit whatever our current situation: love, joy, faithfulness, patience, and self-control. These are the fruits that come because the Holy Spirit indwells his people and spurs them to be like Jesus, whom we love.

Does the Holy Spirit do miracles? Absolutely! But he does them when and where HE wants. He is not bribed into granting them by our “trying hard”. He does not tie himself to a particular church or a particular rite or a particular method. He does them in accordance with the Father’s will. Period. We may ask. We may supplicate. We may even cry before the Lord but we must always end our prayer with the words, “Not my will, but yours be done.”

Most of the churches who tout miracles also rely heavily on speaking in tongues. Again, they see this as a sign that the Holy Spirit is present. They have a simple formula: if you speak in tongues, you have the Spirit. If you don’t, there is doubt, often considerable doubt, as to the presence of the Holy Spirit in you or in the church. Again, does the Holy Spirit sometimes give the gift of tongues? Yes. Our own missionaries have

reported such occurrences when the Word is first preached where Satan has long held sway. But again, the Spirit does this when and where HE wills. Tongues can be learned just as assuredly as a foreign tongue can be learned by being immersed in it for a time.

What the Scriptures have always encouraged is faith in the Lord Jesus. The Pharisees asked for miraculous signs and when they got them, they still doubted Christ. Miracles are like Lay's Potato Chips – no one can stop with just one. If our faith has to be supported and propped up by miracles, then it stops being faith. Paul said, "We live by faith, not by sight." Rather, let us put all our trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus knowing that in him we have an absolute promise of salvation AND the presence of the Counselor he himself has sent to us. Do you need a miracle? Perhaps I or someone I know could USE a miracle, but what we all NEED is the joy of being God's child through the merits and mercies of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. In him we trust. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**1) LOOKING AHEAD: September 13 – Cave Hill Cemetery Tour
September 24 – Elders BBQ**