

Study Guide for July 29, 2018

Readings: 2 Kings 4:42-44; Psalm 145:10-18; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21

Theme: The Power of God At Work In Us and Through Us.

Revelation is a word that is often defined as “information revealed,” or a “disclosure” or in theological terms, “a demonstration of divine will.” For example, Jesus is a divine revelation or demonstration of God’s divine will. Through Jesus, God gives us important information about who God is and what it means to live in harmony to God’s righteousness. In some cases, we come to know God in nature (c.f. Genesis 9:12-15; Romans 1:20) and in so many other cases we come to see God through miracles like we do when Jesus heals the blind, or as we will see in this weeks reading when both Elisha and Jesus feed crowds that seem impossible to feed with what little there is.

It’s too easy for us to turn away in doubt from the biblical miracles. They just don’t add up to what science proves possible. But instead of looking at the logic of “miracle” perhaps we should look at all the *wonder-full* things as parables and stories that are used to reveal and awaken in us how God is busy at work within us to make miracles happen.

Neither Elisha nor Jesus are performing a magic trick. Instead they both are taking what God has already provided for the world. They draw on the resources that are already present in the community to do the impossible – making human beings ‘care’ for one another rather than to ‘keep’ from each other. This week I invite you to take inventory of all your blessings and gifts, write them down and pray over them. Instead of just thanking God for them, ask God to reveal to you ways in which you might use those gifts to make a miracle for someone else.

Read: 2 Kings 4:42-44

This small little verse concludes a chapter that explores the miraculous power of God through the prophet Elisha, who is intimately tied to the community in which he lives. But in these three verses we also get a sense of the relationship he has with God, and how God uses human beings (like ourselves) to reveal God’s glory and distribute God’s blessings. You will see a direct parallel with Jesus in this passage, but it won’t be the only time (read Matthew 17:1-13). Elisha, like Jesus, teach us the way of life in the community gathered around the power of God, and the responsibility that demands from us.

Q: How is God revealing God’s self to you in this passage?

Q: What do these words invite you to do for your neighbor or someone in your community?

Prayer: Thank you God for revealing to me your great glory through the laws and prophets, and especially in Jesus Christ in whom I seek to be more like today. Amen.

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21 (also, Romans 11:33-36)

With this passage, the author reaches the end of the first section of the letter. And does so with a prayer! Imagine if we concluded everything we did with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving? Perhaps, like this prayer, we instead pray for strength, knowledge, and comprehension to understand better what God is revealing to us through God's great love for us. Why might this be important? As the author writes, "so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." What brings the author to his knees is the mystery that has been revealed in so many ways up to this prayer (c.f. 1:9; 3:3-5; 3:9). The mysteries of God revealed in Christ Jesus show us what God's will is: peace between God and us, and peace between us and our enemies; all for the glory of God and Jesus. Through us, God is at work and "is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine."

Q: How is God revealing God's self to you in this passage?

Q: In what new ways can you pray differently today?

Prayer: Lord God, through Jesus Christ you have surprised me in so many ways. Today, in his name, I ask that you help me to be a surprise for someone so that they may be filled with your love and grace, and be saved. Amen.

Read: John 6:1-21 (Matthew 14:13-33; Mark 6:30-52; Luke 9:10-17)

Here we have two of Jesus' most famous miracle stories. The Gospel writers clearly thought this story was important because it shows up in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And on top of that, Matthew and Mark like this story so much that they tell it twice! The second telling is almost identical, except in that version only 4,000 people are fed. More than a miracle story, we also receive insight to God's will for us. This is a story about what Jesus is calling us to do. If we are going to follow Jesus, at some point, he's going to turn to us and say: You give them something to eat. And it matters how we respond to his command. Remember, Jesus came to usher in the Kingdom of God. I believe this story helps us to get a foretaste of what that kingdom is to be: a partnership between heaven and earth. More in the sermon!

Q: How is God revealing God's self to you in this passage?

Q: What are you hoarding or holding onto that is stopping you from becoming a "miracle worker" for God?

Q: How might the way you worship change if you used God's gifts given to you in response to addressing human hunger, suffering, and pain?

Prayer: Blessed Jesus, show me the way to be more like you and less like me. Amen.

Slow Read: Psalm 145:10-18.

Try to picture the intimate relationship between you and God in these few verses, and pray on how you might grow that into a relationship to heal the world around you.