

2 Samuel 11:1-15 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?" Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing." Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die."

Ephesians 3:14-21 I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

John 6:1-21 Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself. When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. **When they had rowed about three or four miles,** they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

I am living proof – once again – that we can read and read the Bible, over and over again – and each time find something new and more and amazing. We could spend the rest of our lives in any one book – and make discoveries every day.

Here's something I saw this week.

You know the story of Jesus feeding all those people on the hillside? Yeah – Amazing!

One blogger did the math for the bread. His estimate:

- 5000 men + one women and one child per man = 15,000 people.
- Each person eats about 1/3 of a loaf of bread.
- 15,000 people X 1/3 loaf per person = 5000 loaves.

5000 loaves. That is a lot. 5000 loaves of bread would fill up about 1.2 semi-truck trailers.ⁱ

Plus a whole lot of fish.

Yet the Bible tells us there were only 5 loaves – only 2 small fish. And there were more than enough.

We try to explain the miracle – to make the impossible understandable on our terms. Forget it.

Some of us have speculated that maybe the real miracle would be if those people on the hillside had put INTO the basket as they passed – sharing, rather than taking. That's like God. For we are always to give, and share what God gives us – not just take. We are created in God's image – And that means that we will be most at peace when we can imitate God in our giving.

Back to the food: It occurs to me that the Creator of all might use their own time table and their own ways to multiply even the stuff of their creation.

The bottom line? This is a big huge miracle – That is, something that we can't explain by any of our means.

So. Back to what I read new this week. That's in the next story. Who can tell me – How far did Jesus was Jesus out on the water? Yeah. 3 or 4 miles. The disciples had rowed 3 or 4 miles when they saw him walking toward them. I have heard this story most of my life – and I never saw that before. It's a long way.

Anybody watch the show "Mythbusters"? A crew of engineering and science folks with great imaginations and chutzpah who would take a story – an urban legend - and see if they could prove it true – or bust it. Stuff like if someone is shooting at you and you're in the water, dive under and the bullets won't hurt you. (Answer: depends on how deep you are when the bullets hit)

Other important stuff like will you blow up if you drop a lit cigarette into a toilet full of gasoline? (??!) No you won't. It'll burn but won't blow you away.

And oh – how about that walking on water – Can that be done? The Mythbusters did not wax theological on this – they studied ninjas who purportedly walked on water and the answer is no they don't – unless there are strategically placed poles in their path. That's the old joke about the rabbi walking across the water, while the priest who follows him sinking and sputtering. "Oh," says the rabbi. "Let me show you where the rocks are."

Back to Jesus – Not a myth – There are miracles – things we can't explain. No rocks – no strategic poles – Just walking – God in charge of God's creation – 3 or 4 miles out with 4 familiar words for the freaked out disciples: "Do not be afraid." And immediately, Jesus with them, they landed right where they needed to be.

Oh the miracle that in Jesus with us – We can release fear. In Jesus, we remember safety.

And now let's go backwards. Back to David for the biggest miracle of then and now and forever.

David! Isn't anything enough for David? He is the king of Israel. God's promised that God will care for him through the generations – and that God's son will come of David's lineage. God – GOD – real – all-powerful forever God – has made a covenant with David. God and David – forever!

And... that's not enough for David. Still the craving – Still the want – the greed. Today: the lust. David wants a woman and our reading says he's going to get her. Even though it means he'll order her husband killed. It's the kind of stuff on creepy 3 a.m. television.

King David has seen Bathsheba – had his men get her – and now she is pregnant with David's child so he wants to keep her. Goodbye, husband. But then – no spoiler alert for most of you already know – this child dies – And pain is heaped upon pain.

Through Nathan, David will see his sin – the lamb he has slaughtered - and repents. Yet he thinks even the baby's death is his own punishment. David – Really - It's not all about you.

For we've known since Abraham and Isaac that God does kill our children. God promises ongoing life through children. Yet in the world where there is disease and injury, children still die. And when they do, God is there – our mooring and hope even in pain.

The God of love does not punish. God remains with us whether our pain is of the world – or the pain that is the consequences of our bad decisions. God remains. Faithful – loving – forgiving – Arms open to receive us whenever we return.

Perhaps that is the greatest miracle of all – That God forgives. That nothing we do can take us from the love that is God when we turn back to God. That God receives us as we are – strong – or broken. For God seeks our living – In God, we heal.

And in the image of God, we forgive. Yet as we forgive, we may remember for pain can be a teacher. Forgiving is not the same as forgetting. Our onward living is life in hope – seeking God.

Our road so often forks in two directions: One leads us away from God; too often, our pain can become our focus in and of itself – a destructive idol.

The other direction brings us to God – seeking God – focusing on the living – sharing the pain with God.

Our hope is to life in toward God.

This is another part of the miracle of forgiveness. For we remember that forgiveness means letting go of anger – letting go of resentment – letting go of the need to blame – the need for revenge so that YOU are free to walk on in life. It's about breaking out of the darkness that threatens to suck us in and turning to the light that is life in God. It is about walking forward from the past – from things we can not change. For anger and blame and revenge will consume and destroy us. And they are tempting: currents with tremendous pull – taking us away from God and each other, and they can kill us.

Ocean swimmers are trained for strong currents in order that they might survive and eventually be freed of them. The steps swimmers are taught work for us under siege, too.

First – Avoid! When the warning signs are up – walk away. Stay out of it!

Should you find yourself falling into danger, get out soon – so often we can just walk away.

Breathe – Stay calm – Think. Pray.

If you're weak, call for help. We're not alone.

If you find yourself in over your head, turn and swim parallel to the shore – across the current. It's less to fight.

When you're exhausted, rest!

And when you are freed from the destroying pull, swim on a diagonal to the shore to keep from getting sucked back in.

The miracle? You'll be free. Whether a rip current of anger – blame – revenge – or water – You'll be free.

As images of God – we forgive, knowing that as we release others, we are free.

Forgiveness. It's about all of us. That's why we come together each week in our Confession.

Speak it with your whole heart – for each of us messes up – and each of us returns to God – And we eat the miracle of the bread – Forgiven – Healed – Renewed.

Forgiveness – the greatest miracle – promised to David – Promised to us.

Forgiveness – the greatest miracle – for it ensures we can return to God's love.

Forgiveness – the greatest miracle - for it assures us of ongoing love.

And we get to be part of the miracle of forgiveness.

Today – hear of the miracle that is walking on water. Today – Be part of the miracle of being fed. Today – Forgive – Live the miracle that is love.

Like Paul: I pray *“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend... the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Amen.*

ⁱ <http://www.catholicmannight.com/uncategorized/feeding-of-the-5000-how-much-food-was-there/>