Teaching Methods of Jesus:

Miracles Part 1

What is a Miracle?

In Unity, we don't understand a miracle as God suddenly deciding to suspend the laws of the universe for one fortunate person.

Charles Fillmore *taught that a miracle is a demonstration of divine law which supersedes the common understanding of natural law.*

So, a miracle is not necessarily a **violation** of natural law. It may be a demonstration of a spiritual law that we don't yet fully understand.

Why did Jesus perform miracles in the first place?
What was he trying to teach us?
Biblical scholars such as *N. T. Wright* suggest that Jesus' miracles were demonstrations of what the Kingdom of God looks like when it becomes a living reality in our world.

Characteristics

- **Proactive** – the movement of Spirit in positive action with a tangible effect in the world.
- **Practical** – a completely useful demonstration; applicable to the situation at hand as well as appropriate to the message of Truth being conveyed.
- **Transcendent** – Beyond our present knowledge of natural law with the ability to lift us up to a higher state of faith.
- **Accessible** – can occur when understanding of divine law comes together with pure, unadulterated faith.

Themes:

- Glory of God
- Jesus as instrument and messenger in the world
- Our accessibility to the kingdom – love, faith, willingness, prayer

Subjects:

- Healing
- Substance/supply
- Nature
- Overcoming Death

Miracles

Scriptures:

- Wedding at Cana – John 2:1-11
- Lame Man at Bathzatha – John 5:2-9
- Feeding the Multitudes: John 6:1-14; Matthew 14:13-21; 15:29-39; Mark 6:30-44; 8:1-10, Luke 9:10-17
- Walking on Water – John 6:16-21
- Blind Man at the Pool – John 9:1-12
- Raising of Lazarus – John 11
- Resurrection – John 20:1-18
- Centurion's Servant – Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
- Jairus' Daughter/ Woman who touched the Garment - Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56
- Calming the Water – Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-40; Luke 9:37-43a
- Walking on Water – Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52
- The Withered Fig Tree – Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:13-14; Luke 21:29-31

Miracles

Healing Miracles:

Examples: Healing the blind, the paralytic, the lepers.
Central teaching: Wholeness is our Divine nature.
• The healing miracles present and emphasize the teachings that God's kingdom is a kingdom of wholeness and peace and that health is the inheritance of all God's children. All of Jesus' healing work must be recognized as the out-picturing of the will of God. (John 6:38, Matt 18:14)

Miracles of Substance and Supply:

Examples: Feeding the 5,000, the miraculous catch of fish.
Central teaching: Spiritual substance is not limited by appearances of lack.
• Preparation: Long before Jesus performed any miracles, He had built into His consciousness the thought of God as omnipresent supply. (Matt 4:4, John 4:32, John 6:35)

Miracles Overcoming Death

Examples: Raising Lazarus, Jairus' daughter.
Central teaching: Divine Life transcends our limited understanding of existence.
• The basic idea of these miracles is that of LIFE. God's kingdom is a kingdom of life and the experience that we refer to as death has no place therein. Jesus does not use the word "death" and recognizes this is only a temporary condition. They refer to something that seems to have died within us. In the "Healing of Jarius' Daughter" (Matt 9:18-26)

Nature Miracles

Examples: Calming the storm, walking on water.
Central teaching: Spiritual consciousness is not governed by fear or outer appearances.
• These miracles involve with things belonging to the realm of nature – The Lake of Galilee, a growing fig tree and the higher laws invoked in these miracles appear to cut through or transcend the laws that govern the activities of the natural elements.

Discussion Questions

- When you hear the word miracle, what immediately comes to mind?

- What changes for you when we view miracles as demonstrations of Divine Law rather than supernatural exceptions to natural law?

Types of Miracles

Miracles of Healing:

• The healing miracles present and emphasize the teachings that God's kingdom is a kingdom of wholeness and peace and that health is the inheritance of all God's children. All of Jesus' healing work must be recognized as the out-picturing of the will of God. (John 6:38, Matt 18:14)

• Healing miracles place great emphasis upon faith. Faith is essential if there is to be a healing. (Matt 9:28, Luke 8:48, Mark 9:23, Matt 8:10)

• In some accounts of healing miracles there are suggestions regarding the cause of physical in-harmony and emphasis is placed on the necessity for forgiveness. (Mark 2:5, John 5:14)

• In some cases the healing was not instantaneous. The healing came by degrees. (Mark 8:22-26, John 9:1-7) The possible reasons could be: the healing my be proportionate to our capacity to receive and we must persevere, even in such matters as healing.

• Some healing miracles emphasize the importance of thanksgiving in connection with healing. (Luke 17:11-19)

Miracles of Supply:

• These show us how to meet emergencies and how to demonstrate abundant supply, even in the face of seeming lack.

• Preparation: Long before Jesus performed any miracles, He had built into His consciousness the thought of God as omnipresent supply. (Matt 4:4, John 4:32, John 6:35)

• Demonstrating Supply: In the miracle of the Loaves and Fishes, Jesus recognized a "nucleus" of supply in the 5 loaves and 2 fishes. With us, when facing lack, there is a tendency to say that nothing is available; but this miracle indicates that there is always something – even though that "something" may be small. Jesus then established order and aroused expectancy and then gave thanks before the actual appearance of supply. He also encouraged His disciples to exercise their faith by attempting what appeared to be an impossibility.

• After the miracle was performed, Jesus instructed the disciples to "gather up the broken fragments." Jesus knew it was easy for people to forget so He took this step so that the miracle would be remembered by the disciples. Now we refer to this action as "impressing the subconscious."

Miracles Overcoming Death

• The basic idea of these miracles is that of LIFE. God's kingdom is a kingdom of life and the experience that we refer to as death has no place therein. Jesus does not use the word "death" and recognizes this is only a temporary condition. They refer to something that seems to have died within us. In the "Healing of Jarius' Daughter" (Matt 9:18-26)

• Jesus took Peter, James & John, faith, love and wisdom, with Him. He shut the door of the house - we need to shut the door of our consciousness to keep out all negative thoughts and words.

• He told Jarius to "fear not." We too must learn to replace fear with faith even when the situation appears hopeless. He then said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." Here He uses denials and affirmations.

• Then Jesus took the little girl's hand and told her to rise. This shows us that Jesus expected something to happen. We must be willing to take action. He then suggested that she be given something to eat. Physically and spiritually it is not enough just to arouse the slumbering spirit; some further action must be taken to insure increasing strength and continuing activity.

Nature Miracles

• These miracles involve with things belonging to the realm of nature – The Lake of Galilee, a growing fig tree and the higher laws invoked in these miracles appear to cut through or transcend the laws that govern the activities of the natural elements.

• Jesus quieting the storm shows us that storms withinalso arise our own consciousness and in our relationships, causing us to become anxious and fearful. However, the Christ within us calms us when we call on it.

• In the miracle of withering the fig tree is to be regarded as an emphatic restatement of the important lesson of Israel's failure to accomplish its God-ordained purpose. Our lesson is to recognize that the purpose of the fig tree is to bear fruit, and unless this purpose is accomplished the tree is useless and is cut down. Our purpose is the same – we need to show forth the Christ spirit in our lives and activities.

Miracles

Discussion Activity
What Is Jesus Demonstrating?
Divide the class into four small groups. Assign each group one category of miracles.

Small-group discussion questions:
What aspect of Divine Law or spiritual Truth might Jesus be demonstrating through this type of miracle?
What human limitation or belief does this category challenge?
How might we experience this kind of miracle in our own lives today?
What is one question or challenge this category raises for you?

How Jesus Healed
In the Gospel accounts, we see a variety of approaches.

• Power of the spoken word. Mark 1:23–26 — Unclean spirit The creative and authoritative power of the word.

• Touch: / Laying on of hands Mark 1:30–31 — Peter's mother-in-law Connection, compassion, and the communication of healing presence.

• Through spiritual presence and authority Mark 6:5–6 — Healings in his hometown The relationship between spiritual consciousness, faith, and receptivity.

• Choosing Healing Mark 10:46-52 – Blind Bartimaeus the willingness to receive healing; consciously choosing wholeness and participating in our transformation.

• Pronouncing forgiveness Mark 2:1–12 — The paralytic Forgiveness, release, and wholeness.

• Inviting the individual to act Mark 3:3–5 — The withered hand Active participation in the healing process.

• Healing through stages Mark 8:22–25 — Blind man at Bethsaida Healing as an unfolding process rather than always an instantaneous event.

•Touch / Words Mark 7:32–35, the healing of the deaf man with a speech impediment, another example of Jesus using physical touch and the spoken word together.

Discussion: consider Jesus' healing methods collectively to see What Can We Learn from Jesus' Methods?

Discussion questions:

- What stands out to you about the variety of ways Jesus healed?
- Why might Jesus have asked someone to take an action, such as stretching out a hand, rather than simply healing them?
- What relationship do you see between faith, receptivity, forgiveness, and healing?
- From a Unity perspective, was Jesus demonstrating a power unique to himself, or revealing spiritual principles that we, too, can learn to express?

Interpretation Activity

The Healing of the Blind Man at Bethsaida - Mark 8:22–25

8:22 And they come unto Bethsaida. And they bring to him a blind man, and beseech him to touch him. 8:23 And he took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, Seest thou aught? 8:24 And he looked up, and said, I see men; for I behold *them* as trees, walking. 8:25 Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked stedfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly. 8:26 And he sent him away to his home, saying, Do not even enter into the village.

Metaphysical Interpretation

Begin with the symbols in the story.
Symbol / Keyword Possible metaphysical meaning

Discussion questions:

- What might blindness represent beyond a physical condition?

- Why is it significant that the man begins to see but does not initially see clearly?

- What does the second touch suggest about the process of awakening?

Mystical Interpretation

- What might this story reveal about our relationship with the Christ Presence within? Is spiritual awakening a single experience, or might it be a continuing process of becoming more aware of our oneness with God?

- What does it mean to allow ourselves to be guided, even when we cannot yet see clearly? Perhaps spiritual awakening is not always a sudden illumination. Sometimes we begin to see differently, but our vision is still shaped by old beliefs, fears, and limited understanding. As we continue opening to Divine Presence, our perception becomes clearer.

Maieutic Interpretation.

A moment of quiet reflection.

- Where in my life am I beginning to see something differently, but perhaps not yet seeing it clearly?
- What old belief or limited perception might I be ready to release?
- Where might I need to trust the unfolding process rather than demand an immediate answer?
- What spiritual practice could help me become more receptive to a clearer understanding?