

Two Miracles

10/12/2025

Rev. Daein Park

An atheist is swimming in the ocean when suddenly, a great white shark starts heading straight for him. In sheer panic, he cries out, “Oh God! Save me!” Time freezes. A heavenly light shines down. And then, a voice from above says, “Why are you calling on Me? You don’t even believe in Me.” Instead of humbling himself, the atheist argues back—as atheists sometimes do—“Well, I don’t believe in You, and I don’t think You can make the shark believe in You either!”

God chuckles. Time resumes. The atheist looks around—the shark has stopped! He’s astonished! But then... the shark bows its head and prays, “Thank you, Lord, for this food I am about to receive...”

This holds up a mirror to our hearts. Because, when we pray for miracles, when we cry out for help, our eyes are usually fixed on our own well-being—our rescue, our healing, our safety. Like that atheist, we want God to change the circumstances around us... to fix the “shark” that threatens us.

But the greater miracle—the one God longs to work—isn’t just about survival or comfort. It’s about transformation that seems impossible: a change of heart, a turning of spirit—sometimes in others, and sometimes in ourselves.

And that’s what we see in today’s story from Luke. To the audience of Jesus, the Samaritan was the least likely person to return and give thanks, because to the Jewish people, Samaritans were considered outsiders—unholy, unwelcome.

Yet God’s miracle always reaches beyond our boundaries and expectations. God’s grace works where we least imagine, and through those we least expect.

Luke’s account places us on the borderlands between Samaria and Galilee, a place of tension and division. Jesus meets ten lepers—outsiders twice over—isolated by disease and, for some, by ethnicity and religion. They call out together, “*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*” (v. 13), opening the door to whatever healing God will provide.

Jesus instructs them to show themselves to the priests, and as they go, all ten experience the first miracle: physical healing. Their skin is restored, their limbs strengthened. They are freed from isolation and the limitations imposed by leprosy.

But then Luke directs our attention to something more penetrating. One man among them, a Samaritan—someone outside the Jewish community—turns back, praising God with a loud voice and throwing himself at Jesus’ feet in heartfelt thanks. Here is the second miracle: not just bodily healing, but spiritual restoration. Jesus tells him, “*Your faith has made you well*” (v. 19), using a word that means more than physical health—it means saved, made whole.

This twofold miracle echoes the prayerful song of Psalm 66. Israel remembers mighty acts of deliverance, God’s parting of seas and rescue through trials. Yet, the psalmist invites the people beyond remembrance to a joyful response: raising praise, making thankful noise, and publicly telling what God has done. The great acts of salvation call forth the miracle of faithful gratitude and worship. Both scripture passages challenge us: will we stop at receiving physical blessings, or turn back to offer our hearts in true thanks?

It’s easy to identify with the nine lepers who received healing but did not return to thank Jesus. When our prayers are answered, we want relief, restoration, or rescue quickly. And once we get what we need, we move on. Gratitude, if it comes at all, is often a brief, internal feeling rather than a lasting posture.

But Luke’s story reminds us of the power of gratitude as a transforming force—an essential part of salvation. It’s not just an optional extra; it is the heart’s miracle of faith becoming visible and vibrant.

The lesson from the atheist and the shark story calls us to consider whether we are only seeking a miracle for ourselves—a change around us that makes us safe or comfortable—or whether we are open to the greater miracle God longs to perform: changes in hearts, especially those we might least expect. The Samaritan leper’s gratitude and faith were miraculous because they came from one who was an outsider, even despised by many in Jesus’ culture.

Likewise, Psalm 66 recalls how God sometimes brings people through fire and water—painful trials that shape faith and character—and leads them into places of abundance. Those trials invite worship and ongoing relationship rather than just quick fixes.

Recent news from Dallas offers a tragic real-life illustration of how the smallest gestures of gratitude or disrespect can shape life and death. A woman held a door open for another person, but when she did not receive a “thank you,” tensions escalated quickly from verbal argument to physical violence and ended in a deadly shooting.

Even though we don’t know the details of the tragedy, this heartbreaking event reminds us how gratitude is not just a social nicety—it can be life-giving or life-taking. The absence of genuine gratitude can deepen division and fuel destructive anger. On the other hand, heartfelt gratitude has the power to heal wounds, mend relationships, and open doors to peace.

The Samaritan who returned to thank Jesus made a choice that went beyond self-interest or swift outward healing. Gratitude, expressed vulnerably and publicly, can be costly; it may require humility, patience, and inconvenience. But it also connects us deeply to God and calls others to witness the wonder God works among us.

Many in our congregation have experienced answered prayers: healing, provision, the comfort of God’s presence in times of trial. These blessings are precious and worthy of joy. Yet the challenge remains: will we stop at relief or move forward into the second miracle—the transformation of grateful faith?

This week, consider your own story. Where has God delivered you in body, mind, or circumstance? Where has God begun to transform your thoughts, attitudes, or relationships in new and unexpected ways? Where has God led you into a deeper life of trust and thankfulness?

Two Miracles is a lens to help us recognize God at work—both in healing and in the heart’s turning. Both require openness to God’s power and presence.

Picture the Samaritan leper again: his strength returning, his body renewed. Yet he chooses to step back from the crowd and come back to kneel before Jesus. He does not rush into life as it was before but pauses to say thanks—to declare that his healing is not just a physical fact but a gift mediated by grace.

Gratitude requires us to slow down, to be vulnerable before God and community, and to name our dependence. It is a proactive act that refocuses us away from self-preoccupation toward worship and fellowship.

Psalm 66 calls us to come and see what God has done, to make a joyful noise, and to tell the stories of God's steadfast love. Gratitude when voiced publicly not only honors God but invites others to join in the celebration of God's mercy.

In a world often marked by entitlement, hurried living, and fractured relationships, choosing gratitude can be revolutionary—it points to the greater miracle God wants to work in and through us.

The atheist's cry to God in the shark's presence reminds us how easy it is to seek miracles only for ourselves while missing the deeper miracle God desires: transformation of hearts, including those hardest to change.

Luke's Samaritan leper and the psalmist of Psalm 66 invite us into the fullness of salvation—not merely rescue from trouble, but restoration into communion with God. Two miracles take place: one renews the body; the other awakens the soul.

May we be like the one who turned back—not by obligation, but by faith, worship, and gratitude—so that when God answers our prayers, we do not simply move on but return to offer praise and deepen our relationship.

“Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me” (Psalm 66:20), the psalmist declares—a grateful heart speaking from experience.

No matter where you are today—in waiting, receiving, or rejoicing—may you live as a person expecting Two Miracles—from healing to faith, from rescue to renewed life.

Let the steadfast love of God fill your heart. Let your whole life proclaim the wonders you have seen. And may gratitude transform you into the person God created you to be. Amen.