

Be the Miracle - Partnership Miracles - 4/26/2020

This past Wednesday evening,
I got an urgent text message from my friend Art.
Alida, it said, *Bruce Springsteen is on Channel 4 right now.*
Now that's a true friend --someone who knows what's important to you.

So I tuned in rapidly, and sure enough.

It was Bruce.

Along with a bunch of other musicians - Jon Bon Jovi, Halsey, Tony Bennett.

These weren't just any musicians, they were all Jersey musicians.

It was a fundraiser -- maybe some of you saw it --

called Jersey 4 Jersey,

with famed musicians all broadcasting from their own living rooms,
in an online concert to raise funds for people in their state who are hurting.

And yes, I did love seeing Bruce and his wife Patti,
singing powerfully and emotionally from their New Jersey home.

But what I really loved

was what they showed in between the songs.

They showed story after story of people who are out there doing God's work.
Doing God's work.

Doctors, yes, nurses, yes, EMTs and first responders. The people on the front lines.

But also -- the restaurant owner who's using his kitchen now to make meals for the hungry and homeless.

Why just sit around and watch the news, he said.

If we have the means to do it, let's do it.

Or the young man who spends all day every day taking groceries to seniors.

He said *The only way we get through this is with love, solidarity, and mutual aid.*

Love, solidarity, and mutual aid.

I liked that.

They showed so many people like that on the Jersey 4 Jersey special, people who were doing the work of Love, God's work.

Being angels to others.

A long while back now, a movie came out called *Bruce Almighty*, with Jim Carrey,

In your intensive Netflix bingeing of late, you may well have come across it. I always thought it was the best theological comedy out there, although granted that *is* a pretty limited category.

I used to make the Confirmation Class watch excerpts from it, until we reached the point a couple years ago where the movie was older than they were, and that made *me* look old, so I stopped.

If you have any vague memory of *Bruce Almighty*, you may recall that Jim Carrey plays this TV reporter named Bruce, who, long story short, acts like a jerk at work, gets fired, and then gets dumped by his girlfriend.

And Bruce then blames God for messing up his life.

Shaking his fist at the heavens, Bruce shouts

“You’re the one who should be fired, not me!”

That’s when Morgan Freeman comes in, as God.

And he says “you think you can my job better? -- go for it.”

Whereupon God goes on vacation, leaving Bruce in charge.

Bruce soon discovers that it’s really hard to be God.

He gets bombarded with prayer requests that he doesn’t know how to deal with;

he tries answering yes to all of them, and promptly bankrupts the lottery system.

Chaos ensues.

When God comes back, this is what he - Morgan Freeman - says to Bruce -- and this was the part I always had the Confirmands watch.

People want me to do everything for them, says God.

What they don't realize is that they have the power.

That's your problem, Bruce, that's everybody's problem -- you all keep looking up.

You want to see a miracle, son?

*Be a miracle. **Be** a miracle.*

David and I were talking earlier this week about what it means to be a miracle.

And we started thinking about Jesus' miracles.

Not so much the big razzle-dazzle ones that people think of right away, like the water into wine miracle, or the walking on water miracle, although those are both pretty cool.

We were thinking more about the miracles that Jesus did day in and day out,

the miracles of healing,

the miracles where he placed his hands on someone who was hurting, inside or out,

and brought them comfort, soothed their souls, made them well.

And we realized something.

That a whole lot of the times that Jesus healed a person, there was someone else who made it possible.

We realized that more often than not,

Jesus had a partner for his miracles.

Someone who did the right thing at the right time so that someone they cared about could find healing.

Someone who was willing to step in and, with Jesus' help, make the miracle happen.

We read a bunch of those miracle stories in our scripture litany just a few minutes ago.

The stories where people partnered with Jesus to create miracle.

The friends of a paralyzed man who carry him, on his bed, all the way to Jesus, knowing Jesus will help him walk again.

The Roman Centurion who humbles himself before Jesus, begging him to come and heal his servant.

The mother who seeks out Jesus and demands that her daughter be made well.

The father who carries his son into Jesus' presence.

All of them, all of these miracles of hope and healing, only happened because someone had enough love and faith to make sure they happened.

Because someone had enough love and faith to be the miracle for someone else - to be the miracle *with* Christ's help, with Christ's power.

I started off by talking about those stories I saw on the fundraiser for New Jersey,

the Jersey stories of people being the miracle for one another.

But of course, those stories are happening right **here**, all around us **here**.

Those stories are happening right here in our own church family.

In our own church family, we have nurses and doctors who are in the hospitals right now,

as I'm preaching this, being the miracle for people who are hurting and scared.

We have firefighters, police, and EMTs who are each day are finding the strength to be strength for others, to be miracle for others.

And we have lots of other folks being miracle.

The church member whom I mentioned last week,
 who has made thousands of cookies to give away.

The people who are loading up their cars with extra groceries,
 packing up their cars with meals to take out into the community.

The church friend who called up the amazing Al at Saugatuck Sweets and
 arranged for us to deliver tons of ice cream to our friends at Pivot Ministries.

The people who have given what they can, all they can, to our Bridge the
 Gap fund for others.

The kids in our church who spent this past week designing cards to bring
 comfort to people hospitalized with Covid --

we sent dozens and dozens of them to Bridgeport Hospital, where they're
 being streamed digitally into patient rooms

And the church member I talked to just this weekend,

one of those essential store workers making sure you still have the supplies
 you need.

He said "my job is to witness to God's love in whatever way I can right where
 I am --

and if that means just being a calming presence to someone who looks
 frightened, then that's my witness."

A lot of different ways to be the miracle.

All of them partnering with Christ to bring healing to others.

This past week, we crossed the forty-day mark.

Forty days since the schools around us closed,

and our church offices shut down,

and we started being a church online instead of the pews.

Forty days in which we've gone from hugs to masks,

from sitting in living rooms together to looking at each other on screens.

Forty days is pretty Biblical.

Noah hung out on an ark for 40 days, waiting for a dove with an olive branch to signal the end of the flood.

Jesus prayed in the wilderness for 40 days, waiting for God's direction.

And here we are, still on the ark, still in a strange wilderness.

And it seems harder and harder,

as people we love have gotten sick or lost people they love.

This *is* hard.

So here's how you keep hope alive.

Here's how you brighten the wilderness, and welcome the dove of peace.

By looking for every moment that you can create goodness.

By partnering with Christ to bring healing to others.

By **being** the miracle in whatever way you can find.

You have that power.

You can bring the light.

Be the miracle.

Amen.