

What You See Is Not Always What You Get

The Bible, and life for that matter, is full of stories that at first glance appear one way, and then, after a closer look, appear very different. The story of Jesus' Baptism is one such story. To some, it may have looked like nothing more than a man going under water and coming up, but the Biblical writers tell us that there was more going on than "meets the eye." We are told by Mark that as Jesus came up out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens open up, and the Spirit of God descend upon him like a dove. Just how many bystanders aside from Jesus saw this reality we don't know? It does; however, beg some consideration. At any given moment, life's realities extend far beyond what we can see, feel, or touch. The ever-present God is the primary reason for that. Living the Christian life is "in large" part learning to live more deeply aware of Him and His workings.

Listen to Tom Wright:

"A good deal of Christian faith is a matter of learning to live by this different reality even when we can't see it. Sometimes, at decisive and climatic moments, the curtain is drawn back and we see, or hear, what's really going on; but most of the time we walk by faith, not by sight." Tom Wright – "Mark for Everyone"

Monday – "Things Are Not Always What They Seem"

"We inhabit a mystery. We must not pretend to know too much... We're afraid when reality without warning is shown to be either more or other than we thought it was." Eugene Peterson

1. Please Read Acts 3:1-8. What is it in this story that is different than it seems (i.e. surprising or unexpected)?
2. Look carefully at verse 4. Try to imagine this exchange. Notice the way Peter and John interacted with this man. How was their interaction different from the way others treated him?
3. The crippled man was hoping only for some money from Peter and John. Why were Peter and John unwilling to give money? In what ways did their gift exceed the gift of money?

Tuesday – How Deep?

1. Please Read Acts 3:1-10. Describe the man's condition before meeting Peter and John. Now, describe what changed in his life after meeting them.
2. How deeply was this man's life changed? Physically? Spiritually? Otherwise?

Making it Personal - How deeply has your life been changed by Christ? Into what areas of your life has Christ's power reached (relationally, spiritually, etc.)? Take time to thank God for the depth of his work in your life.

Wednesday – "More Than We Ask or Imagine"

"...the most personal, most significant, most human thing we ever do is believe in God. At the same time it's the most public, the most social, the most political." Eugene Peterson – "Leap Over a Wall"

1. Please Read Acts 3:1-8 and Ephesians 3:20-21. Can you remember a time when God gave you something better than what you had originally asked of him?
2. What does the man in Acts 3 ask for? What does he get?
3. Look at how the word "power" is used in Ephesians 3:20? What is power related to according to Paul? Think about the phrase "glory in the church." How might it be related to the event in Acts 3? How might it be related to what you see happening in and through the lives of people at FBC?

Thursday – Strong Ankles are for Dancing

"We should either abandon miracles completely or act accordingly." Søren Kierkegaard – "Journals and Papers"

1. Please Read Acts 3:6-8 and Luke 17:11-19. How does the man in Acts 3 respond to his healing?
2. How is the Luke passage similar to the Acts passage? How is it different?
3. Who are you more like – the praising men or those nine who did not return to Jesus? Spend some time praising God for his acts in your life.

Friday – An Appetite for Wonder

"This elementary wonder (of children), however, is not a mere fancy derived from the fairy tales; on the contrary, all the fire of the fairy tales is derived from this...we all like astonishing tales because they touch the nerve of the ancient instinct of astonishment." G. K. Chesterton – "Orthodoxy"

1. Please read Acts 3:1-10. How did people respond to this event?
2. Read Psalm 9:1-2. What does the Psalmist mean when he declares, "I will tell of all your wonders?"
3. What role does praise and wonder play in training your heart to "see" beyond the physical world so you can walk by faith rather than sight?

Weekend: Read 2 Cor. 5:7. Living by faith, rather than sight, involves choosing to see God at work in your own life and in our world. What "wonders" has God worked in your life that you could relate to others? Ask God to give you the opportunity to tell of God's wonders to others.