



Mary and Bob often find themselves sharing common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry. When approaching ministerial concerns from different angles, He Said - She Said is a venue to share differing perspectives.

Miracles

Miracle: an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.

–Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Bob's Perspective:

Think about how many times in life you've prayed for a miracle. Maybe it was for a loved one (or yourself) to be spared from death or healed from some malady. It may have been for the means to pay the mortgage or some other debt. Possibly, it was for a good outcome to a meaningful endeavor. Every one of us has given in to praying for a miracle at least once in our lives. But truth be told, miracles happen in our lives all the time; it's just that we don't always recognize them. Why is that? It could be that they're not spectacular enough for us to care, or we take miracles for granted, or we don't think that a miracle is a miracle. Perhaps a change of perspective might be in order.

Let's shift gears for a moment.

Think about baseball – pitching, in particular. Many would judge a good pitcher as one who throws a lot of strikeouts and wins a lot of games. That's true in itself, but there's much more involved – form, technique, and athleticism, just to name a few. Those things, however, are only really appreciated if we're invested in the game. A passive spectator munching on hotdogs and watching clips on TikTok (only looking up to see what's going on at the crack of a bat) may not truly appreciate many of the pitching nuances in quite the same way.

Think about music – an organ fugue. To the untrained ear, it may sound like a jumble of notes being pounded out on a blaring instrument. But to one who understands the intricate construction of a fugue, the composition and the interplay of the musical lines, combined with the artistry of sensitive voice registrations – it's heavenly.

Think about that crocheted afghan that Grandma made for Christmas years back. It's pretty and serves as a nice decorative piece draped over the back of the davenport. But the true beauty of it is in the color selection of the patterns, the detailed attention to precise stitching, and the love that was put into each stitch.

Think about... add your own examples. You get the picture.



Back to miracles.

When we walk through life passively, we miss the whole point. To truly appreciate miracles, we need to *be miracles* – to be active rather than passive. We need to actively *manifest the Divine in human affairs*. We manifest the Divine when we act out of love and concern rather than out of pity or rash judgement. We manifest the Divine when we give from our means rather than from our surplus. We manifest the Divine when we do something for no other reason than just because it's the right thing to do.

The key to manifesting the Divine is to be mindful in our ways, humble in our motives, and actively grateful for all that we've been given no matter how great or small (See Micah 6:8). When we become miracles for others, we become invested in the game, we come to understand the intricacies, and we begin to see the true beauty of the miracles in our own lives, as well as in those of others.

Mary's Perspective:

When I first read Bob's perspective, I had three reactions:

First, I don't pray for miracles. Never have. I feel like praying to God – expressing my concern and then telling him the answer – closes the door to the unimaginable reach of the Divine. Sometimes, the road has obstacles because our journey is supposed to take a curve. I believe our experiences are part of a bigger picture, and sometimes our suffering or challenges or the lessons we are learning play a crucial part in someone else's journey. If I tell God not to have me walk this road, I'm not only changing my own destiny, but perhaps someone else's story, too.

Telling God the answer also limits the Divine to what I see – not what he sees. I've often said I would not have written my story this way, but I can't think of a better story to write. God sees the potential in me that I may doubt or deny. God gifts me with the strength and insight to move mountains, even if I feel like kicking a pebble might just break my toe. Thank God my life is not limited to my own narrow vision. Why would I want to change that?

So, once I got past the whole concept of praying for miracles, I must admit my second reaction: I agree with the concept of needing to *be miracles* – to be active rather than passive. We (Bob and I) are Church people, and so we think like Church people. We recognize the Divine manifest in human affairs every time we celebrate Eucharist. We recognize the Divine in every sacramental celebration (or at least, we should, if we're paying attention!). We recognize the Divine when the music touches our soul, or the lector



gets through the toughest names without stumbling, or the choir's harmony comes together in balance, or the homily engages our heart and mind.

As a parent, beyond the Church scene, I recognize the Divine in my daughters' spontaneous dance parties while we are cooking, and in a toddler's fascination with potato bugs, and in those moments when a teenager's dirty socks actually end up in the hamper instead of... well, literally anywhere else! To be mindful, humble, and actively grateful isn't restricted to Churchworld. It's good advice for all of us. Perhaps we need to stop praying for miracles and pray to *become* the miracle. When we are mindful, we pay attention. When we are humble, we look to others' needs. When we are actively grateful, we find ways to leave this place a little better than how we found it.

You're probably nodding your head right now because it's obvious advice – yet maybe not something we consciously think about very often. My prayer for you today is that you see opportunities to be the miracle for someone – to actively manifest the Divine, even in the mundane parts of life. Especially in the mundane parts, because that's most of the time. And then (and this is the big one) I pray that you do something about it.

Oh, and my third reaction? "Davenport"? Seriously? How old ARE you?