

A Miracle of the New Creation

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] I don't know how many of you have seen the Pirates of the Caribbean movies. I think the second Pirates of the Caribbean movie, which came out this summer, I think, it's the third highest grossing film of all time. It passed the billion dollar mark worldwide.

And they're really fun films. And in the first film, without, you know, if you haven't seen it, I don't think I'm giving away anything which is terrible. But the Pirates in question, the principal Pirates in question, they fight and they fight and they fight and they fight.

And they always seem to win. And the reason they always seem to win is that they cannot die and they don't need any food. I mean, you think about an army that cannot die. You know, you can shoot them and shoot them and shoot them and shoot them and they just laugh and they can keep coming. And, you know, you don't have to worry about supply lines or them stopping for a break to eat or any of those things. You find out afterwards it's because they're sort of dead.

They're really skeletons in the moonlight and it's really spectacular film work and all that stuff. And maybe scary for young children. But the Pirates in question, the bad Pirates in the first Pirates of the Caribbean film, they are pirates who cannot die and they do not hunger.

In the Gospel today, we're going to look at two miracles. And the first miracle can really only be, you know, the human effect of the first miracle can only be understood if you've thought about Pirates of the Caribbean. Because in the first miracle of the two miracles that we're going to look at today, after Jesus has performed the miracle, the men there, and there's 5,000 men.

[1 : 45] One of the reasons I think they mentioned 5,000 men is because that would make a pretty sizable army. But the 5,000 men there say this is time to throw off the oppressor's yoke and rise up in revolt and we are going to beat those Romans. Why? Because we know that Jesus can heal, so it's pretty unlikely we're going to die. And he's just fed a whole pile of people with a few fish, so we'll never be hungry. And so they sort of have a Pirates of the Caribbean moment and think that they can become an invincible force against the Romans. And so Jesus performs a remarkable miracle and their response is, let's force Jesus to lead us and we will rid Judea of these cursed Romans. Jesus will have none of it. Let's look at the miracles and hopefully when we look at them, we'll have a different desire with Jesus than to try to make him that type of earthly king.

Turn in your Bibles to page 923. And we'll look at those two miracles again. 923. And it's John chapter 6 for those of you who brought your own Bibles with you.

And we'll begin reading at the first verse. After these things, and just sort of as a bit of an aside there, after these things is just a little literary device that John does, it tells you sequence but not duration. So it means the different things that have happened in the first five chapters. Sometime after that, we don't know if it's a week, we don't know if it's a month, we don't know if it's eight months, but sometimes after those previous events, Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. It had two names.

Then a great multitude followed him because they saw his signs which he performed on those who were diseased. In other words, they saw the miracles that Jesus performed on those who were sick, and that he had the power and the authority to heal. And Jesus went up on a mountain, a bit of an aside, it's the Golan Heights that he went up. If you want to give it a bit of a contemporary place, that's where he was. He was in the Golan Heights, where all the contested geography and real estate is today. Jesus went up on a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and seen a great multitude coming toward him. He said to Philip, where shall we buy bread that these may eat?

[4 : 20] But this he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, 200 denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little. Just to give you a bit of a sense, a denarii would be what a working man would get paid for a day. So

imagine what an average working person's salary is, multiply that by 200, and that's the amount of money that Philip is playing around in his, within his head, eight months wages. 200 denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, there is a lad here who has five barley loaves. They would have been little, they would have been just around the size of a dinner roll.

Five barley loaves and two small fish. But what are they among so many? And Jesus said, make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place, so the men sat down in number about 5,000.

Just want to sort of pause there for a second before we actually get to the miracle. Everything that's happened in this story up until now, and the things which are going to happen in the next couple of verses, all of them are trying to emphasize and heighten the fact that a miracle is about to take place. In fact, it's trying, John is in fact emphasizing or bringing out elements of the story to make it clear that when Jesus performs a miracle, it really is a miracle. And so the fact that it's in a mountainside where it would be sparsely populated, the fact that there's a great multitude, the fact that obviously these people are going to be needing food, Jesus is aware of that. The fact that even if they were to get eight months wages, nine months wages, for some of you that's about 5,000 bucks, for some of you that's maybe \$100,000. But whatever the amount of money is, it couldn't possibly buy enough food. The fact that the boy only has a couple of tiny dinner rolls and a couple of tiny fish, even the fact that Jesus asked the people to sit down is actually something which heightens the miracle. Because they're sitting down, it's ordered, nobody can say, oh, that sort of Jesus snuck in a big wagon load of food from the back while everybody's milling around, or, you know, everything in the story is heightening the fact that there are no resources there to provide the food. Verse 11,

And Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down, and likewise of the fish, so much as they wanted. So when they were filled, he said to his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain so that nothing is lost.

[7 : 15] Therefore, they gathered them up and filled 12 baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Now, the story once again makes clear that the, I mean, it would have been a remarkable thing if you try to picture it, if you went back in a time machine and you were able to picture it. The picture is that Jesus is standing there, and he starts to break the barley loaves, and as he breaks the barley loaves, he puts them into baskets, and he'd reach in and break a barley loaf into pieces, put it in the basket, reach down, pick up another barley loaf, put it in the basket, and he would just keep doing that and doing that and doing that, and the barley loaves never ran out, and the fish, and it just kept getting distributed and distributed and distributed, and eventually everybody that was there was able to eat as much as they wanted until they were full, and afterwards they were able to gather up 12 baskets worth of food. The story is clear that it doesn't, that it happens, this miracle happens at Jesus's hands, that it's not because Jesus taught something that inspired sharing. There's no hint whatsoever about that. That's what modern people sometimes, you know, think of because they want to try to avoid the fact that the story is pointing to the fact that Jesus performs a mighty miracle. In fact, this is Jesus's most public miracle, and it's the only miracle which is recorded in all four of the Gospels. It's his most public miracle.

Many of them took place in small villages, small crowds. This took place in front of potentially 20,000 people, and it's his most public miracle. And so it's not, the text is making clear that it's not a result of Jesus's teaching and people being inspired to share, and in fact, all of the historical detail and physical detail, it's not poetic way of talking about the need for sharing or a poetic way of talking about Holy Communion. Everything in the story points to a miracle. And I'm going to make it as hard as possible for you to believe it. What this miracle means is that there was more matter in the universe after Jesus performed the miracle than before. That's what this is saying.

If you could weigh up all of the matter in the universe, if scientists could calculate that right down to the gram, and then after this miracle was over, there'd be more grams in the universe than there were before. The story is the story of an act of creation. Many of you have maybe heard me say before how if you could go back in a time machine, you'd be able to see this. If you went back in a time machine, you'd be able to see that. And it's because I want to try to bring out to us that the Bible believes, and I believe, that these things really happen. It's a story about really, really

occurred.

One of the things that we couldn't do if we went back in time is we couldn't actually see the very, very beginning of creation because obviously there's, in a sense, nowhere for us to go back to in our time machine. This miracle is a miracle of creation. It is, in a sense, the book of Genesis. It is, in a sense, these people saw something similar to what the angels would have seen in the first days of creation when God created stuff, and only the angels would have seen it. And the disciples had the opportunity to, in a sense, not in a sense, the disciples had an opportunity to watch Jesus create bread and fish out of nothing before their eyes. Isn't that astounding?

Yeah. You know, one of the things which I ask you to pray for me for, it's really easy nowadays in Christian circles to try to, you know, to try to, in a sense, downplay the sheer offense of the miracles and the sheer offense of the authority claimed by the Bible and the Word of God and the authority claimed by Christ. And one of the things I ask for you to do for me is ask that I always have the gift of clarity to try to bring out exactly what is in the Bible with its full power. That I would much rather have you say, gosh, that's, you know, I used to think that I like the Bible, but if that's what the Bible says, how can anybody possibly believe it?

[12:17] I'd rather have somebody say that after one of my sermons than think that my sermon was really beautiful or eloquent and made me think of communion and made me think of flowers and daisies and butterflies and all of those types of things that, I mean, this is an astounding thing. The disciples get to see Jesus create matter in front of them. This is the book of Genesis. This is astounding stuff.

And, you know, there's a law of thermodynamics. And, you know, one of the things that might, this is just as incredible a thing as it is today as it would have been, like people know that you can't create matter out of nothing. I mean, you don't have to have, you don't have to know the first law of thermodynamics. You could be a farmer, you could be a fisherman, you could have virtually no education. Everybody other than mentally ill people would understand that you don't create matter out of nothing. And in a sense, what happens is a lot of people think that science tells us that miracles like this can't happen. But even the first law of thermodynamics, it just says that in a closed system, you can't have matter and energy being created out of nothing. In a closed system, it's constant. And in those of us who know science, and those of us who are physicists, and those of us who are chemists, and philosophers, what this miracle is saying is that if it's true, we don't live in a closed system. Because that's all that the mirror, that's all the first law of thermodynamics says that if you're in a closed system, you don't have this happening. But if there is a God who's created all things and can create whenever he wants, then we have just seen Jesus being like the Father on the first and second, third and fourth and fifth and sixth day of creation, creating out of nothing. Just astounding. And then the story continues. Verse 14, then these men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, when they'd seen the miracle, the fact that he'd created food, they say, this is truly the prophet who has come into the world.

So therefore, when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he departed again to a mountain by himself alone. Just a little bit of an aside here. And one of the things which really struck me as I was thinking about this text all week and meditating upon this text was this idea that they wanted to take him by force and make him king. And you know, one of the dangers for those of us who are honest, you know, who know Jesus is that it's a constant temptation for us to want to force him into our mold, force him and make him to do or to baptize or to agree with or to back up or to use his authority to do what we would like to accomplish. It's a constant temptation for Christians. And this, just as we could look back and think, well, how ridiculous of these people to want to force Jesus and make him a king. But once again, you know, as I was reading the text this week, I realized I'm those people. There are times in my life that I want to force Jesus to do what I want to do or back up what I think or I say or my dreams or my hopes or my program or my agenda so that, you know, he appears to be king, but it's still my agenda which is being forced. And it's just that once again, the Bible warns us of a great spiritual danger. We are to understand that

Jesus is sovereign, that he's free. And the thing which the Bible is constantly inviting us to know is the virtue of surrender to him and obedience to him, to allow Jesus to be himself and rule in my life according to his will, his plan, his agenda. That is the Christian life. Now we see, you know, one of the things which is so amazing about this story is that it dawned on me as I was meditating upon it. That I think it's, I can't remember where it is in the Bible right now, but Jesus is described as

being the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. And in a sense, in these two stories of Jesus, we see the Alpha and the Omega. We see a story that makes it almost as if we could be there in the first or second or third or fourth or fifth or sixth day of creation. And then immediately after that, we see a story of Jesus as the Omega. We see a story of heaven. We see a miracle of the new creation. And we see Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega, all in these two stories, one after the other.

One moment, it is as if he is the creator who created everything in the book of Genesis. In fact, he is revealed as the creator in the book of Genesis. And the very next minute, he is revealed as the Jesus of the book of Revelation. Let's continue reading verse 16.

[17:43] And when evening came, his disciples went down to the sea. Jesus is off in the mountain by himself alone. We know from the other gospels that he spends hours and hours and hours in prayer with his father. And so the disciples go down to the sea, get into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them. Then the sea arose, because a great wind was blowing. So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat, and they were afraid.

But he said to them, it is I, do not be afraid. Then they willingly received him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going. Each of the gospel writers sort of, what happens in this is that there's like several miracles that all happen, all within moments of each other. One of the gospel accounts focuses on the fact that Peter is able to walk in the water with Jesus. And another miracle account emphasizes the fact that Jesus was also able to calm the sea and stop the storm. And this miracle account emphasizes the fact that in a sense, Jesus was able to instantly move a boat from the middle of the sea to the edge of the sea. And at the same time, all of them, all of them, all three accounts of this miracle in the gospels, all of them emphasize the fact that Jesus was actually walking in the water. It's a big, big lake. He's in the middle of the lake.

There's no sandbars. There's nothing like that. He comes walking in the distance, whether they're seeing him through the lightning flashes or however it is that they see him, they see him walking on the waves to him. You know, once again, friends, pray that I always have the clarity that we can see the miracle for what it is. And my hope is that when we see the miracle for what it is, we don't say to ourselves, this is just too incredible for me to believe. And I reject,

I reject it. That's not my hope. My hope is that when we have the clarity to see the miracle for the fullness and the power that Jesus really has, that we understand why it's so important for us to trust him and why it's so important for us to worship him and why it's such a wise and good and holy thing to surrender all of your plans and ambitions and hopes and dreams into the hands of Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. God, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, that there is nothing wiser that you could possibly do than to surrender yourself into the hands of Jesus. And so in this miracle, we see a miracle which is one of the, there's only two or three times in the New Testament where we have what's called the miracle of the new creation, where something happens which does not fit with the normal created order.

And in a sense, what we are seeing is a glimpse of heaven. In a sense, what we are seeing is a glimpse of the future when there is a new heaven and the new earth and where we have resurrected bodies and where our spirits are not in rebellion against God, but are fully and utterly redeemed and are in complete and utter unity with the Father, are completely and utterly at peace with the Father, rejoicing the

Father, accepting the Father, obedient to the Father. Our spirits are completely and utterly at one with the will of our Heavenly Father. And our bodies have been remade and the entire created order has been completely and utterly remade. And in this new heaven and in this new earth, our bodies and our souls will have the whole relationship. And even our bodies will have a whole and healed relationship with the entire created order. And right now, our wills desire things which are not in keeping with the Father. And sometimes our wills do desire things in keeping with the Father, but our bodies can't always do what our wills want to do. And there's this, in a sense, chaos and dislocation in our souls and in our bodies and in our persons and in this created order. And this is a miracle of the new creation. Jesus, in obedience to the Father, needs to cross the lake. And his body is in complete and utter submission and obedience to his soul, which is in complete and utter obedience to the Father. And we see what we will experience in the new heaven and the new earth. We see the book of

Revelation. John would have a vision many years later of the book of Revelation, but in a sense, he doesn't see anything he didn't see upon the Sea of Galilee. And he doesn't see anything that he didn't see on the Mount of Transfiguration, the second miracle of the new creation. And he doesn't see anything he doesn't see than after the resurrection when Jesus appears into a room with locked doors, windows, the third miracle of the new creation. He doesn't see anything he hadn't first seen in the person of Jesus. We see the future. We see Revelation 23 and 24. John was an eyewitness. [23 : 19] You know, it's in light of all of this that we can listen to Paul's prayer in Ephesians chapter 3, which was the text epistle which was read today. Listen to Paul's prayer, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might through his spirit in the inner person, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be the glory in the church, by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. Let's pray to the Alpha and the Omega.

Amen. Amen. Let's pray to the Alpha and the Omega. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.

[25 : 10] Amen. Amen. Amen. grâce.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. and are the most glorious thing in the entire universe, that you would set all your glory and splendor and power aside to die upon a cross for me, for these people here.

Such love, Jesus. It is hard for us to understand, and all we can do is thank you.

Thank you that you who are the Alpha and the Omega, the Creator and the End, that you would willingly die on the cross, bearing my sins, bearing our sins and the punishment that we deserve, that you would so willingly subject yourself to this, all out of love for us.

[26 : 41] Jesus, that is such a great miracle, and we thank you for it. Thank you for your death.

Thank you for your cross. Thank you for your resurrection. Thank you for your unfailing love. May your power work in us.

In Jesus' name, amen.