I believe in miracles! I believe in miracles because I have seen and continue to see so many of them happening every single day. Sometimes these miracles are spectacular, where someone finds healing from an incurable disease and there is no explanation why; or where some impossible thing happens in one’s life and can only be attributed to divine intervention.

Sometimes these miracles are what we might consider less spectacular, yet certainly not less significant. Like seeing the miracle of faith in one’s life, the miracle of love in a family, or the miracle of conversion where a life is turned around and turned on by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I truly believe in miracles because I see them all around me every day!

Now miracles, of course, are something that have often been hotly debated among people and even in the church. There are some who feel that miracles only happened when Jesus walked the earth; they ended when the apostles of Jesus died. On the other hand, others believe that there never were any miracles; that certain things simply happen by chance; that there is usually a logical and rational explanation to everything.

Perhaps some of you have read some of the articles in newspapers and major news magazines describing a group of present day scholars named “The Jesus Seminar.” This group of quote “scholars” are raising doubts on the accuracy of the Bible as to what Jesus said; are explaining away many of the miracle stories; are even claiming that Jesus’ bodily resurrection never happened—they say rather that Jesus was simply spiritually resurrected in the hearts of his followers.

This may be a popular fad today, that the media and news people love to jump on, but there is nothing new or earth shaking about it. In every generation from the time of Christ people have tried to explain away and cast doubts on the words, the miracles, the resurrection of Jesus. Yet for me, as well as for millions of other people through the centuries, these claims and fads don’t even bother me.

It is when we know Jesus as our Savior; it is when we witness the power of his truth that has been passed on and preserved in the church throughout the centuries; it is then we can live by faith. The power of our resurrected and living Lord Jesus Christ, living in our hearts, opens our eyes to believe the witness of the disciples; to see the miraculous power of Christ all around.

As we continue our walk through the Bible we see in the last part of Ezekiel and the first part of Daniel how the people of Israel are in Exile and how they are ruled by the Neo-Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel and his friends, of course, were observant Jews who were not willing to go along with all the idol worship and idolatry at that time.

In fact, when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down and worship the golden image/god (perhaps of the king himself), Nebuchadnezzar had them thrown into a fiery furnace. In fact, he even had them turn up and intensify the flames till they were white hot.

Yet Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not burned up by the fire. In fact, they didn’t even smell like they had been in a fire. As people looked at them in the flames it appeared as if there was a fourth person
with them—an angel of God was talking and visiting with them in the fire. As a result, the king declares that “there is no other god who can rescue like this.” (Daniel 3:29)

Daniel in turn was allowed to serve in this emperor’s court and was able to interpret dreams for him. Nebuchadnezzar seemed to like Daniel, and he seemed to looked the other way as Daniel continued to worship and pray to his God.

Yet when some of Daniel’s adversaries saw him openly worshipping and going against the emperor’s own decree, they pushed for punishment. Daniel is then put into the lion’s den where his life is miraculously saved—the lion’s mouths are closed. Again King Nebuchadnezzar proclaims that no other god but Daniel’s God can do such a miracle.

This is also, my friends, the good news for us who believe; the assurance we share that this same God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is active in our lives and in his church today; he is continuing to bring about miracles among us. The good news is that through Christ, and through faith in him, that he is continuing to do many wonderful and miraculous things.

These past months and weeks here at Messiah I have seen and have experienced, as have many of you, the miracle of faith coming alive in so many ways. We have seen this faith in action as our congregation has dedicated the vision of our church to Christ, and as we have gotten involved and have trusted him to lead.

Someone said to me not too long ago, “I never thought when this whole visioning and renewal process began several years ago that such exciting things would be happening today.” Granted, many of us did wonder what was possible here at Messiah; some of us may even have thought we should throw in the towel and simply do things the way we have always done them.

Yet the miracle is that God has other plans for Messiah and that Christ is working here in a powerful way. I know very well from experience that there are no leaders or plans that alone could ever unite and ignite a congregation and move it forward in faith. All the life, joy, commitment and hope in this church is a miracle of the Holy Spirit working among us.

Another miracle I have seen here at Messiah is the willingness of people to help, to serve, to give of themselves in a variety of ways. One thing that experts tell us is that people’s time is the most precious commodity today; that people are just not volunteering like they used to. Well, the miracle here at Messiah is that not only have people said “yes” to help, many of you have gone far above the call of duty.

There are some of you who are very busy who have committed yourselves to serve on Messiah’s Church Council; on the Visioning and Technology Teams; on various committees like Education, Youth, and Outreach; on being willing to help Charis and our youth by being mentors, helping to plan mission opportunities, planning and fund raising for the National Youth Gathering next summer in Detroit; on helping Charis by singing in the choir and praise band. Only when we are touched by Christ’s miraculous love; only as we know the joy of serving him will we ever give ourselves to such projects which seek to do what is best for Christ’s mission.

Another miracle I have seen here at Messiah is the wonderful willingness of people to give generously—a year ago many stepped up their support so we could call Charis as our Youth & Worship Minister; and now many have stepped up even more as we have increased her ministry to two-thirds time. Many of you have significantly invested of yourselves in the furthering of Christ’s mission in and through our congregation.
An amazing miracle was also seen in the recent building of Messiah’s Fire Pit. A dream/vision was put forth of how this Fire Pit could enhance our ministry to our youth and people of all ages; a plan was presented and affirmed by our Council; volunteers came in droves to help with the hard work; money was donated (more than $2800 with less than $600 remaining). Truly a miracle that was accomplished in just a few weeks.

Now anyone who doesn’t believe that these things are miracles hasn’t faced up to the power that money has in our society today. In fact, my own sinful and human nature wants to simply keep all my money for myself; wants to buy more things for me; wants to hoard it for me. With all the fund raising programs out there today it is easy for us to say “no” to giving our money and our time.

Yet when we see people sacrificially giving their money; stepping out in faith in bold ways; saying “no” to that part in all of us that wants to hoard it all, it is nothing but a miracle. Martin Luther said that in every Christian’s life there needs to be two conversions: the conversion of the heart and the conversion of the pocketbook. It is nothing but amazing to see the miracle of giving coming alive in so many.

I talked with a person one time who said that most of us have gotten by pretty easily and cheaply for all that is offered here at Messiah; there hasn’t really been a lot commitment or sacrifice needed from us. Yet now the commitment level has just gone up; it is a time to stop denying the incredible resources and possibilities that are here at Messiah; it is time for us and for our church to boldly move ahead in faith for the sake of Christ.

When Nebuchadnezzar put those three men in the fiery furnace, and when he put Daniel in the lion’s den, no one believed they would live; there were many doubts expressed. In fact, most resigned themselves to the belief that they were gonners. Yet God had other plans. They all lived and even Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed, “there is no other god who can rescue like this.” Our God is a God of miracles and new life.

Today and every day, my dear friends, I believe that Jesus calls each of us and his church to come alive in him. He calls us to come out of our flames of doubt and unbelief; to be set free from the sins and hungry lions which cause us to fear. Jesus calls us to believe in him and to experience his miraculous power all around.

Yet the problem, of course, is that to step forward in faith can be very threatening. For example, studies have found that former prison inmates often have a very difficult time facing life outside of prison; many are afraid and do not have the skills that are needed; some even commit crimes shortly after they are set free so they can go back to prison. There is a security for them in staying behind bars.

In the same way venturing out in faith can easily be scary and threatening for us. We often feel inadequate in our faith; we find that the security of our doubts and skepticism are often more comfortable for us. Jesus says in John 3:19 that some people love the darkness instead of the light; some prefer to stay in the prison of the dry and dead bones that Ezekiel speaks of in the message a couple weeks ago.

But Jesus keeps calling, “Nathan, come out of the flames of doubt; Messiah, come out of the lions’ den of fear.” It is in following Jesus’ call by faith that brings to each of us the miracle of resurrection and new life in him. This is why, my dear friends, there are so many miracles happening at Messiah these days—we are responding to his call.

My Friends, as we continue to come forth and allow Christ to lead we then need to stand on tip toes in anticipation of the tremendous miracles that lie ahead. Praise God!