

**Simply Amazing!**  
**Matthew 11:2-10**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Have you noticed anything wonderful and marvelous lately? Has there been something you saw that truly amazed and astounded you recently?

If you are anything like I am, there really isn't that much that goes on in the world that really astounds or amazes me anymore. It is kind of sad! In fact, in our society, we have almost come to expect the unexpected – and usually the unexpected is neither beautiful nor wonderful – it is too often disgusting and disheartening. San Bernadino is one example of the unexpected that was diabolical and evil. But it was not unexpected, it is what is expected of radical Islam.

So, where can we find the marvelously beautiful things in life? Have you ever looked closely at a snowflake? Normally, you are too busy grumbling about having to clean it off the driveway or the fact of what it does to the roads. I am looking forward to the first snowfall, for I love how it glistens and sparkles the first time the sun shines on it.

How about an ultra sound picture from a woman pregnant three months? You would see ten fingers, ten toes, eyes, ears, nose, and could tell if the child was male or female. If you were there, you could listen to the heartbeat. Of course, some people would have you believe it is not a child, but just fetal tissue. Simply amazing!

How about the first steps taken by a child! I love glistening hoarfrost as the sun breaks at dawn! The beauty of a sunset over a glassy calm lake! Or a red/orange sunset tinting wispy clouds over a pine forest!

We do not think of these things as pointing to God, but they do. They point to a God of unlimited power and might. They point to a God who is in control over all things. They point to a God, who with but a Word, created all that exists.

Too often you and I overlook the simple things in life that astound and are truly beautiful. We get so caught up in the drudgery of day to day living that these simple little pleasures escape us. When the boys were young, they found those wonders and reminded us of them – I miss them being little children.

In your own life, do you expect wonders anymore? That sense of wonder you each had as children has disappeared. The same is true of your life's work as well. You do not expect marvelous results from your efforts, let alone wonders. Maybe that is why you do not have any.

Expectancy is important. John and his disciples expected great and marvelous things from Jesus. In our text, it appears that Jesus had disappointed John and his disciples. They needed to learn, as do you and I, that we can and should expect great things from Jesus.

The problem in our text, and the problem in your lives today is that expectations are wrong. The marvelous wonders that God does are readily available, you just do not see them as all that great.

Our text for today finds John in prison. He was the prophet to go before the Messiah. He had heard the voice from heaven declare Jesus to be God's Son when he baptized Jesus. John was the last of God's prophets, the one to go before Him and prepare His way. Now he was sitting in prison while the Christ was in the area.

If you were John, faithful in all that you were preaching, and now find yourself imprisoned for the truth, wouldn't you maybe wonder if Jesus truly was the one of whom you prophesied? John has some doubts, so he sends his disciples to ask Jesus about the situation, "Are you the coming One, or do we look for another?"

John had doubts! Even God's chosen prophet wondered about this Jesus and who He really was. Where were the marvelous works of salvation that God promised in His Christ?

You also want the marvelous and the miraculous from our God. You want to see the great deeds of God in your life. It is one of the reasons you like to focus upon Christmas and Easter and forget about Good Friday. The birth of a child, especially one born of a virgin – KEWL! Jesus rising from the dead? That's impressive!

With that in mind, many want to get done with Advent and move into Christmas. After all, the rest of the world is already in the Christmas mode. You want to focus upon the little baby born. You want to sing the familiar Christmas carols. You feel that you shouldn't have to worry about forgiveness and that sort of stuff now.

I beg you to open your eyes. You want something simply amazing? The Creator of the world was born as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world. The purpose of Advent is to celebrate Christ's coming to die, to forgive you all your sins, and ultimately to raise you in a perfected body to live forever.

But that dying on the cross thing? Well, you'd rather forget that one. And of course, you don't want anything to do have a body on that cross. Advent is the time to prepare to celebrate Christ's first coming, and He came to go to the cross, and to suffer and die there for you. Christ crucified, His body on the cross, helps you to remember what God did for you. We don't have a problem putting Jesus in a manger, although He isn't being born anymore. But too many have a problem with His body on the cross, saying that He is not dead, He's risen. The whole story falls apart if all we think about is a baby in a manger and an empty tomb, and forget about the events on Good Friday.

Think about how incredible that is! God died on a cross for you. If that isn't the most amazing fact of history, I don't know what else is. Yet, sometimes we act as if that is some event to forget. Oh yeah, we will remember the cross, but you don't want to think about what took place upon it. Why? Because it points to you and points to me and says, "You are sinners who deserved to be there!"

Today, there is an inner voice that speaks to you telling you what you should expect from Jesus. The world tries to entice with tinsel, lights, presents, songs about reindeer and grandma, maybe

familiar Christmas carols, and yes, a baby in a manger. Your reason tells you that this sounds good too, at least that baby in the manger and the Christmas carols. These seem to be the exciting and amazing things about Advent – at least according to our reason.

God knows your reason gets in the way, which is why Christ comes to you physically, in His Word, just as He did to John. Go and tell John what you hear and see: "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them." In other words, he was saying, "tell him that I am the Lamb of God that he proclaimed would come, I am doing the things foretold I would do."

You want the amazing? Where is Christ? He is doing what He proclaimed He would do. He is not some figure in the manger in the creche in front of the church, He is here. He is Word of God coming into your ears here in the preaching of the Gospel! Here, in the Holy Absolution! He is the Word of God which brings about the miracle of the Eucharist!

In these means of grace, Jesus, the very Word enfleshed, comes to you, speaks to you, and gives great gifts to you. This is simply amazing. He comes to you here to forgive your preoccupation with what you feel is important. He comes to give you a weekly Christmas present.

What wondrous things these gifts of God are! I invite you to look at them again. This simple liturgy, so memorized that you even speak the pastor's portions under your breath as he says them, this simple ritual gives to you the forgiveness of sins and prepares you for heaven. It gives you a place in God's eternal kingdom. You want the simply amazing? You participate in it every week - listen to it anew.

The simple preaching is nothing glorious or astounding, yet it is God's Word. And you know that where God's Word is heard, faith is built and sustained. Nothing fancy, but it happens. What a miraculous thing! It is simply amazing that you have eternal life as Christ comes to you in that word.

On the table before you are simple wafers which you'd never use for a sandwich and a small sip of wine that would never satisfy our thirst. They are the earthly elements by which Christ sacramentally gives to you eat of His very own body, and drink of His precious blood. It is simply amazing that through the eating and drinking of this meal you are given the forgiveness of sins and are fed unto eternal life.

It is simply amazing to know and to receive all these precious gifts of God through His means of grace – gifts by which Christ comes to you and keeps you in the faith. Isn't it simply amazing that God does such great things to you? Amen.