

In the late 70s there was a popular film entitled, "Oh, God!" It starred John Denver as a lowly assistant supermarket manager who is confronted by an unassuming, and kind elderly man claiming to be God. That part was played by George Burns. He quipped once that he was chosen to play God because they were roughly the same age.

The crux of the story was that God was appearing to this young man to bring a hopeful message to the world. All manner of troubles and complications unfold until, at the end of the movie, there is a court case. God is called as a witness.

When he appears, in the form of George Burns, God is pressed to perform a miracle. But God responds by saying that he always thought miracles were troublesome. He said that it only adds to the perceived distance between God and humans.

This morning we have a miracle in our Old Testament reading. But it is barely highlighted, you may have even missed it when we read our passage from Genesis.

The passage is filled with strife, and drama. Its culmination comes when Hagar, cast out with her child Ishmael, is faced with watching her own child die of thirst. But then there's the miracle.

Our text says, "Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water."

That is the miracle. Hagar saw the well. We are not told that God miraculously made the well. We are not told that God miraculously transported Hagar to the well. We are only told that God opened Hagar's eyes and she saw the well.

Grief, turmoil, stress, and suffering have many effects on our lives.

One is that it can cloud our vision, our awareness, our ability to put one foot in front of the other. But there are times when God pierces through these veils of tears, and troubles and provides us with a new vision, a new vigor, a new hope.

Sometimes these moments seem like stunning miracles. But more often than not they are simple events of inspiration, and encouragement. Sometimes it's just noticing what is right in front of you. Sometimes it's a moment when a new resolve arises.

My years at seminary were not happy ones. It was stressful. I was a Florida boy stuck in the cold, and gray climes of Chicago winters. The community at the seminary was fractured, and dysfunctional. It was a lonely, and at times, emotionally dark time.

I remember laying in bed at night from time to time being so overwhelmed and exhausted that I would find myself in prayer telling God, "I don't know if I can do this but I will try for one more day."

I have come to believe that in those prayerful words I was not so much speaking to God as God was speaking to me. As I wrestled with sleep, I committed myself to rise the next morning and continue. I would put one more foot forward.

One of the truest things I have learned in life is that the only way through troubling times is to put one foot in front of the other. That, and doing so in the faith and hope that God is with you.

What is your dark moment? Where are your troubles found? When are you overwhelmed, and approaching defeat. In those moments recall Hagar.

Notice there is no prayer of Hagar. She does not beseech God. God's response is to tend to the cries of Ishmael. God does so by speaking to Hagar, by encouraging her to step forth one more step. It is then that her eyes are open to see what is already there, a well to quench her son's dying thirst.

Yes, God can work miracles. Yes, God can move powerfully, with stunning strength. But as George Burns once told us that seems just make the perceived distance between us and God all the more broad.

Instead, let us train our hearts, and minds to seek God in the well in front of us, in the kind hands, and gifts of others, in the renewed resolve to take just one more step.

It is in these moments when we can discover that God is with us, alongside us, suffering with us, and ready to work with us, and walk with us.