

We human beings are funny creatures. We tend to think that something isn't "possible" until we see it "happen." We come from a long line of people who have thought: The world is flat and you can fall off the edge. . . . People cannot fly. . . . No one can run a mile in less than four minutes. . . . You can't speak to someone on the other side of the world as easily as you can speak to someone standing next to you. . . . You can see the "man in the moon" but you can't send a man to the moon. . . . Over and over again we have needed to re-draw where we think the line is between what is possible and what is not possible.

You might be familiar with the work of journalist Keith Uhlig who writes for the Wausau Daily Herald. Some of his articles are also picked up by the Appleton *Post-Crescent*. On December 27, 2019 he wrote about Gary Edinger, a then 68 year old logger from Kennan, Wisconsin. During the 1980s and '90s Edinger was a champion sled dog racer. But what really sets Edinger apart is something that happened on the morning of February 15, 2007. Despite it being 15 degrees below zero, Edinger went out to cut down a double-stemmed soft maple tree. While he was working on the tree the trunk began to split in a way that loggers call "barberchair" – which means the tree could fall anywhere. As the tree started to come down, Edinger started to run. Unfortunately he ended up running in the direction that tree came down. He thought he had just made it to safety past the stump of another tree when he heard a huge "boom" and felt a jolt run through his whole body. He ended up sitting, straddled on a tree he'd already cut down, and thought he was all right. Until he went to stand up and his left leg didn't touch the ground.

At first he thought his leg must be broken. But when he looked down at it he saw that the lower left leg had been cut off by the tree falling against the edge of the stump he'd been running past. Steam was rising from the stump of his leg, and a stream of blood was jetting out on the snow. He tried to use his belt as a tourniquet to stop the bleeding, and the belt broke. He tried again, and the belt broke again. He figured he might have a half hour until he would bleed to death. He could either lay down and die there, or try to see how far he could get before he died. He decided he didn't want people to think he was a "quitter," so he crawled to his skidder and drove the machine to his pickup truck, where he kept his cellphone. When he got to the truck, that had a manual transmission, he got into low gear and slowly started driving out of the woods. Then he called 911.

The 911 dispatcher told him to pull over and not pass out while driving. He refused to pull over because he was intent on getting out of there. The Sheriff's Deputy and an ambulance crew met him on the county road. They took him to an airport near Phillips

where he was loaded on a medical helicopter to fly to Marshfield. At that point Edinger felt he'd live, and had hopes that his foot could be reattached (since he had managed to drag it along with him). What he didn't realize was that it was barely warm enough for the helicopter to fly, and without the helicopter he would have died. EMTs and doctors ended up giving Edinger ten pints of blood as they worked to save his life. The average adult body only has about twelve pints of blood in it. . . . Ten months later Edinger returned to the scene of the accident, hooked up his skidder to the tree that took his foot off, and dragged that tree out of the woods. He said, "I couldn't let that tree win." . . . Would we have believed that was possible if it hadn't happened?

Obviously there are any number of things that happen that we have no idea *how* they happen, or *why* they happen, and nor can we rationally explain *what* has happened. We only **know** *that these things have happened*. This was also true for the people we read about in the Bible. For example in that crowd of five thousand people gathered around Jesus, all those people could see and hear Jesus when he held up five loaves of barley bread and offered a prayer of thanksgiving for them, and how he then lifted up two fish and gave thanks for them. They saw Jesus pass that food to people who were seated on the grass closest to him. And they watched as those people passed the food to the people next to them. And those people passed the food to the people next to them. And so on – until even the people at the outer edge of the crowd had food passed to them. And after everyone had eaten all that they wanted, they watched Jesus' disciples fill up twelve large baskets with leftover bread.

All those people were **THERE** and they **SAW** this happen. And the only explanation they had for what happened was that God must have been at work in what Jesus had done in blessing and giving out the food. That the power of God must have been flowing through Jesus to them! Of course, they were enthusiastic about that! That's why they thought Jesus would be a **SUPER** king for them to have right there in Galilee! . . . But Jesus did not share their enthusiasm for that idea. If he became their king, Jesus would have had to immediately stand in opposition to the political and military power of Rome. That wasn't possible right then, because Jesus still had other things to do to prepare the way for the coming kingdom of God. So Jesus slipped off to continue doing what he needed to do.

Having already shifted and expanded the realm of possibility in terms of the economics and logistics of providing food for five thousand people, Jesus went on to push his closest disciples to re-think what they assumed they already "knew" about storms at sea, weight displacement in water, and navigation. Was it really possible for anyone to walk three or four miles on top of wind-whipped waves? And was it really possible that after Jesus came onboard their boat, the disciples would find themselves exactly where they wanted to land on the shore at Capernaum? Well, it must have been possible – because it

happened! . . . Or it must have been possible for the power of God to make it happen through Jesus.

The power of God. . . Did you hear what Paul prayed for in his letter to the Ephesians? That God's people would know the power of God through Christ. Wow! That's some prayer! He asked for God's people to be internally strengthened by the power of God's Spirit and the "extravagant dimensions of Christ's love" – and to live in the fullness of God. And Paul does not fail to point out that, "God can do anything, you know – far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams!" . . . So my friends, is it possible for the power of God to be at work in us through Christ? . . . We better believe it is! And we also better be ready to see the realm of possibility continue to expand exponentially! Thanks be to God! Thanks be to Jesus! Thanks be to the Holy Spirit! Now and evermore.

Amen.