I. Introduction

A woman named Andrea was walking with her husband Steve along a forest road while they were visiting their two children at a summer camp in upstate New York. Andrea happened to notice something partially hidden in the dirt; she had no idea what it was, but something made her stoop down and retrieve it—much to her husband’s annoyance. In his impatience, he complained about her wasting time by picking up trash, but Andrea ignored him—for she somehow felt a strange connection to the item, as if it were waiting for her. Rubbing off the dirt, she discovered she was holding a ring. This immediately made Andrea think of her father, who had died a few years earlier—for he was always losing things, including both his original wedding ring, from some thirty years earlier, and then the replacement ring his wife purchased for him. His propensity to lose things became something of a family joke—except Andrea’s mother didn’t find it very funny.

As she rubbed off the dirt from the ring, Andrea discovered to her utter amazement that her parents’ names and their wedding date were engraved on it—it was the original ring her father had lost! As a girl, she had attended this same summer camp, and her father must have dropped it when he and her mom were visiting her there all those years ago. Andrea asked herself how a gold wedding band could have survived almost three decades on a dirt road, being buried in winter snowstorms, assaulted by spring thunderstorms, trampled under the feet of hundreds of campers and their families, and pounded by the heavy tires of food delivery trucks. When Andrea delivered the ring to her mother the following day, the two of them reminisced and talked about coincidences, fate, and miracles, crying tears of joy over a ring they never expected to see again. Steve was also amazed, and as Andrea later wrote, “[‘He] said, ‘That ring is love.’ At a time when our marriage was troubled, he pointed out that just like the ring found on the ground, covered with dirt and eroded by time and neglect, love will get dirty and tarnished. Love will take a beating with heavy burdens and hardships. Love will be walked all over and taken advantage of. Love is sometimes hidden and dormant, but not dead. Love is never forgotten, lost or abandoned. Love can withstand separation, deterioration, and weathering. Love is like the ring; it will resurface and prevail” (Amy Newmark, Believe in Miracles, pp. 63ff). What Andrea and Steve learned applies not only to married life, but to all our relationships—including our relationship with God. The more we truly love God and the people in our lives, the more the Lord will perform wonders for us.

II. Development

The Canaanite woman loved her daughter so much she was willing to endure unfavorable attention by making a nuisance of herself, and risk rejection by Jesus, by insisting He work a miracle—and when He seemingly insulted her by referring to her and her people as dogs, she boldly took His analogy one step further, asking for a scrap from the master’s table. She must have been a remarkable woman, and Jesus admired her faith
and happily granted her request. When love and trust are combined, great things can happen. As noted in the 1st Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, God’s Kingdom has room not only for His Chosen People, the Jews, but for anyone—foreigners included—who serves Him. St. Paul was quick to understand this, as the Letter to the Romans shows. As a Jew himself, he deeply loved his people—but he knew he was called by God to preach to the Gentiles, or non-Jews, and that if he was faithful in doing so, the Lord would be powerfully at work in his ministry. So it is with us: the more love we have in our hearts, the more God’s grace will be at work in our lives.

III. Conclusion

Farmers in 19th century Connecticut were suffering from a great drought; water disappeared from the hills, and they had to bring their cattle and sheep down into the valleys—but soon the streams there began to run low because of all the additional demands on the water. One devout Christian farmer was told by the neighbors, “You must not bring your herd down here anymore!” Instead of pleading or arguing, he went home and told his family what had happened; then all of them—father, mother, and children—immediately and automatically fell to their knees in prayer, fervently begging God for the water necessary to keep their sheep and cattle alive. After this the farmer went out into the hills, and at an unpromising spot he had passed hundreds of times, he noticed the ground was suddenly dark and moist. Summoning his family, they all began digging and praising God—for they uncovered a spring providing more than enough water for the needs of their farm (*Knight’s Master Book of 4000 Illustrations*, p. 206).

This farmer and his wife had loved their children enough to teach them of the love of their Heavenly Father and of the power and importance of prayer—so when a dire need for water arose, it was very natural for them to pray, and their prayer was answered. If the family had been hypocritical—parents who only pretended to be religious, and children who learned to reject God or dismiss the faith because of their parents’ cynical example—they would not likely have prayed in their time of need, and the Lord may not have worked a simple miracle on their behalf. God loves everyone, but He is especially attentive to the prayers of those who sincerely love Him in return—and one of the most important ways of demonstrating this love is by showing compassion to those in need, especially by appreciating and serving the people most directly in our lives.

One of the main reasons self-centered and irreligious people don’t receive many miracles is simply that they’re too caught up in themselves to recognize the wondrous things the Lord is doing all around them. We must not make that mistake; we must learn to appreciate the beauty of creation, the simple joys and blessings we encounter each day, and above all, the value and dignity of every person we meet—most especially within our own families. When God sees that we truly value the gifts He’s already given us, He will entrust us with even more—sometimes by means of amazing coincidences and simple miracles. True love is energizing, life-giving, and creative—and the more we allow it to be at work within us, the more reason we will have to rejoice and to give thanks to God.