MIRACLES, INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES AND THE GOSPEL

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Category: Observations

One of the features of modern western society is that we are highly orientated towards the individual.Â We tend to consider the effect things will have on the individual before we think of them in corporate terms. This means that we miss out on some important things when we read the Scriptures. This was drawn to my attention today while reading Jesus and the Victory of God by NT Wright.

> *In addition to the physical burden of being blind, or lame or deaf, or dumb, such a Jew was blemished and unable to be a full Israelite... This means that Jesus' healing miracles must be seen clearly as bestowing the gift of shalom, wholeness, to those who lacked it, bringing not only physical health but renewed membership of the people of YHWH...*
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> *The effect of these cures, therefore, was not merely to bring physical healing; not merely to give humans, within a far less individualist society than our modern western one, a renewed sense of community membership, but to reconstitute those healed as members of the people of Israel's god.Â (p.192)*

The same thing could actually be said of salvation for the Christian. We tend to pitch it as forgiveness for an individual's sins: Jesus as my own personal saviour. But the biblical picture is of salvation having a huge communal aspect as we become members of God's international family. One of the features of post-modern society is that people are starting to see the hollowness of western individualism. The corporate nature of the Gospel provides an antidote to our isolated and atomised societies, but we need to start teaching this and above all we need to start living it!