



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday - Luke 5:17-20 – Jesus' teaches and heals in his home.

V17. The three Synoptics gospels don't always record the same events in Jesus' life, but this fascinating account of the healing of this man with paralysis is one that is, Matthew 9:2-8, Mark 2:12.

Luke doesn't tell us where this happened, but we know from Mark that it took place in Capernaum, and Matthew says that Jesus is back home having returned by boat from the Gadarenes. He is teaching the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, scribes, either Pharisees or Sadducees. The Greek word shows that he had been doing so for some time. These men were professional students Old Testament, the majority of the whom were not local. Luke says that they "had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem." So these prominent, influential men had come from all over the region to hear Jesus. It will soon become clear that their collective motive is not one of generosity.

Interestingly, Luke states, "that the power of the Lord was with him to heal." It is an unusual comment. Ordinarily, we are told how an event unfolds, but here we have an insight into what Jesus is going to do. Why? Is the point being made that while his home may be full of religious unbelievers; Jesus is still going to act in the power of the Father. The demoniac cannot thwart him, nor can the Jewish religious elite.

V18 A paralyzed man is brought on a bed to Jesus' home by four men who want Jesus to heal him. They can't get into the crowded house so undeterred and determined they go up onto the roof, take tiles off and lower the man into the room where Jesus is. It's not just a random delving, there is thought involved here.

Jesus sees the faith of the man and speaks into this amazing scene, by addressing the paralysed man's innermost need. Jesus declares the man's sins forgiven. Jesus is not saying that this man's paralysis is due to a specific sin or sins. The idea that those who have a disability, or a particular illness, have it because of a sin or sins is unbiblical, and has to be denounced. Yes, if people do engage in habitual sin that can lead to both physical and mental issues in their lives; but that's a different thing.

V21. The scribes and Pharisees say nothing but their faces speak a thousand words. They know that Scriptures of the Old Testament teach that God alone can forgive sins. Their thoughts are laced with ungodly 'righteous' indignation. In their eyes, this is first degree blasphemy, but they are so filled with cowardice that they won't speak their minds.

Q1. Where is Jesus and what is he doing?

Q2. What disturbs his teaching?

Q3. What does Jesus do and how do the scribes and Pharisees react?

Thursday - Luke 5:12-16 – Jesus heals in a quiet unpretentious way.

Jesus speaks and declares his willingness to heal the man, (the only recorded time of his doing so), and he does so *instantly*. No rehabilitation, no after care is needed. Note, Jesus not only heals the man, he declares him clean in terms of God's Law. Why? Healing this man of his leprosy is important, but the man's mental well-being is equally important to Jesus. The fact that he is now 'clean' means that the man is not only renewed physically, but is also free to engage relationally and socially with others.

The sheer brevity and unpretentiousness of these healings is striking. While they are dramatic in terms of the phenomenal change they would have brought to the people's lives, yet they are undertaken in a simple, drama-less way. Such is the nature and ongoing work of the Kingdom of God. Be careful where Christianity is presented in a boisterous attention-seeking way; it's not the way of Christ and his Kingdom.

V14. Jesus charges the man, tells him strongly, not to tell any one about how he was healed. Is that not a bit strange? Is Jesus trying to keep the it a secret? I doubt it. Matthew tells us that crowds witnessed what took place, Matthew 8:1. So what is Jesus doing? Jesus has just preached that he has come to fulfill the Law and the prophets, and not to destroy them, Matthew 5:17. He's showing here that he means what he says. But it's also about Jesus taking care of the man. Jesus wants the man to say nothing about how he has been healed when presenting himself to a priest to be declared clean, so as to prevent him from extensive questioning about Jesus's involvement.

Sadly, it was to no avail. The news spread like an Australian bush wildfire in the height of summer, with the result that things just became more demanding for Jesus. The crowds got larger, the hunger to hear him preach intensified, and the numbers seeking to be healed increased. It was incessant, never-ending. What could he do? He withdrew to desolate places and prayed. Note the plural 'places'. This wasn't an occasional activity on the part of Jesus; it was a regular feature of his life. Why? Because it placed him within the refuge of the Father. A place where he could see the reality of what was going on. He got a sight of how the Father saw things. Psalm 73:17. It also renewed his strength for the day ahead.

Q1. What does Jesus tell the man?

Q2. How does Jesus actions set an example for us?

Q3. What did Jesus often do?

Q4. What does this tell us about Jesus' life?

Monday - Luke 5:1-11 – Jesus' command to do the irrational.

Last week we saw that Jesus gets into a boat owned by Simon, the same Simon whose mother-in-law Jesus had healed on the day he had preached the sermon on the mount. Having asked Simon to take him out a little from the land and taught the people, Jesus then tells Simon to take the boat out into deeper water and to cast the nets over the side to catch fish. Simon's response is simple, honest, and straightforward. It begins with the word 'Master'. Luke is the only gospel writer to use this term. He does so seven times and each time it is addressed to Jesus, and speaks of his authority. That's why, Simon although expressing the logical thought, 'there's no point, we've been at this all night and caught nothing', quickly follows it up with 'but we'll do it if you say so'. Fishing is done at night because, during the heat of the day, the fish go deeper to get cooler water and they become less active. The key point to is Simon's obedience.

It's easy to do what you are asked, when you see the reason for it, when you get the point. But obedience is doing what you are asked, when you can't see the reason nor the point. Obedience is the real-life, practical outworking of our faith. And the point to take from what happens next is that obedience of God, no matter how apparently irrational and unreasonable it may seem, always results in blessing and reward.

You and I need to ask God to lay that fact deep into the recesses of our head and heart, like treasure buried in the ground. Why? Because we are missing out on blessing too often, solely because of our failure to obey.

The net Simon has thrown over the side becomes so full of fish, large fish, that it begins to break, so they signal to their partners in the other boat to come and help. Luke says that both boats were overwhelmed with fish and began to sink. It must have been unbelievable to see, fish, large fish everywhere – the power of Christ over his creation. They men would never have experienced anything like it before. Do you believe in Jesus' power to do astonishing things when he commands you?

Q1. What does Jesus tell Simon to do?

Q2. What is Simon's response?

Q3. Why do we obey, but not always?

Q4. What happens?

Tuesday - Luke 5:1-11 – Obedience brings blessing and service.

V8 Simon falls on his knees, down on the fish as they are filling the boat, and says with powerful emotion: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It is a similar reaction as that of Abraham (Genesis 18:27), Job (Job 42:60), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5), and Daniel (Daniel 10:16). One commentator writes this, "It is the 'Master' whose orders must be obeyed, the 'Lord' whose holiness causes moral agony to the sinner."

Yesterday, I said we need understand the relationship between obedience, and blessing and reward. But there is something more important than material blessing and reward. It's an increased sense of our sin, our unworthiness before God. In reality, that realisation is a far greater blessing.

Seeing God at work in our own life, and in the lives of others should literally bring us to our knees. The question is, are we too cold, too ambivalent to actually see the power of God at work around us? If that is the case, shouldn't we be asking ourselves why? Is it because we are blind to it, or is because God isn't doing amazing things around us? And if that is the case, is that because we are living by sight and not by faith? Are we not obeying God because what He is asking of us seems too unreasonable, too irrational? Imagine if we were to 'risk' throwing ourselves upon God in obedience, and He was to do something unbelievable, and we were to be overwhelmed with a sense of His power and Majesty. Would the impact of such experiences not give us a desire for a much deeper experience of God? It certainly does so for Simon and those with him in these two boats. The supernatural event they had just witnessed, leaves these hardened fishermen visibly shaken, Jesus sees and understands that. That is why he tells them, not to be afraid. Isn't that beautiful. The care Jesus had for those he is interacting with is something that we will see throughout his life. It speaks of the genuineness of his love for us. Jesus doesn't just say that he loves us, he does love us and he sees when we are afraid and he will care for us, we need to understand and live in the reality of that.

V10 But it didn't end with the putting to an end of Simon's fear. Jesus calls Simon and the two sons of Zebedee, James and Johns to be 'catchers of men.' They obviously knew what he meant by that statement because when they landed their boats, left them and followed Jesus. Obedience to God always leads to greater opportunities to serve. If you want to have an opportunity to serve God, take the opportunities He gives you to obey. Service is not primarily about ability it's about obedience.

- Q1. How and why does Simon respond to what he sees?
- Q2. What does Jesus say to the men? Why does he do this?
- Q3. What does Jesus call them to do?

Wednesday - Luke 5:12-16.

Luke's account is not chronological, he's pulling together events to make a point. He's saying look at the power of Jesus to heal.

Leprosy, in biblical times, is the name given to a variety of diseases, some curable, most not. In its worst form, it was a terrible disease, disfiguring and ultimately fatal. The Law of God states that lepers were forbidden to approach others and to prevent accidental contact, they were required, to call out 'unclean', see Leviticus 13:45,46. The fear of both contamination, and association with uncleanness, meant that sufferers were separated from their loved ones. As a result, many lepers lived impoverished lives and depended on charity to survive. And it wasn't just the physical pain, they had to contend with the daily psychological effects of their isolation and that far from easy.

This man, Luke tells us, was full of leprosy, so it was at an advanced stage. The fact that he is in this town is an indication of his desperation because it was against the law for a leper to enter a city, Leviticus 13:46.

V12. When the man sees Jesus, he falls on his knees before him. Not that unusual, but what is unusual is his request, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." This isn't a statement of doubt but one of immense faith. How did he come to have such faith that he would ask Jesus to do the impossible? Through having just heard Jesus preach the sermon on the mount, Matthew 8:1-4. Faith doesn't just materialize on its own, it always originates in the grace of God and often through the preaching of God's Word. And note how this man's faith, as all faith should be, is set within a genuine acceptance of God's Sovereign rule. The alliance of genuine expectant faith, and a humble willingness to unreservedly accept what God demands, is not something that always comes easy to us.

V13. Touching a leprous person just wasn't done in first century Palestine, so in reaching out and touching this man, Jesus is doing the unthinkable. In breaking the boundaries of non-contact, Jesus is communicating love and compassion, and telling this man that he cares for him as a person. Surrounded by crowds, Jesus' focus is on caring for this one person. Please understand that God loves you in Christ Jesus. Please realize and grasp that nothing can separate you from that love. Neither height nor depth, angels or rulers, things present or things to come, life or death, nor anything else in all creation can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Q1. What disease did this man have?
- Q2. What did that mean for his life?
- Q3. What did Jesus do and why?