

WEEK THREE



THE LIFE OF CHRIST:
EARLY MINISTRY

DON'T TELL ANYONE

It seems so strange to hear Jesus tell this man not to tell anyone. After all, the Great Commission directs us to go into all the world and tell others. However, it wasn't the Gospel that they were restrained from sharing but the miracle.

Isn't it hard to keep good news a secret! Imagine the life of this leper. He suffered from a debilitating disease with enormous social implications. Leprosy was disfiguring, mutilating and highly contagious. A leper was estranged from society to protect the community. He

could not be with his wife, children, parents, brothers, sisters or friends. They only fellowship he could effectively have was with other lepers.

Because of the nature of leprosy, it is often associated with sin. It was a disease of the "living dead." A leper's body literally dies while he is living.

Imagine the thrill of being immediately healed of an incurable disease! It was a life changing transformation! His world that had been turned upside down was

now right side up. He had been set free. How can you not share this good news?

Jesus, however, had good reason for His direction. We see how quickly people came to Him in search of miracles. The crowds that thronged Him actually hampered His ability to simply preach and teach. They were looking for miracles more than the message.

Isn't it great that we have no such restrictions today. We can freely share the news of what Christ has done for us!

DAILY READING: Mark 1:40-2:12, Matthew 8:1-4, Luke 5:12-26

DAY
1

Cities/Places

1. Based on our last reading, we know that Jesus is now in Galilee preaching in the synagogues. By comparing accounts we learn that a leper approached Him doing what two things?
2. After healing Him, what did Jesus tell him not to do? Why do you believe He gave Him this instruction?
3. What unusual means did four men use to bring their friend to Jesus and what does this teach us concerning our efforts to bring people to Christ?
4. What does this teach us about team work in the church?
5. The physical healing Jesus gave this man demonstrated that He was also able to do what else?
6. What was the end result among the people?

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

FASTING

I've often wondered why its called fasting when it seems to go so slow! In fact, fasting is a spiritual practice that derives from a natural response to difficult situations. We have all known someone so trouble or burdened that they just could not eat. Their appetite was taken away because of sorrow or grief. Many times they must be encouraged to eat for their own good.

In contrast, times of celebration are always characterized by a feast. A wedding feast, for instance, characterizes the joy of a newly wed couple. Hence Jesus observes that it would be inappropriate for His

disciple to fast in His presence. This was not a sorrowful time but a joyful one. The Messiah has come!

However, there would be a day when the Bridegroom would be gone away for a season. Certainly, the bride would long for His presence and that would be a time of fasting.

Fasting is a practice among Christians today that expresses a deep desire for something that is lacking. Perhaps a believer is seeking God's will in a matter. Maybe there is a desire to see a loved one saved. Perhaps there are special

needs to be met. During times like these a Christian might fast as a expression of the great desire they have to see this prayer answered. Some fasts may last for days while others fast perhaps a meal a day. Some even fast specific pleasures to express their heart to God. (1 Corinthians 7:5)

Jesus, however, warns against fasting before men rather than God. The Pharisees and others would be sure that others saw the agony of their fast so that they would be recognized as being spiritual. That was hypocritical. (Matthew 6:16-18)

DAILY READING: Mark 2:13-22, Matthew 9:9-22, Luke 5:27-39

1. What disciple did Jesus add to the team and what was his occupation?
2. What type of people did this man associate with?
3. When Jesus was criticized for the company He kept, how did He respond?
4. Who asked Jesus the question concerning fasting?
5. What reason did Jesus give for them not fasting?

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Give as much information as you can about what a publican was and how their were perceived by Jewish society.

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

DAY
2

Cities/Places

TROUBLED WATERS

Thirty-eight years is a long time to wait. It is a long time to suffer. Little is known outside of what John gives us concerning this unusual pool called Bethesda. The name means House of Mercy. It is apparent that God for some reason and some way used this pool as a demonstration of His mercy.

Consider that He sent an angel to trouble the waters as a sign that healing was available. The first to enter the troubled waters was the next recipient of mercy as demonstrated through God's healing power.

This is a powerful metaphor for us today. There are constant reminders of the Pool of Bethesda. Troubled waters are not a stranger to most of us. The needy did not fear them but rather looked for them as a sign of God's working. As a believer, we need not fear the troubled waters of life. They are simply a sign that God wants to do a work in our lives.

The impotent man was incapable of reaching the waters. Likewise you and I are powerless on our own. But just as Jesus came to Him with power that surpassed the troubled waters of Bethesda,

He is within reach of us as well.

The first question He asks: "Wilt thou be made whole?" Will you let God cleanse you from sin? Will you let Him relieve you of your burden of sin? Only after our sin is washed away by Christ can we rise above a powerless life!

I am amazed, however, at the seeming ingratitude of the man whose life was made whole. His loyalty to the world seems to be greater than his love for his Redeemer. Let that never be said of us!

DAILY READING: John 5

DAY
3

Cities/Places

1. Where did Jesus go for the feast?
2. How long had the lame man suffered from his infirmity?
3. For what reason did the Jews rebuke the healed man?
4. What do you think about the man's reporting Jesus to the Jews?
5. What verse in Philippians 2 relates to John 5:18? Why?
6. Is it possible to honor God without honoring His Son, Jesus Christ? Give a reference to support your answer.
7. What was the proof (witness) of Jesus authority, power and position?

APPLICATION

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LORD OF THE SABBATH

Yesterday we witnessed Jesus being questioned over doing good on the Sabbath. That saga continues in today's study. The Pharisees were a legalistic group of religious leaders whose goal seemed to be to make life difficult on everyone.

We call them legalistic not because they believed and adhered to the letter of the law but because they added to it. They misinterpreted the Law of Moses and added their own laws to God's laws "just to be safe." If one got a pebble stuck in his sandal, a Pharisee would suggest that

he was bearing a burden and breaking the Sabbath. According to the Pharisaical tradition the Sabbath became a burden upon man rather than a day of rest as God intended. They made work out of not working!

In addition to the Law of Moses, the Pharisees adhered to an Oral Law that served as an interpretation of the Mosaic law. This eventually came to be written and called the Mishnah. This became their legal code and the source of legalism. Although liberals who detract from God's

Word like to refer to living by biblical principles as legalism the truest sense of legalism is adding to God's Word. That is what the Pharisees were guilty of.

The legalist cares less about people and more about their formalities and tradition. They had no compassion for the cripple at the Pool of Bethesda or the man with the withered hand. They were only interested in pretending to be spiritually superior to Christ and His disciples. Isn't it strange how spiritual pride kept them from spiritual power!

DAILY READING: Mark 2:23-3:6, Matthew 12:1-14, Luke 6:1-11

1. What two things did Jesus and His disciples do on the Sabbath that stirred up the Pharisees?
2. Who is Lord of the Sabbath?
3. What Old Testament character did Jesus use to counter their legalistic and interpretation of the law?
4. Why was Jesus grieved?
5. What unlikely ally did the Pharisees seek?
6. Explain how Jesus was not violating the Sabbath but rather correcting the Pharisee's interpretation of it.

DAY
4

Cities/Places

APPLICATION

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THE TEAM IS CHOSEN

Five men had been specifically called to follow Jesus: James, John, Peter, Andrew and Levi or Matthew. However, these men were not yet ordained or set aside. There were disciples but not yet Apostles.

A disciple is simply a learner and follower of Jesus Christ. There were hundreds and even thousands who could have been called disciples. One hundred and twenty are numbered in Acts 1:5. The term disciples included not only the twelve but all who followed Christ.

But now Jesus is setting twelve aside for a higher calling and special task. As we noted last week, these twelve were far from perfect but they were divinely chosen! It is so much better to be chosen by God than qualified by man!

Notice as you read the Scriptures that this was no light consideration on Christ's part. He got alone with the Father atop the mountain and prayed. If Christ must pray before such a decision what does that say about us!

Certainly, there are times when the choice seems obvious. Why pray about a perfect fit? Why pray over someone so well qualified or over someone with so few qualifications?

There is only one reason to pray: because we want God's choice! Even the one's God chooses may bring us grief, as Judas did. But that does not make them any less God's choice. Every person God chooses fulfills God's purpose. Let us be mindful to seek God's direction in all of

DAILY READING: Mark 3:7-19, Matthew 12:15-21, Luke 6:12-16

DAY
5

Cities/Places

1. Note on your map the regions from which people followed Jesus. How would you characterize this? In other words, people followed Him from where?
2. What Old Testament prophet does Matthew cite for his Jewish audience?
3. What Old Testament prophet does Matthew cite for his Jewish audience?
4. What did Jesus do all night before ordaining the twelve Apostles?
5. Name the twelve Apostles. (Some have more than one name.)

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?



TABLE TALK



PASTOR'S MESSAGE