



YEAR 3—The God Who Pursues Relationship: A Story of God's People

Module 6—Jesus and His Church

Lesson 2: The Life and Ministry of Jesus, the King—Mark 2:1-12; 5:21-34; Luke 4:1-13

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

(A theological and biblical reflection on today's Scripture passage.)

GOD'S STORY

The temptation of Jesus was an incredibly significant event to Jesus in His life. How do we know this? There were no eyewitnesses to this event. This event made it into Luke's gospel because it was important enough for Jesus to tell His disciples about it and to give them explicit details.

There are three recorded temptations in Luke 4 and each of them is uniquely significant. First, Satan tempts Jesus to turn stones into bread. Second, Satan tempts Jesus to worship Satan. Finally, Satan tempts Jesus to jump from a high place of the temple. (Note: Matthew's gospel record of this temptation event is in a different order).

The first temptation, to turn a stone into bread, came when Jesus was very hungry. Jesus had been fasting for 40 days. So Satan tempts Jesus to reverse His feelings of hunger. As we know, Jesus quoted Scripture (Deuteronomy 8:1-6) and avoided sinning. The significance of this particular temptation is that Jesus was strong enough and faithful enough to avoid the sin where the Israelites had failed. Where the Israelites were unable to discipline and control their appetite, Jesus was. So it is true with Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were unable to resist their desire for more knowledge, Jesus was able to.

The second temptation, to worship Satan, was a temptation to reverse the power of Jesus. Satan wants Jesus to take the easy road by avoiding the cross and taking him up on his offer to possess all the power of the nations. Jesus again uses Scripture to avoid the temptation. Jesus knew that worship only belongs to God. Where Israel had failed previously (think worshipping a golden calf among other times) Jesus doesn't. Jesus undoes what Israel did.

Finally, the third temptation to jump from the high place and be guarded was a temptation to reverse the hope of Jesus. Jesus, instead of succumbing to the temptation, avoids the sin and again undoes what Israel had been doing for years—living outside of hope—and instead He trusted God. The bottom line of the temptation is that, Jesus, the King, came to undo all of the sin of Adam and the whole nation of Israel by showing us a new way to live—a way that honors God and loves people.

After Jesus is tempted in Luke 4, we are introduced to His rejection in Nazareth. In short, Jesus declares why He has come to the earth. His declaration is in line with a prophecy from Isaiah 61, one in which the people in the synagogue would have clearly been familiar with. Jesus declares that He is the fulfillment of this prophecy in Isaiah 61 and that the reason why He has come was to preach the good news; to the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed.

The preaching of this good news Jesus mentioned in Luke 4:18 has two implications for the people of Israel, and more specifically for the people in the synagogue. First, there is a physical implication and secondly, there is a spiritual implication.

There were poor people who didn't have enough. Jesus came to preach the good news to them by teaching His disciples and followers to care for the poor. There were also people who were without faith and spiritually poor. There were those who were being held captive by sin. Jesus came to free the captives. There were those in the synagogue and those in the nation as a whole who were blind—both physically and spiritually. Jesus came to preach the good news to all—both physically and spiritually.

Throughout the rest of the gospels we see Jesus ministering in various ways—teaching, performing miracles, and teaching all of His followers what it means to “preach the good news” to all.

Jesus is the express representation of God. The teachings of Jesus, His parables and His miracles give us a window into the heart of God. God made Jesus human and divine in order to dwell with the people God loved so much. We know more of God by carefully looking at the words and deeds of Jesus. The compassion Jesus displayed, the questions Jesus asked His disciples (Who do you say that I am?), the challenges He gave His followers (follow Me), and the many signs of His divinity (turning water into wine) give us a wonderful idea of who God is.

As a human, Jesus was obedient, merciful, faithful, righteous, selfless, patient, loving and determined. So, too, is God all of those things. In His divinity, Jesus was eternal, majestic, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and so on. So God is obviously all of those things also.

OUR STORY

Mark 2 is an incredibly inspiring narrative. A few days after healing all the sick in the village (1:32-34), Jesus travels to Capernaum. He, as He did frequently, was teaching the Word to the people. The Scriptures say there were so many people in the structure where Jesus was teaching that there was absolutely no room—not even outside the door or within earshot. Some men (we are not told how many) brought a paralyzed man to Jesus to be healed. Four of this man's friends carried him, most likely on a make shift cot or stretcher. When they located Jesus and saw how many people were there they could have leaned over to the man on the stretcher (the Scriptures use the word mat to describe this—v. 4 and v. 11) and said, “We are so sorry we will have to come back another day.” No! This isn't at all what they said. Instead, probably at the suggestion of the most mischievous of the friends, they carefully dragged the man up onto the roof, dug a hole in the roof and lowered the man down to Jesus. Where did they get the rope to lower the man? It doesn't matter. How did they dig a hole in the roof? It doesn't matter. What matters is that these friends were “creatively determined” to “do whatever it takes” to bring their friend in need to Jesus.

Clearly the reputation of Jesus as a teacher and healer had gotten around the countryside. Soon, the reputation of these four friends as the most loving friends in the world would also spread around the countryside. Even though it was typical for homes to be built much lower than we build homes today, this act of compassion and care is astounding. Even though roofs were usually flat and made of brush, twigs, branches, clay, mud and other oft-repaired debris, this action of the friends is certainly Jesus-like. The four friends were bold enough to interrupt Jesus' teaching to prove their faith and Jesus' power gave those in attendance a story to tell for a lifetime.

Jesus focuses on the men's faith and their desire to heal their friend, not on all of the other elements such as the destruction of the roof, the size of the crowd, the distance the men traveled, and so on. Jesus is certain that four faith-filled men have brought this man to Him and because of their faith Jesus heals this man from his sins. In addition, this act of forgiveness included not only a spiritual healing but a physical one as well. Due to the lack of compassion, understanding and faith of the local leaders (called teachers of the law) who challenged Jesus' authority and motives, Jesus heals the man, telling him to pick up his mat and walk on home. The crowd responds just as you and I would respond by saying, “We've never seen anything like this!”

Jesus, because of His great love for people, heals this man both physically and spiritually just as He said He would in Nazareth when He read from the scroll of Isaiah 61. Jesus' practices of healing prove He was who He said He was going to be.

OTHERS' STORY

In Mark 5 we have another wonderful miracle. A miracle that not only proves that Jesus was who He said He was going to be, but a miracle we can apply to our own lives.

It is usual for all of us to wait until after we tried all other options before we appeal to Jesus for help. Some of us resort to the advice of as many physicians as will see us. Some of us run to the company of friends and family; others dive into business activities that take their minds off of their issues. Still others try hard to establish a sense of righteousness or piety, thinking that the depth of their spirituality is related to their physical healing. Even some suffer in practicing forms of asceticism. We can't blame people really. When we are desperate, we are willing to do whatever it takes to fix our problems whether they are social, physical, emotional, or intellectual.

The woman in Mark 5 must have been scared when Jesus asked who touched Him. Since she was not even really allowed to be in public, this woman clearly would have been hiding. However, when asked by Jesus, she told the truth. Jesus desires to comfort people and I believe that the more simply we trust Him for our needs and hope for healing from Him, the more we will realize what salvation is all about. Those, like this woman, who by faith are healed physically and spiritually certainly have reason to go in peace as this woman did.

When this woman left the presence of Jesus, she left in peace with God, peace with self, peace with others, and peace with the entire ordered world. She left knowing her sins have been forgiven and she was restored with God. She also left the presence of Jesus knowing that she no longer had to deal with the physical ailment and the inner and emotional turmoil. She also left restored to community with others. This woman probably did not have relationships with anyone for the 12 years she had been sick. That meant no physical contact and probably no social interaction. Now, however, this woman was brought back into the everyday ongoing life of a normal citizen.

THE WORLD'S STORY

The joy of being forgiven of sins and restored to a right relationship with God produces within the forgiven people the desire to reflect the generous spirit of the Redeemer. The experience of restoration fosters missional living. This happens in communities as well as in individuals' lives. Churches who experience ongoing moments of redemption and resurrection, practice it much more intensely and frequently.

When people and faith communities commit to finding ways to engage God's mission, the following happens:

- Forgiveness
- Compassion
- Acts of mercy and kindness
- Justice
- Evangelism
- Acceptance and tolerance
- Generous giving
- Sacrifice
- Simplicity for the sake of others

All of these characteristics of missional living can help others around us and around the world release the captivity that comes with sin, pain, hurt, loneliness, despair, and so on.