

January 31, 2020

Marks of Discipleship

Day 1: Mark 1:23-26

Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

The most interesting aspect of this encounter is that the unclean spirit recognizes who Jesus is (the Holy One of God) when those around him do not. Before Jesus silences the spirit, He has been teaching in the synagogue. I wonder if it was Jesus' teaching and preaching that caused the spirit in the man to cry out for Jesus to be silent. It is never a good idea to tell Jesus to sit down and be quiet.

Question: How did the unclean spirits recognize Jesus?

Challenge: How could you tell the difference between demon possession and mental illness?

Scripture: Matthew 8:14-17, Luke 4:38-41

Day 2: Mark 1:29-31

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

We can tell how complete the healing was because Peter's mother-in-law goes back to doing everyday things that remind her she is over her illness and part of the family. In families each person has a vital part. All the members need to keep doing their tasks for the family to thrive. When the woman was sick with a fever she couldn't do her portion of family work. We are more than what we do, but what we do to contribute to our family's well being is critical to us believing we are an important part of the whole.

Question: Who is Simon and where was the house (what town)?

Challenge: Think of your family - how has an illness affected your family and how did you respond?

Scripture: Matthew 8:5-13

Day 3: Mark 1:32-34

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him

A common theme in Mark is Jesus telling individuals not to reveal how they were healed. There are two reasons: 1) To focus on Jesus as a healer is to divert attention from his mission. He is not a miracle worker but the Son of God, who came to suffer and die for the sin of the world. 2) The demons, knowing they could not defy Jesus, attempt to deflect him from His mission. He came to destroy evil and its power over humanity. He came to destroy death. Jesus' casting out the demons is the sign that the present evil age is coming to an end and the age of God's reign on earth has begun. Jesus' healing of sickness is a sign that illness is not punishment from God for a sin committed.

Question: What would the demons say if they were allowed to speak?

Challenge: If you had the power to heal would you heal everybody that came along?

Scripture: Matthew 9:18-38

Day 4: Mark 1:40-41

A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, 'If you choose, you can make me clean.' Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I do choose. Be made clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

When Jesus heals the leper the healed leper then goes and tells others who did the healing and thereby causes trouble. Jesus is now popular which causes others to see Him as a miracle worker. All of Jesus' great works of healing and preaching and teaching are signs, not of how great Jesus is, but of God's presence in Him. In our time people, uncomfortable with Jesus' divine nature, like to see Him as a moral teacher and example of how good a human can be. Jesus would be appalled to have people tell him how great a teacher he is and that we should listen to him because he makes sense.

Question: Was the leper alone when he came to Jesus? What illness are we afraid of today?

Challenge: Look up leprosy to see what it is.

Scripture: Matthew 8:2-4, Luke 5:12-16

Day 5: Mark 2:3-4

Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.

In this account it is the faith of the friends that prompts the healing. Granted the paralyzed man couldn't go to Jesus but he could have asked for some help to get there. Once at the house perhaps he gives up, thinking

the crowd is too large. The friends do not give up; they believe their friend can be healed if he can just see Jesus. The reason we are a church is so that when our faith is not strong enough someone else's can be. When I am too distressed or angry to pray then someone else can pray for me. When I cannot give proper

praise to God then someone else can for me until I can once again give thanks and praise. When another cannot do these things then I can do it for them.

Question: Why didn't the crowd move aside?

Challenge: How have you been like one of the 4 men caring the paralytic in helping someone else?

Scripture: John 5:1-8, 18

Day 6: Mark 2:5-12

When Jesus saw their faith; he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 'Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, 'Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven", or to say, "Stand up and take your mat and walk"? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the paralytic—'I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.' And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'

Jesus always looks deep into the soul of the person to see what needs to be healed. In this man's case he needed to be spiritually healed before he could be healed physically. The healing that needs to take place in all our lives is being reconnected to God. Jesus gives his life so that reconnection can take place. Jesus is our shalom, the one who brings us peace and wholeness.

Question: Why were the scribes upset with Jesus?

Challenge: When have you witnessed God's love transform a person?

Scripture: Matthew 9:1-8, Luke 5:17-26