

Consider

When we think of the gospel we refer to Jesus dying on the cross and paying our debt before God. This is our good news; because of Jesus, we have the opportunity to approach boldly the throne of God. However when Jesus announced the gospel of the kingdom, he had not died yet. The people would not have thought of Jesus dying on the cross, being raised from the dead and liberating us from sin and death as the content of the gospel. The gospel, or good news, for the people of Jesus time would have been understood more in light of the coming of the kingdom of God on earth and the rule of the Messiah. They would not have understood that Jesus would have to die on the cross to reconcile us to the Father. When Jesus healed the sick, he was demonstrating the power of God that had come on the earth. Jesus power over sickness and demons was a foreshadowing of God's power and rule that Jesus will manifest more clearly when his kingdom is finally established upon the earth. Jesus healing ministry and proclamation of the kingdom was giving us a glimpse of what the future holds.

Saturday, January 30, 2010

Daily theme: Because we live in a time of opportunity, we should ask God for help.

Questions

Read Matthew 9:36-38

1. What did Matthew mean by the people being distressed and dispirited?
2. Why might God's people hesitate to ask God for more help?

Consider

The people of Palestine were by and large an oppressed people. They did not enjoy the same freedoms that we enjoy. They lived under the oppressive rule of the Romans through the Roman puppet ruler Herod Antipas. Many of them lived in poverty, working each day for the food that they would consume that evening. Like the woman who had been ill for 12 years, they often suffered from illnesses that physicians could not heal. Life expectancy was short, many children never lived to adulthood. Sorrow was a common part of their life. We can easily imagine why they would be distressed and dispirited, maybe even emotionally numb to their lot in life as they tried to survive day to day. It is not surprising that the people flocked to Jesus with hope that he would change their lives. These are the people that Jesus saw and the sight of them produced compassion in his spirit. Jesus knew that their needs were greater than the disciples could address by themselves. In response Jesus urged the disciples to ask the Father for help. They were to request additional workers. However, our view of God could hinder our coming to him for help. If we view ourselves as people who do things for God, then we might hesitate to ask for help, because we believe we are supposed to reach the world for God on our own. However, if we view ourselves as living with God and view him as our source of strength and hope, then it would be natural for us to ask his help, because we realize that making real changes in the world is beyond our power, but not beyond his.

Needs in our life give Jesus an opportunity to reveal himself.

Matthew 9:14-38

Sermon Series: What did Jesus teach?

Devotional Notes January 25-30, 2010

Monday, January 25, 2010

Daily theme: As we follow Jesus there will be times of sorrow and joy.

Questions

Read Matthew 9:14-17

1. Why were John's disciples concerned with Jesus' disciples?
2. What point was Jesus trying to make with his three illustrations?

Consider

In the first century there were several activities that identified a religious person: giving to the poor, prayer and fasting. John's disciples had observed that Jesus' disciples did not regularly fast. The Bible does not anywhere prescribe a regular fast. An annual fast is implied on the day of atonement, but not regular weekly fasts. The Pharisees fasted twice a week, apparently John's disciples followed the same practice. Jesus' disciples didn't fast at all. Jesus explained through three illustrations that his disciples' fasting at that point in time would not have been appropriate. In the first illustration, Jesus referred to a Jewish wedding. Jewish weddings were not like our modern weddings. We have a ceremony and then the couple leaves on their honeymoon. In Jewish weddings they had the ceremony and then a week-long feast during which people came and went from the bridegroom's home. During this week friends of the bridegroom celebrated with him. Jesus referred to himself as the bridegroom and the disciples as his friends. In the same way that it would be inappropriate for people to fast and be sorrowful at a wedding, it would be inappropriate for the disciples to fast during the time that Jesus was with them. Jesus did say that a time would come when his disciples would fast. This was a reference to Jesus' death on the cross. The other two illustrations reinforce the same idea. Jesus was introducing something new, the old ways of worship were no longer appropriate. Jesus didn't come to restructure the Pharisees' way of worship; he came to reveal a new means of worship.

Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Daily theme: Even during times of hopelessness, there is reason to trust Jesus.

Questions

Read Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43

1. Why might have the synagogue ruler and the woman trust Jesus in the midst of their hopeless situations?
2. Mark 5:43 says that Jesus told them no one should know about what happened. Why would Jesus give such an order?

Consider

The fact that the synagogue ruler came to Jesus illustrated the depth of his desperation. By this time the religious community opposed Jesus. The synagogue ruler would have been a member of that community, yet he appealed to Jesus. Mark and Luke help us understand that when the ruler came to Jesus, his daughter had not yet died. He learned of her death on the way back to his home with Jesus. The synagogue ruler would have been familiar with Jesus' power to heal. This knowledge might have encouraged the ruler to appeal to Jesus and look beyond the official disapproval of Jesus that had impacted the religious community. The woman as well, was desperate. She had been sick for 12 years. Her illness would have made her unclean so that she could not have even attended a worship service during that period of time. Mark tells us that she had exhausted her resources seeing doctors. Rather than getting better, she had grown worse. Jesus was her last hope. It is probable that she too had heard what Jesus had done and so hoped that what Jesus had done for others could also be done for her. Having healed the woman and raised the daughter, we learn from Mark that Jesus specifically told the parents not to communicate what happened to their daughter. It is an interesting command by Jesus, because the community was already aware that the child had died. Seeing her alive would naturally raise further questions. Jesus' instruction seems to reflect a general habit of Jesus to down play his healing of people. It was not uncommon for Jesus to tell someone that he had just healed not to talk about it. The only exception was with the demon possessed man on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus told him to tell his friends and family what he had done for him. Jesus had warned the people after feeding the 5000 that they followed him only because he had fed them. Then he added that they should seek bread that leads to eternal life. Jesus seemed to display a concern that people would follow him simply for him to do what they wanted, when the more important matter was their spiritual condition.

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Daily theme: Jesus displayed mercy to those who requested it.

Questions

Read Matthew 9:27-31

1. Why would these men call Jesus the Son of David?
2. What did Jesus mean by telling them not to let others know about what happened?

Consider

The blind men who called out to Jesus were probably identifying Jesus with the Messiah. As we will see in the following verses, this was not an agreed upon opinion. Jesus did not refer to himself as the Son of David. He preferred to call himself the Son of Man. However, the people tended to refer to Jesus as the Son of David, although at one point Jesus questioned the Pharisees about how the Messiah could be called the Son of David when David himself referred to the Messiah as his Lord. In any case, the blind men's persistent faith was rewarded

with sight to their eyes. Again Jesus told them not to mention Jesus' healing of them to anyone, even though the fact that they had received sight would not have been able to be kept a secret. This is yet another example of Jesus' reluctance to have his works of healing broadcast within Israel. Jesus demonstrated a reluctance to promote himself, preferring to communicate to people their need to repent and follow God. In spite of Jesus' warning the two went out and told everyone in the region.

Thursday, January 28, 2010

Daily theme: Some will always find ways to explain away Jesus.

Questions

Read Matthew 9:32-34

1. Why would the crowds be amazed at Jesus healing a demon possessed man?
2. What might have motivated the Pharisees attribute Jesus' power to Satan?

Consider

As was the case earlier when Jesus healed the two demon possessed men, in Capernaum the people were amazed when Jesus healed the mute demon-possessed man. Casting out a demon demonstrated that Jesus was more powerful than the demons themselves. While the Old Testament prophets had healed the sick and even raised the dead, there is no recorded occurrence of their casting out a demon. When the people saw Jesus do this they were seeing him do something that not even the great prophets Moses, Elijah or Elisha had done. They were quite likely awestruck because they saw Jesus do something that they may not have considered possible. However when the Pharisees saw what Jesus had done, they believed that Jesus had done so with the power of Satan and not the power of the Holy Spirit. Their conflict with Jesus became more evident at this point. According to Mark and Luke they had already objected to Jesus' healing on the Sabbath, believing that his healing the sick broke the sabbatical law. Although Matthew does not record Jesus' response to the Pharisees, Luke does. In Luke 11:17-26, Jesus explained that it would be absurd for Satan to give power to destroy his own kingdom. Jesus pointed out that his power came from the Holy Spirit, not from Satan. However the Pharisees' objection to Jesus blinded them from seeing what God was accomplishing right before their eyes. Even today we find people who explain away the amazing things Jesus does.

Friday, January 29, 2010

Daily theme: Even though many oppose Jesus, His kingdom continued to expand.

Questions

Read Matthew 9:35

1. When Matthew referred to the gospel of the kingdom, what did he mean?
2. How would Jesus healing ministry complement his proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom?