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Day 297 - October 24

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## Jesus the Christ (5 BCE – 30 CE)

### *Beginning of the Great Galilean Ministry*

**Readings: *Matthew 4:12-25; 8:1-4, 14-17; 9:1-8; Mark 1:14-45; 2:1-12; Luke 4:14-44; 5:1-26***

### ***Reflections:***

#### ***Beginning of the Great Galilean Ministry***

- Coming of the Kingdom Preached: Jesus will be rejected at Nazareth and so he selects Capernaum as a home base and focuses on the region of Galilee. Jesus wants to lay the foundation for a nation-wide movement and so he starts with the region that will also fulfill prophecy of Isaiah 9:1,2 “...in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea...the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” Again in this prophecy we see a reference to the Gentiles even though Jesus’ ministry is primarily focused on the Jewish people.
- The simplest version of Jesus’ message is this: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” This again is a clear Messianic signal. As we will see, repentance is needed not just from moral sin but also from religious sin and the kingdom of heaven is a spiritually-rooted, trans-national, relational kingdom not a nationalistic, political kingdom.
- Jesus Rejected at Nazareth: Jesus returns to Nazareth on a Sabbath, enters a synagogue and reads out his Messianic mission from Isaiah 61:1,2, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Jesus introduces all of the key themes for this new kingdom: The Spirit, good news, the poor, freedom for prisoners (especially those bound by the Law and religion), recovery of sight (especially for the religiously blind), the Lord’s favor (an experience of grace over judgment). At first the people respond positively, “I can’t believe this is Joseph’s son” – a typical hometown thing to say. This is likely a subtle reference to the fact that they did not believe Jesus was God’s son. Jesus then confronts them for their apparent lack of faith and declares he won’t do any miracles in his hometown. He goes on to tell two Old Testament stories from the times of Elijah and Elisha of how God did not work miraculously in Israel but did extend miraculous grace to two Gentiles (see 1 Kings 17:9-24 – Elijah and the widow; 2 Kings 5:1-24 – Elisha and the leper). At this the people are outraged!

They march him to a cliff that that is used for executions. People were thrown off of it to be killed. We know from the geography of that region that the cliff is more than a Sabbath day's walk from the synagogue in Nazareth. A Sabbath day's walk was just over 1 kilometer. The Jews maintained that the requirement not to work on the Sabbath meant that a person should not walk a long distance. Walking over 1 kilometer was considered working. Apparently from the reading of the story, the people realize this. In a humorous way, Jesus simply walks away from the crowd because they would have to break their own religious Laws to kill him. Luke loves to use humor in these stories and right off the top he shows how ridiculous a religious approach to life is.

- Great Catch of Fish: The calling of Simon and Andrew is now recorded by Luke. This account harmonizes well with John's account (see John 1:35-42 in how Jesus came to know Peter and Andrew. Here are the key points to note about this story of the miraculous catch of fish. First, Jesus teaches from the boats before giving the miraculous analogy of the catch of fish. Here he is making a clear connection between catching people with the message and catching fish with nets. Second, Peter shows a basic trust or faith in Jesus when after being unsuccessful all night he does what Jesus says without Jesus having to say it twice. Third, the nets begin to break. This shows the size of the nets. This event will be replayed after the resurrection when Simon is reinstated by Jesus. At that time, the nets won't start to break. This suggests that this image of the nets breaking highlights how the demands of following Jesus and catching men will reveal the weaknesses of Simon and the other disciples. Only after they are filled with the Spirit in Acts 2 will they and Simon particularly be able to handle the work of the kingdom. Fourth, the boats sinking from the number of fish shows the ridiculously large number of people who will respond. No doubt this points to the enfolding of Gentiles into God's kingdom.
- Peter's automatic response is that he is too sinful to be around Jesus. This is a normal response for people in touch with their weaknesses and sin who then encounter God's call on their lives. When Peter is reinstated, he will actually run to Jesus rather than want to run away. His experience of God's grace will one day enable him to see past his sin to see how much God truly loved him. This is something all Christ-followers must experience if we are to be secure in his love for us.
- Simon, Andrew, James and John: We are also introduced to James and John, Simon's fishing partners. Simon, James and John will form the inner circle of Jesus' twelve disciples. Sorry Andrew! What is interesting is that Andrew was apparently the first one to connect Simon with Jesus and in turn, Simon connected James and John. Andrew opens the door but then is left out of the inner circle. This reminds us that we all play a role and we must learn to be content with however God chooses to use us in his purposes.
- Jesus then calls Simon, Andrew, James and John to follow him. First, the vision is to gather people into a movement ("become fishers of men"). Second, they responded immediately. There was no hesitation. This shows their trust in Jesus. Third, they left their nets (means of income) and their father (sense of family security and relationship) to follow Jesus. There is

definitely a cost and a risk of following Jesus. As Jesus will make clear, you can't have any competing loyalties if you want to be his disciple.

- Jesus Teaches at Capernaum: Jesus returns to Capernaum, his new home base, and teaches with authority. This will be a key aspect of Jesus' leadership. He is not just someone who is kind and providing helpful insights. He has authority to lead people out of their broken condition, to spiritually confront dark forces, and to challenge the religious establishment.
- Unclean Spirit Healed: This authority is immediately displayed at a synagogue when Jesus confronts an evil spirit in a man. Even the demon confesses that Jesus is the Messiah – the Holy One of God. This escalates the spread of the news about Jesus throughout Galilee.
- Peter's Mother-in-law Healed: After this Jesus heals a number of people including Peter's mother-in-law. This lets us know that Peter was married. It is interesting to note that the wives of these men were not included in the telling of the story. This is likely due to the culture of the day when wives played a key role within the home but did not play a public role.
- Others Healed: Here we see the incredible power and compassion of Jesus revealed as countless people are healed and set free. The movement continues to gain momentum.
- Jesus Goes Out to Pray: Mark 1:35-36 gives us an insightful window into Jesus' own relationship with his Father. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Jesus here models for us the kind of intimate, dependent relationship that is needed with God. Jesus shows us that we need to have regular, significant time of quiet and solitude to seek God, to listen to his voice and to receive his guidance. Jesus moves out of his time of prayer with a clear sense of mission. God wants to secure us with his love, shape us with his truth, and move us into his mission. This is why he wants us to draw near to him and seek him with our whole hearts. If we only seek him with part of our hearts, that is all he gets of us.
- Jesus Travels About: Jesus' mission includes teaching the truth (mental), proclaiming the good news (relational), healing every disease (physical) and casting out demons (spiritual). We see that his work is holistic in peoples' lives.
- Leper Cleansed: The story of Jesus healing the leper reveals Jesus' heart. He has compassion on the man and then touches him to heal him. Often times Jesus heals with a word but in this case, a man who was considered unclean and untouchable, Jesus touches as an act of love and grace. Jesus tells the man to not tell anyone what had happened but just go show the priests. Jesus is trying to manage the growth of his popularity to keep it in line with the timetable God had ordained. He did want the religious leaders to declare the man clean for two reasons. One, so the man was fully restored to community. Two, so they would see Jesus' power and have a chance to repent of their religious sin. Jesus consistently reached out to his enemies. The man ignores what Jesus asks him to do and as a result, Jesus must remain out in lonely places to help hold back the swell of popular support. Here we see the cost Jesus faced throughout his ministry. He was faced with ongoing struggle and loneliness.

- Paralytic Healed: A few days later again in Capernaum, Jesus performs another miracle, this time to show the religious leaders he has the authority to forgive sins, something only God can do. This story illustrates the faith of the man's friends and how we can help each other in our own spiritual growth by exercising faith-filled support to those we love. It also is another great example of Jesus making it very clear for the religious leaders his true identity and divine authority. He forgives the man, reads their thoughts (another example of Jesus knowing what is inside of us), and then heals the man right in front of them. Jesus could not have made his case any more strongly that he was the Messiah and somehow uniquely "God with us." (As the religious leaders declare, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Again, we should see all of this as an expression of love as Jesus reaches out to the religious leaders.
- Scribes Question Authority: At this point, everything Jesus does results in people praising God and being completely blown away. The miraculous grace of God is astounding. The cost of following Jesus is what turns some back. Yet, to embrace his grace means we must at the same time embrace the cost. The religious leaders were being challenged to give up their legalistic righteousness and their control over the people. Something we will find they were ultimately unwilling to do.