
Day 303 - October 30

Jesus the Christ (5 BCE-30 CE)

Performing Miracles

Readings: *Matthew 8:18-34; 9:18-34; 13:53-58; Mark 4:35-41; 5:1-43; 6:1-6; Luke 8:22-56; 9:57-62*

Reflections:

- Jesus performed many miracles to demonstrate in power the coming of the kingdom. His kingdom initiated a clash with the powers of religion, the powers of Empire, and the powers of Satan. Jesus came to demonstrate as God with us that God has ultimate authority and power over every principality (power structure) or power (force).
- For those that would follow Jesus, Jesus is very clear and precise in the requirements. No excuses. Following Jesus comes with no guarantees (e.g. maybe no home). No prior commitments (even the funeral of your father – the most extreme example imaginable) can take precedence. No loyalty (even just taking time to say goodbye to your family – again the most extreme example imaginable) is allowed to compete. Now Jesus speaks in hyperbole to drive the point home. Will most followers have a home? Yes! Will we care for our families and prioritize our relationships? Of course. But these are all submitted and infinitely secondary to our ultimate loyalty and full allegiance to Christ. Only as we allow his Lordship to guide and direct our lives can we discover what true love looks like.
- Jesus calms the sea: The Jews were very afraid of the water. This storm and the sinking ship no doubt caused them to feel their deepest fear. Here in their most fearful, terrifying moment, Jesus is asleep. He is present but he is saying nothing and apparently doesn't care. Jesus' response was to rebuke their faith. Just because he is with us, that should cause us to feel safe even when everything around us appears to be going wrong. Jesus' perfect love and power can both be trusted. Faith is not ultimately about believing doctrines but trusting a person. We also see in this miracle that God controls nature. Not everything that happens in nature is caused by God but rather we should see that God has the power to control nature if he so chooses according to his will.
- Demon-possessed Gerasene: This story has often been used to help people understand some spiritual realities associated with demons. This demonized man lived an isolated, death obsessed (lived in a graveyard), abusive and self-abusive life (cutting himself). When confronted by Jesus the unclean spirit speaks and we realize that this demon is expecting to

lose and to be punished. The spirit speaks as a collective (“Legion”) and then when it is cast out, immediately goes into pigs and drowns them. The spirits love to destroy even as Jesus declares in John that the thief (Satan) has come to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10). It is noteworthy to point out that Jesus gives the spirits permission to go into the pigs. Now pigs were not valued by Jews as unclean animals but it seems strange that Jesus allows this. I think we must assume that Jesus is going to use this situation to reveal the hearts of people. Once those herding the pigs lose their pigs and see the man fully restored, they plead with Jesus to go away. Jesus seems quite comfortable bringing what is in our hearts out in the open. The healed man on the other hand becomes an incredible witness to the power and grace of Jesus as he goes into the Decapolis to share his story. Here we see that God loves to use broken people. Once he heals and restores them they can speak out of personal experience. In this way, God beats the devil with his own stick. 😊

- Jarius and his daughter: This story is a powerful example of Jesus mercy and ability to do the impossible. Jarius is a synagogue ruler and yet even though the Pharisees are opposed to Jesus at this point, he is desperate because of his daughter. Sometimes it takes a tragedy to get people to reach out to God. It would appear that Jesus is too late because the daughter dies. Yet, Jesus uses this situation to display greater power. He takes his inner three, Peter, James and John, with him. Jesus has a pattern of taking this inner group of three when something very significant is going to take place (e.g. Jesus’ transfiguration, the garden of Gethsemane). He enters the room with just the disciples and the mother and father. He raises her to life and then commands them to not tell anyone. He just wanted to bless her mom and dad with that special miracle. Did Jesus also just invite these inner disciples and her parents so that only those who have true faith would be with him? Yes, that might be another way to interpret Jesus’ decision to keep the group to a limited number. The key encouragement Jesus gives to the father was, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” Fear is the enemy of faith. When we fear, we doubt. When we embrace God’s perfect love and see it cast out fear, then it is much easier to walk by faith in trusting God and his love for us.
- Woman Touches Garment: On the way to raise Jarius’ daughter, a woman who has been bleeding for twelve years presses through the crowds and touches Jesus’ garment. This touch of faith allows power to flow from Jesus and heal the woman. It is like faith enables us to plug into the power source of the divine. Jesus knows the power has gone out but it would appear he is unaware of who received it. Is this an indication of his self-imposed limitations? Certainly he did not need to ask this. Yet, Jesus plays this out to draw the woman into a public confession. At first Jesus looks a bit crazy for asking who touched him when everyone was pressing him so closely. In the end, Jesus uses this woman’s humble, dependent faith as a powerful example of someone who truly has deep faith and for that faith, receives her miraculous healing.
- Two blind men healed: In Matthew there are often two people rather than one. There is some debate of why Matthew records it this way? Was there always two and sometimes only one is mentioned? Anyways, Jesus asks them if they believe and they say yes. He

touches their eyes and heals them. He warns them not to tell anyone but they disregard what he asks and tell everyone. We see here that healing again flows through touch or points of physical connection. God doesn't work through magic wands but through loving touches.

- Mute made to speak: Another demonized man is healed. He was unable to speak and once the demon is gone, then the man can speak. The religious leaders declare that Jesus' power is from the devil and so attribute the work of God to Satan. This is a very dangerous thing to do. Jesus will confront this with the statement by declaring that a house divided against itself can't stand (see Mark 3:25 and Matthew 12:25).
- Jesus rejected in his hometown: Jesus returns home and people reject him as being someone special because they all know his family. In other words, "who does he think he is?" Here we see that Jesus is called the carpenter. In that area, many were tradesmen and so it makes sense that Jesus learned to be a carpenter like Joseph. Mary is mentioned but Joseph isn't. Many assume he has passed away. Jesus' brothers are mentioned as well: James, Joses (or Joseph), Judas (or Jude), and Simon. Sisters are also mentioned. Now James and Jude will become well known leaders in the church and will even write books included in the New Testament. They reject Jesus during his ministry but after his resurrection, they will all become followers. James will receive his own appearance from the resurrected Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7). Their lack of faith in his home town amazed Jesus and resulted in him performing few miracles. We must be careful not to look at people through our own preconceived ideas. How many great leaders are forced to lead outside their own spiritual family because of people living out of preconceived ideas? The challenge of the church is to always look for those up and coming leaders in their midst rather than to always look outside for the great leader coming to them on a white horse to save the day.