



Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for October 4, 2009
Released on Wednesday, September 30, 2009

“Looking for Jesus”

Lesson Text: Mark 1:35-45

Background Scripture: Mark 1:21-45

Devotional Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16

Mark 1:35-45

35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

INTRODUCTION:

All the great leaders of the Old Testament that we have been studying pale in comparison to the Lord Jesus. As this lesson will show, there was great power in what He said and did. All the leaders we have previously studied received their strength through God's grace. Jesus was God in the flesh and thus had intrinsic authority.

If Jesus walked our streets today, what would be our expectation of Him? The people of Jesus' day expected that Jesus would work miracles for those who were either physically ill or demon-possessed. What faith they had! While Jesus is not present in human flesh in our midst today, we can still take hope in John 20:29: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Consider also 1 Peter 5:7. That passage encourages us to cast all our care on Christ, for He cares for us. Many people of Jesus' day did just that. Jesus did the seemingly impossible for those afflicted in body, mind, and spirit. To be sure, not everyone who sought Jesus had good motives (example: John 6:26). But many did.

Do we have an eager expectation today that Jesus can transform lives? Do we still revere Him and gather in His presence, looking to Him for blessings? Or has our faith grown complacent over time, lacking the initial flame that once burned within our souls?

LESSON BACKGROUND:

Time: A.D. 27

Places: Capernaum; Galilee

The Gospel of Mark is a fast-moving account of Jesus' actions in His ministry. While other Gospels spend a lot of time describing what Jesus *said*, Mark likes to focus on what Jesus *did*.

Today's text—a text of action—takes us into Jesus' initial preaching tour of Galilee. By the time we get to today's text, John the Baptist already had prepared the way (Mark 1:1–8). Jesus had been baptized and tempted (1:9–13). He had called His first disciples (1:14–20). He had taught; He had performed exorcisms (1:21–28). He had healed Peter's mother-in-law, who had been bedridden with a fever (1:29–31). So much action in only 31 verses!

News of Jesus had spread throughout Galilee (Mark 1:28). His fame was growing as people flocked to the one who seemed to have the solution to their problems.

LESSON AIMS:

Facts: to show how people looked for Jesus and found Him.

Principle: to explain that covenant living begins with finding Jesus.

Application: to demonstrate that if we want to live for God, we must first seek Jesus, then obey Him.

JESUS' PRAYS (Mark 1:35-37)

1. What is significant about the time and place of Jesus' prayer? (Mark 1:35)

Jesus set a good example for us by placing such importance on communion with His Father. He woke up very early to have a precious time of solitary fellowship with Him. The passage stresses how early by noting it was "a great while before day."

The Lord needed to get up early in part because of the demands on His time. But we can also see here His self-discipline, His ability to submit His body's desire for sleep to His spiritual needs. His love for His Father is evident in this, as is His recognition of prayer's importance for effective service.

We do not need to become legalistic about our prayers, and God loves to hear from us at any time; but there is surely blessing involved in seeking out the Lord with the first thoughts of our day. This is why David declared, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord" (Psalm 5:3). Of greatest importance, of course, is that we cultivate a relationship with God that causes us to want to meet with Him and not view it as a chore.

Jesus went to a solitary spot to pray – He withdrew to a lonely place in order to free himself from distractions. We are encouraged to do likewise (Matthew 6:6).

There are many around Jesus who will try to co-opt Him for their own purposes, as time will tell (example: John 6:15). Mark often notes that Jesus retreats from the public arena and the pressure of the crowds (Mark 1:45; 3:13; 6:31, 32, 46; 7:24; 9:2, 30). Solitary prayer will help Him keep His mind clear and stay focused. If Jesus has a need to do this, can we say that we do not?

I once knew a minister who was in charge of Adult Life-Changing Bible Study (also known as Sunday school) at his local church. I asked him how he spent his quiet time with the Lord. He gave me some wise and invaluable advice when he said that he tithed a tenth of his time each day to God. That is, every day he specifically gave God about two and one-half hours of time in the morning. This time included studying the Word of God and communing with the Lord in prayer.

Many of us do not have such an amount of time at our disposal on a daily basis. Even so, we may be able to invest that much time on a weekly or biweekly basis. Time spent with the Lord is time well spent. While it may involve sacrifice or having to rearrange priorities, we can rest assured that our time spent seeking our Father is never wasted. It yields fruit in due season (see John 15:4).

2. Why did Jesus' disciples seek Him and what did they say to Him when they found Him? (vs. 36-37)

After a while, the disciples apparently became concerned and went to look for Him. Because of the miraculous acts, Jesus had achieved instant fame and the disciples brought news that "all men seek for thee".

Simon (Peter), the only disciple mentioned by name here, and the others probably urged Jesus to return to Capernaum because of the impact that He already has had on that city. That's the natural way to think, isn't it? "Keep building on the momentum you've already achieved" may be the idea. But as we soon find out, Jesus had other plans.

JESUS' PREACHES (Mark 1:38, 39)

3. How did Jesus respond to the disciples' remark? (v. 38)

Jesus has a larger vision than what His followers may have for Him. Jesus' goal is not to *preach* and minister only to the people at Capernaum, but to go to neighboring villages as well. Sometimes our vision may be clouded by the opinions of others. Others' expectations of what we are to do with our lives or our personal circumstances may not always be what the Lord has in mind for us. What are we to do?

Consider Jesus' example. Before Jesus makes this ministry decision, He spends time with His Father. His decisions are birthed in prayer, and this venture into the nearby *towns* can be seen as an answer to His prayer in verse 35. Are our decisions in life birthed in a context of prayer? Or are we more susceptible to the whims of others? One thing is certain: we must be able to discern God's will for ourselves. Sometimes we will need to take a stand against the desires of the crowd to pursue the will of God.

4. What was the message that Jesus came into the world to spread?

Jesus said that one of His chief reasons for coming into the world was to spread His message. What was the message? Other Scriptures make it clear that Jesus had come to proclaim the kingdom of God. As He said in Luke 4:43, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent."

The gospel message is such good news because the Lord does not just command us to come to God but also provides the means to do it.

5. What is the significance of Jesus' casting out demons? (v. 39)

Jesus showed His authority in particular when he "cast out devils" (Mark 1:39). The New Testament has a good bit to say about the warfare going on in the spiritual realm. As Ephesians 6:12 declares, "We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Christ was asserting His dominion over the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4).

Jesus demonstrated the saving message of the gospel in both word and in deed. Jesus traveled all over Galilee, preaching His message, casting out demons, and setting people free from Satan's power.

JESUS' MIRACLE (Mark 1:40-45)

6. How did the leper show that he had faith in what the Lord Jesus could do? (v. 40)

At some point during Jesus' Galilean ministry, a leper came to Him for help. There were varying degrees of affliction among lepers, but all of them were treated as outcasts by society

because of their uncleanness and the fear of contagion. The leper approached Jesus with great humility He knelt before Jesus and asked for help. What he said to Jesus showed that he had faith. Instead of directly asking Him for healing, he simply declared that he knew Jesus could heal him if He wanted to.

7. Why did Jesus touch the leper when He healed him? (v. 41)

Jesus healed in different ways. Sometimes He brought healing by simply speaking a word. At other times, He physically touched the one He was healing.

Jesus isn't appalled, and He doesn't turn His back on the leper. Rather, Jesus breaks the barrier of "no physical contact allowed" that separates Him from the leper. Jesus touches that which is impure and unclean, which potentially means becoming unclean himself according to the Law of Moses (see Leviticus 5:2, 3; 13:45, 46).

His physical touch was not intrinsically necessary, but it was certainly a comfort in the case of the leper, who would have encountered few people willing to touch him. What a beautiful picture of Christ's love this touch was! And it showed that His love and authority took precedence over the strictures of the ceremonial law (cf. Lev. 13:45-46), a fact that irritated the Pharisees.

8. What do we learn about Jesus' character from the way He responded to the leper? (v. 42)

Jesus responded to the leper with grace. The goodness of Christ is evident in the fact that He was "moved with compassion."

We sometimes doubt how Jesus will respond to us when we come to Him. Whether it is because we have not received much unconditional love in our life, or because we feel we are not worth any consideration, or for other reasons, we may have difficulty accepting the idea that Jesus cares about us. However, when we turn to the New Testament, we find that the overwhelming disposition of Christ toward those He encounters is love and a willingness to come to people's aid.

The leper had said Jesus could heal him if He so willed. Jesus simply responded, "I will" (Mark 1:41). There is something very compelling and assuring in this brief reply. The feeling conveyed is that if we come to Christ, He of course will agree to rescue us. As He said in John 6:37, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The wonderful truth is that Jesus is not only willing to help but powerfully able to help as well. He had the power to simply declare the man clean, and he was indeed clean. He was clean under the rules of the ceremonial law, and he was cleansed from all traces of disease.

9. What did Jesus command the leper not to do? (v. 43)

After showing such love in healing the leper, Jesus commanded the leper not to say anything to any man concerning his healing. There is strong emotion in His command. Perhaps Jesus foresaw the healed man's coming disregard of His command.

Jesus strictly warned the man and then summarily dismissed him. Jesus placed great importance on the healed leper going immediately to a priest to be pronounced ceremonially clean. He was not to talk to anybody else about what Jesus had done, for reasons that would soon become clear.

10. What was the leper to do when he left Jesus? (v. 44)

Concerning what the leper needed to do, he was to follow the procedure set forth in Lev. 14:2-31, and involved different offerings depending on whether the man was poor or prosperous. In the first century the man had first to show himself to a priest in his place of residence, after which he must go to Jerusalem to be pronounced clean and to make the prescribed sacrifices." Instead of talking freely to anyone who will listen, the man's testimony is to be that of showing himself to a priest. Leviticus 14:2-31 speaks of this

important practice. The examination is to be followed by certain cleansing procedures and sacrifices.

Jesus wanted to make it very clear that He respected God's law but also that the power of God was at work. The leper's healing would be a testimony of this.

11. What was the result of the leper's disobedience? (v. 45)

The leper did not follow the Lord's instructions. We do not know whether he ever went to a priest, but we do know he immediately began talking to everyone he met about what Jesus had done.

As a result, Jesus' ministry is hindered. Perhaps it is hampered to such an extent that Jesus isn't able to help all the hurting that He could otherwise. While people still come *to him from every quarter*, we are left to wonder who is not able to reach Jesus because of the disobedience. What about those who are completely paralyzed? Are they able to go and meet the healer *in desert places*? Perhaps not.

We learn from this verse that Jesus knows best. When He gives us a task to do, we can rest assured that His way is perfect. We may ask and pray for clarification, but we dare not think that we have a better idea than God.

12. Thinking about how Jesus both proclaimed the good news and healed people, what have you discovered about the relationship between words and deeds in your Christian experience?

It would seem that word and deed function best side by side. Jesus was both a preacher and a healer. In the eyes of the world, it is much easier to talk than to do. So Jesus put into action the messages He taught. His healings not only supported the proclamation of the lessons He taught about the godly life, they also (or especially) witnessed to what He taught about himself.

The church can take a lesson from this. As the church preaches, it should also be involved in benevolence. These actions verify the sincerity of the preaching. When someone does good deeds, it should be accompanied by preaching so people will know we do it in the name of the Lord (Matthew 25:35-40; Acts 6:1-7).

PRACTICAL POINTS:

1. We cannot claim to follow Christ without making prayer a priority (Mark 1:35).
2. Many who "seek" Christ are merely seeking His benefits, not His salvation (vs. 36-37).
3. Our desire must be to take the gospel elsewhere (vs. 38-39).
4. Jesus had compassion for us in our trials and is acting on our behalf (vs. 40-42).
5. God reveals His will for us, but His purpose may not be readily apparent (vs. 43-44).
6. We hinder God's work if we presume His will rather than learn it and obey it (v. 45).

CONCLUSION:

Checkbooks and Day Planners

It is often said that you can look at people's checkbooks or day planners and determine what or who is first in their lives. With that said, if a complete stranger got hold of yours, could he or she tell that you are a Christian? In other words, are our money and time prioritized toward earthy pursuits that have no heavenly significance? Does our money go to better ourselves on this temporal planet (laying up for ourselves treasures on earth) while investments in the kingdom of God go wanting? Do we give Christ only our leftover time, or do we set aside sufficient time each day in conversation with our heavenly Father?

From this lesson, it is clear that we are to look to Jesus. This not to be an occasional glance, but a soul-searching pursuit! We need to become desperate to seek His face; desperate for deliverance from the cares and woes of this life that weigh on our souls; desperate for answers that can come only from Jesus.

I dare you to pray the "impossible," to think the "unbelievable," and to recapture the hope that once burned within your soul. Resolve today to go deeper into your pursuit of God than you did yesterday. Determine to get closer to Him.

Modifying your routine will be critical. In other words, it is essential to carve out time to be with the Lord. I've heard it said, "Seeking the Lord morning and night will cause everything to be all right." Before we dismiss this as simplistic, remember that the Bible speaks much the same message: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

This goes back to the basics. Are we seeking the Lord with a fervent pursuit of His presence? The Bible tells us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Don't be afraid to "come boldly unto the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16). Tell God your concerns, your cares, and your worries. Expect Him to give you answers that only He can give. Look to Jesus as your sole and soul provider.

PRAYER:

Father, help us to keep our eyes fixed on Your Son during the trials and tribulations in our lives. May He always occupy first place in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER:

Look to Jesus in the midst of life's storms - and at all other times.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON:

Next week's lesson is "Recognizing Jesus". The lesson will focus on an important principle in covenant living – recognizing Jesus and what He does in our lives. Study Mark 5:1-20.

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