

Today we continue a study started last week. I guess really it goes back several weeks.

- 1) Jesus at the Samaritan Well – He was intensely interested in evangelism and helping people. We sought to “Do the things that Jesus Did” from that example by listing 7 things.
- 2) Jesus: “Love your Neighbor – We came back a couple weeks later to note that such can be daunting. But if we “Feel what Jesus Felt” – love for neighbor and see all people as neighbors, we can use that emotion of concern and investment of helping to fuel evangelism.
- 3) Jesus: “Gentle and Lowly in Spirit” – We hoped that would help us branch out, but some find it challenging to love those we don’t know, or those who don’t reciprocate. How do we do that consistently: by “Becoming who Jesus Is” in character.
 - a. He is GENTLE - He was “*mild of disposition*” “*gentle in spirit*” “*meek.*” He was strong and direct at times, but His default position was Patient, Kind, Considerate, Humble. And we are challenged to be like Him – in troubled marriage, with the world, in all things, seek peace when possible, even in our defense of Truth, marked by good behavior.
 - b. He is LOWLY in SPIRIT – “*not rising far from the ground*” “*lowly, of low degree, humble.*” He was and is the greatest, but He intentionally took the lowest position – when He washed their feet (and invited them to do the same for others), when He died, even on a cross, lower than any of us have been, to support and serve us. And so must we, enter a room and take the lowest seat, as a mental exercise. This position promotes love and service!
 - i. **Romans 12:10-21** – You can’t do this from a lofty position. Not with regularity. Not like Jesus. This takes a lowering of self and lifting up of others – ALL OTHERS.

Our bulletin this week includes part of a paper by Christ Benjamin entitled: “Cultivating Gentleness.” I found it while researching this topic. There is an awesome section in the middle on the idea of “The Upside-Down Kingdom.” God didn’t, historically, build great things on the shoulders of youthful, strong, powerful, influential, or certainly not prideful or authoritative men. He used an old man and his barren wife upon which to build a nation. Saul, the lowest guy in the lowest family. David, the eighth son. People of little renown or status. God built a nation of power upon the those of lowly position. Why? Well, those in lowly position tend to be those of lowly disposition. They know the lacking road. They know how to serve, share, do for others to accomplish their work.

When it came time to build the ultimate kingdom, it started with a baby boy of no direct noble blood, born in a barn to seemingly poor parents. Jesus enters his ministry submitting to baptism by John, and ends it riding into town on a donkey. He selects men of no reputation or position, fisherman to share the message. They were literally lowly in position, throughout history, but it was their lowly disposition that made them useful to God as the foundation of His great blessings.

I’ll be honest, I think we have a challenge on our hands due to our relative richness and incredible national prosperity and loftiness. I think I have a better idea of why Jesus said it was difficult for a rich man to enter into heaven. He is UP HERE in terms of POSITION, and yet needs to be DOWN HERE in terms of DISPOSITION. That is not easy. To be a servant when we are often served and feel like we deserve to be served in many ways. To put yourself lower than all others when you boot strapped to get up higher.

There is one way we can accomplish this – the first one is what we are trying to do – “learn from Him” – That’s what He told us to do in **Matthew 11:28** – read the Gospel to know Him, who He is and how He lived and what His core character traits are, and then --- strive to be like Him – **Colossians 3:10**.

We made a list of 8 things on the screen at the end of last week’s study. I basically laid it out:

- He was PATIENT when so many others would have been HARSH
- He was SAVING people when so many would simply CONDEMN
- He was APPROACHABLE when there were many reasons to be ALOOF
- He was Leading FOR PEOPLE instead of looking out FOR HIMSELF

He was sometimes those other things, but always in the right way, for and in small amounts of time, for the right reasons, with these other four things as His default and preferred manner of living.

So we had a neat event last Tuesday night. About 15 of us gathered to read Mark’s gospel, at least chapters 1-14 covering Jesus’ ministry. I wrote these 8 things on the board and asked if some would just note when they saw Jesus engaging in any of these thing – just write down the verse reference. The results were somewhat consistent among the 7 participants. And the content of the passages revealing.

Let's start with the fourth one: "FOR HIMSELF" vs. "FOR OTHERS"

For Himself – (11:2-3 – He needed a colt)(14:6-8 – accepted her anointing)(14:13-15 – request a room)
(6:46 – needed time to pray) (14:34-36 – address His own anguish in prayer)

-- But overwhelmingly, and no surprise, His actions, real choices, were about helping other people.

For Others – (1:15 – whole message was getting people into the kingdom) (1:38 – here to preach)
(6:34 – compassion for people who were lost/hurting) (14:60-65 – took this for us)

Yeah, He took care of His own needs, and planned His events and prayed about His concerns, but His daily mission was to have compassion for others, lead them to the kingdom, give of Himself for us...

By the way – He's still doing all of this – Still He serves as High Priest, Intercessor, Sacrifice.

This is our Jesus. This is the humble one who has elevated our needs above His own. Be like Him.

"ALOOF" vs "APPROACHABLE"

Aloof – (6:45-46 – He needed private time to pray) (8:11-13 – got fed up and went away out of range)

-- He needed time alone, but it was intermittent in His real purpose: helping people, all people.

Approachable – (1:30-31 – He came to her upon request) (1:40-41 – compassion and healing)
(6:34 – they were lost. He taught them) (10:14-16 – welcomed children to Himself)

The list is lengthy. He went to people. People came to Him. He felt compassion, answered questions, addressed needs. You can just see Him there with a demeanor that says, "Come to Me." Oh how when we are like Him, and our mission is the spreading of the Gospel how our demeanor will change. We will put down the cell phone, not block our selves off with closed body language or scowls. We WANT to know people - help people. Jesus did that.

Skip up to Top One: "HARSH" vs. "PATIENT"

Harsh – (7:26-30 – was clear about Gentiles being outside of initial wave... but even then, he healed)

(8:31-33 – strong language for Peter... but 9:2, six days later He took him on the mountain)

(9:17-19,23,25 – frustrated with their short sightedness but prescribed faith and healed)

(11:15-18 – Pretty direct and unpleasantly rough – but about GOD's honor – 11:25 – forgive)

-- He was direct and plainspoken and defended God but always with temperament and purpose, control and good tidings of forgiveness or blessings or hope.

Patient – (2:7-11 – They accuse Him. He shows them the Truth) (3:21-27 – same thing – explains)

(4:38-40 – with Disciples He worked with them) (10:35-40 – more patient with Apostles)

Everyone He met knew less than Him. Enemies attacked Him. Disciples misunderstood Him. It was ALWAYS everyone else's fault – and yet, He labored on, He taught, He explained. His mission was to lead people to God, not push people away. And we must be like Him. Patient and peacemakers so far as God is not dishonored. And even when God is, we address it directly, then work to heal. To reunite.

Lastly: "CONDEMN" vs. "SAVE"

Condemn – (3:28-30 – Unforgivable sin – but He spoke of principles in Judgment – "whoever")\

(8:35-38 – "whoever" – anyone. He is stating truths with power, but also hope)

(9:42-49 – "whoever" – it was not personal, it was just Truth.)

(12:38-40 – specific to scribes who are fake. He is stating facts and protecting the innocent)

-- He preached Truth plainly – not often directly at anyone, just the way that it is.

Saving – (1:38 – came to preach the kingdom; 2:5 – forgiving sins; 2:17 – healing spiritually sick)

(5:34 – of course he healed many people) (9:42-49 – even here it was about how to "ENTER LIFE")

Jesus knew His words and God's power would condemn to hell one day all who lived outside of God. He was direct to people about that and often said "whoever" will be lost. But He was here to save, to create personal relationships, offer them His gift of forgiveness, and help them get to heaven. No matter who it is, who your neighbor might be – we must come to them from Christ's angle ever time – Help Them Get To Heaven.

Conclusion: I want to return to this in a couple of weeks and address something interesting --- most often in Mark when you see people who were unnecessarily harsh, aloof or self-centered... it was His disciples!

(9:33-34 – who is the greatest) (9:38-40 – stop healing) (10:13-16 – refusing children) (10:35 – what we ask)

They had a lot to learn. But I'll give you the punch line on that.... They watched Jesus show them a lowly spirit for 3 years. Then they watched Him die. Then they saw Him raised. The apostles you meet on the other side of Christ's victory, when THE UPSIDE DOWN, build on humility and gentleness and love KINGDOM was established... were different men. Jesus way led to victory. They saw that and it changed them. If you struggle with these character traits, it will be tough, but remember which side of victory you live on. Jesus was is victorious. Be like Him and victor with Him.