

Weekly Devotional



August 8-12, 2011

Prayers

Monday: Pray every day this week for those on the Ecuador mission trip.

Tuesday: Pray for teachers and students as they wind down the summer and begin to prepare to go back to school.

Wednesday: Pray for those in our congregation who are in nursing homes, who are out of work, whose marriages might be struggling, or who are battling cancer.

Thursday: Pray for those who call us enemies, and pray for the mission groups who work in their midst.

Friday: Pray for the worship services, for fresh encounters with God, and a renewed outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on all who would attend.



Monday

Acts 5:12-42



Lloyd Ogilvie in his commentary on Acts says three things about the early church. “The church which resulted from being of one mind and soul with loyal commitment to the risen Christ and loyalty to each other, had undeniable miracles. It was a supernatural church. Signs and wonders were done. Signs were an outward evidence of the inner working of the power of the Lord in a person or situation.” These signs caused people to be gripped by awe. Something beyond human ability was involved in the healings and transformed lives, which were occurring as a result of Christ’s Spirit in the apostles.

Thus it was a respected and growing church. Verses 13 and 14 seem to contradict each other. But verse 13 refers back to the incident that occurred at the beginning of chapter 5. The result of that incident was that people understood the high cost of commitment to Jesus and the loyalty one was called to give to the fellowship of believers. The church really stood for something. The church grew because it was authoritative, not authoritarian in proclaiming the gospel. The people were an example, not just an explanation of what being re-born was all about. The people were living, not legislating the Spirit-filled life and they were gracious, not grim, in their quality of inclusiveness. As a result the church grew.

Finally, the church was a healing church. People needed healing then and they do now. I think one of the reasons we do not see more healings is because of God’s gift of doctors. But I think another reason is because we often only look for healing of church members. These New Testament healings were often done because people in the church dared to lay hands on and pray for those outside the church. The results of such healings were evidence that Jesus really is who He said He was. That He really did rise from the dead. That His Spirit was really present with power. And, the result was that the Apostles were able to tell others about Jesus. They did not point to a comfortable Jesus but to a Jesus who required repentance and a completely new way of life. Have you ever laid hands on someone and prayed for healing? Ask God to bring someone across your path this week that you might do just that. Let’s expect more of ourselves and our church (don’t forget that the church is the people, not just the staff—you are the church).

Tuesday

Acts 3



We are in a series on truth. How do we know that Jesus is real? We have looked at some very logical philosophical reasons. But increasingly today what many people are asking for is an experience of Jesus, something they can point to.

How do you respond when you see a need? When we share prayer with requests with a small group of Christians one of the great temptations is to offer some piece of counsel or advice. When someone is hurting, we recommend a doctor, a psychologist, or offer some sort of financial help. When you see a beggar on the street, what is your response- to turn the other way, or to give some spare money?

Peter and John's response was to give the man what they had. They focused their attention on the man and asked him to give them his attention. A relationship began to be established. Then they spoke Jesus' healing into his life with confidence and boldness. As others watched in amazement, Peter and John used the opportunity to explain to the on-looking crowd the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Miracles lead to evangelistic opportunities.

Lloyd Ogilvie uses this passage to stress what he calls our "Two-Legged Gospel." Not only are we to preach the word, we are to demonstrate it by bringing real relief to the lives of others. We need to be healing people's spiritual, psychological and physical needs. Sometimes this healing comes in the form of a prayer. Often it takes more of a long-term commitment.

Jesus said that others will know us by our "love." He said that we will do greater works than He ever did. Are we? Yes, we do a great job of opening our hearts to the homeless, and giving to various mission offerings. But we are also to make sure that we do not just give and walk away. The call is to get involved. Our involvement, our giving of our time, energy, and resources to others will show others where our true trust lies. Where our priorities are; what is of real importance in this life is not things, but people. It is easy to give to those we are in relationship with. This week ask God to bring into your life someone you can enter into a relationship with in order to extend God's love to them. Who knows, maybe you too will find yourself doing great things.



Wednesday

John (Various Readings)

John 20:30-31 says that Jesus performed many signs, and whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke record numerous miracles, John only discusses 7. But these 7 are chosen because when they are put together we see that Jesus is really Lord over every aspect of our lives and creation. Today you might read about these various miracles or you might just choose one or two to read. In each case ask the question: What might God's working in this area of my life look like? What might it look like if I were to pray for a similar miracle in the life of someone around me?

The first miracle that Jesus performs in John's gospel is at a wedding (John 2). There he turns water to wine. Jesus is Lord over the quality of our lives. In this case He keeps the host from being embarrassed. He takes ordinary water and makes it extraordinary. He takes the water used for ritual cleansing and changes it to refreshing wine, looking ahead to the new covenant of forgiveness in the wine, and the new life in fellowship with the Father (I wonder if that is why the next thing Jesus does is clean out the temple?) Jesus has come to give us life more abundantly (John 10:10).

Jesus' second miracle is found in chapter 4:43ff where He heals from a distance, showing He is Lord over space. He does not need to be physically present to heal. Prayer from a distance can work miracles too, even when another does not know we are praying. His next miracle is the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-30). This man is waiting for just the right time to be healed. He has been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus makes the time now! He redeems the 38 years of waiting. He takes that which is dead (the man's limbs) and brings it back to life; just like when the time will come when He will call people out of the grave.

In John 6 we see two miracles: the feeding of the 5,000 and His walking on water. In these miracles we see Jesus is Lord over quantity, provision, and nature. In chapter 9 we see Jesus is Lord over misfortune, but we need to be able to put aside our preconceptions in order to see Jesus. Finally, in John 11 He shows that He is Lord over life and death with the healing of Lazarus.

Thursday

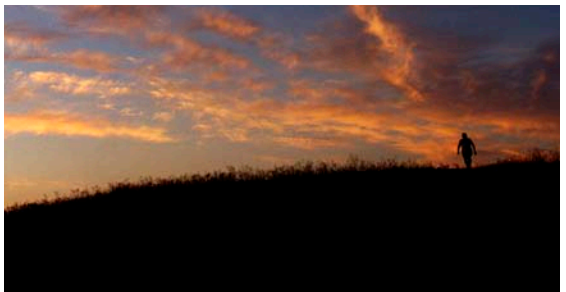
Matthew 14:22-33

John Ortberg changed my thinking on this passage. For years the only sermons I had heard about Peter's walking on water revolved around his taking his eyes off of Jesus, looking at the waves of his surroundings and beginning to sink. John though has a different take. He comments that Peter might have sunk and needed Jesus to pull him back into the boat, but he did walk on water. How many other people can say they have walked on water? Ortberg's point is that if we want to see a miracle happen in our lives, we need to get out of the boat.

Ortberg goes on to comment that people today are searching for authenticity. They want lives that are lived on the edge, lives of excitement, of significance. The reason many of us do not live on the edge is because...well the edge is scary. Risk carries consequences. Some of the more common phrases in scripture are "fear not, take courage, do not be afraid." Because Peter is willing to risk, to get out of the security of the boat, he ends up doing the impossible and as Dale Brunner once said: "he gets a glimpse of the unearthly possibilities that are possible even on earth with the enabling help of Jesus."

Today we often question—where are the David and Goliath stories—the stories of fire from heaven—the stories of city walls coming down and seas being parted—I believe the answer lies in our unwillingness to get our feet wet—our unwillingness to take risks to go out on a limb with Jesus. If you read some of those stories in scripture you realize that the Jordan didn't part until the feet of the people were already into the water—the fire didn't come down from Heaven until Elijah was at a point of no return—the city walls didn't come down until after the Israelites had stepped out in obedience and walked around it day after day. And Goliath was not defeated until David ventured out on the battlefield with his sling. David slew Goliath while everyone else in the army stood back in fear.

Is there some source of security God is asking you to give up in order that He might work the impossible in and through you? Is there a risk He is asking you to take?



Friday

Matthew 9



Matthew 9 is filled with the miraculous activities of Jesus. Dale Brunner in his commentary on Matthew, *The Christbook*, prefers to see the chapter under the “rubric of freedom. (1) The healing of the paralytic...teaches Jesus’ gift of freedom from sin; (2) the calling of...the tax collector and the controversy that ensues teaching freedom from separatism; (3) the following question about fasting teaches freedom from scrupulosity; then (4) the stories of the ruler’s daughter and the woman who touched Jesus’ garment are so notoriously intertwined in a single paragraph that we can see them teaching...freedom from sickness and death and finally, (5) the healing of the two blind men and deaf mute...show Jesus giving... freedoms of sight and speech.”

It seems that Jesus’ healings generally signal a deeper event occurring in people’s lives than just the presenting problem. Thus His focus is on forgiving sins more than healing the paralytic; or restoring someone to fellowship as with the calling of Matthew and the healing of the woman who would have been unclean because of her issue of blood. In fact, Jesus takes time away from rushing to a dying young girl to carry on a conversation. Can’t you imagine what the girl’s father must have been going through as Jesus stopped to try and figure out who “touched” Him in the midst of a crowd? Often our prayers and our desires are way too narrow. We find ourselves focused on the immediate, the presenting problem, rather than on what God might be up to.

This chapter concludes with a statement by Jesus to his disciples requesting that we pray for workers to be sent out into the harvest. So many people need freedom. The problem is that we need more people willing to be sent out. This weekend we will gather for worship. The purpose is for us to meet Jesus afresh, to be filled anew with His Holy Spirit in order that we might go back out into the world to free people from all that would enslave them. So three questions: (1) what are you praying for? (2) what do you need to be freed from? (3) to whom might you offer the freedom of Jesus?



1700 East Palopinto Ave.

Glendora, CA 91741

(626) 914-4833

www.GlenkirkChurch.org