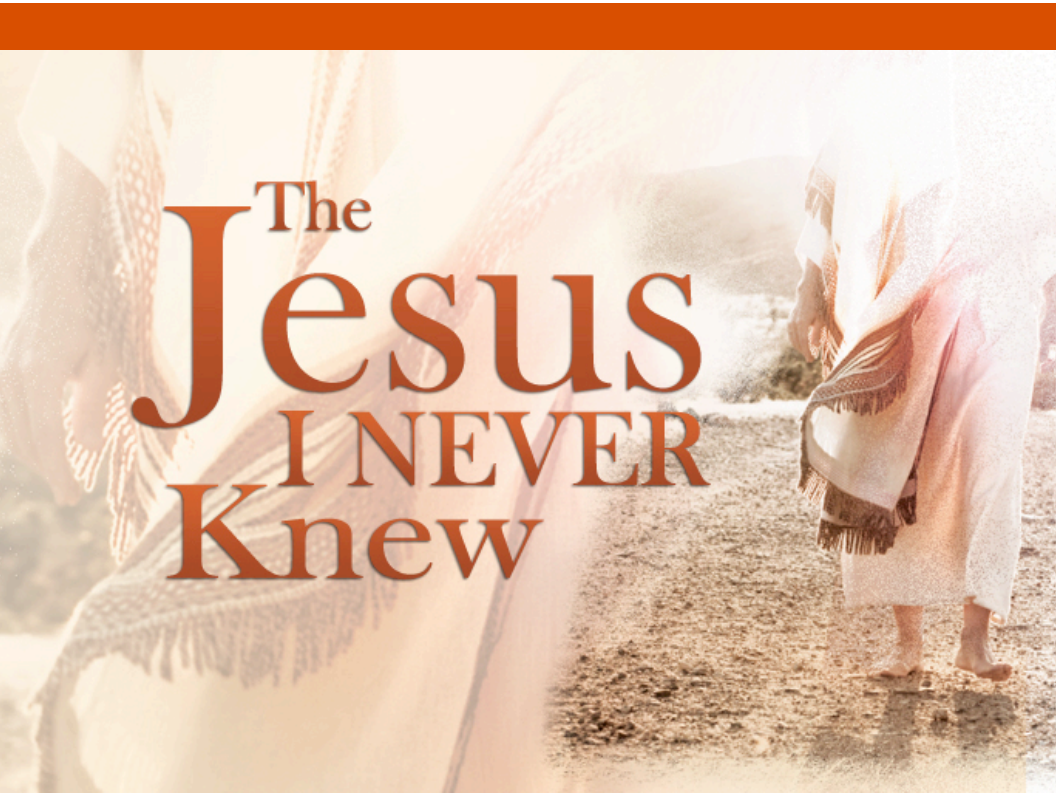


Weekly Devotional



The
Jesus
I NEVER
Knew

September 26 - 30, 2011

Questions & Prayers

1. What did the expert in the law ask, and how did Jesus turn the question back on him?
2. When the expert in the law asked about loving his neighbor, what do you think he had in mind?
3. Why did the Samaritan help the beaten man?
4. What different motivations do people have for asking questions about God and of God?
5. What natural inclinations make it easier for you to act like the priest and the Levite than like the Samaritan?
6. In what ways can we as individuals and as groups of Christians be more like the Samaritan?
7. What step can you take to help meet someone else's physical needs?

Monday: Pray for families with special needs children. Pray for the children to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Tuesday: Pray for those looking for work.

Wednesday: Pray for AWANA's and our youth ministries programs.

Thursday: Pray for those who live in countries where there is not enough food, jobs, or freedoms.

Friday: Pray for the weekend services.



Monday

Matthew 25:31-46



I once heard a story about a man who, upon arriving in heaven, was given a tour by Peter. Upon entering one room he noticed that everyone grew immediately silent. He also realized that he recognized almost everyone in the room. The man at once leaned over to Peter: “Peter, I have two questions. First, why is there such a sense of shocked silence? Second, Peter, I know these people. Did you make a mistake? How did they get in?” Peter’s response was this: “The silence is because they are just as shocked to see you here.” Some people have written that when we get to heaven we will be shocked both by who is there and by who is not there.

This passage is meant to carry some of that shock value. We evangelicals can be pretty smug in our theology of “praying for Jesus to come into my heart and being assured of heaven” theology—just like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day who were pretty smug in keeping the details of the law in order to assure themselves of God’s pleasure. This teaching of Jesus (and it is a teaching, not a parable) can, maybe appropriately, cause us a little uneasiness. Jesus died, so we do not have to worry about whether we will get “in” or not. But in that dying He freed us up to live for others rather than for ourselves.

Personally, I find this teaching troubling. Who are “the least” in my life? I had a friend who once said that when she sees someone standing alone, or someone who is rejected or with special needs, she thinks, “There is Jesus. I need to go spend time with Jesus.”

Who are some of the groups of people that you tend to ignore? I think it is important to note that the teaching in this passage begins with all the nations coming before Jesus. These are not just Christian nations, but all nations. How easy we see our enemies as the enemies of Jesus. His heart goes out to them. They are the sick and the imprisoned. Jesus came to us while we were yet sinners. Who might we go to?

Tuesday

Luke 10:25-37



This is a very familiar parable, almost too familiar. The expert in the law is trying to trap Jesus. He wants Jesus to say something heretical—something like: “God’s Kingdom is for unclean Samaritans.” This is exactly what Jesus teaches, but instead of Jesus saying it, He gets the expert in the law to say it.

If you remember, the Pharisees in Jesus’ day went out of their way to be ceremonially pure. If they had contact with someone who was not ceremonially pure, this would mean that they would become defiled. So to have too much contact with Romans, half-breed Samaritans, and Gentiles in general was discouraged. In fact, people would go out of their way to avoid such contact. Jesus, though, ignores all of these traditions. Not only did He come for those Jews unable to make the grade (sinners), He came for the Romans, half-breed Samaritans, and Gentiles. He came to widen the circle of God’s people to include all people—no matter what their race, color, age, position, or morality; no matter if they are friends or enemies. To the Pharisees, this was heresy.

In this story Jesus gets the expert in the law to call the half-breed Samaritan the true neighbor to the Jewish man left half dead on the road. The original question was, “Who is *my* neighbor?” The question Jesus asks the man is, “Who is the true neighbor to the half-dead Jewish man, the priest or the Samaritan?” The twist of this story is for the expert in the law to see that he is the one who is half dead. Those he is trying to exclude—those he looks down on—are actually more loving and more alive than he is.

One of the surprises for those who travel in developing world countries is how loving and alive people who have nothing actually are. Many times those of us who have so much are “half dead.” What does it mean for us to allow others to befriend us? Are we particular about who God brings into our lives to be a friend? Do we even see our need? What does it mean for us to care for a world that has been left “half dead”? Do we even notice?



Wednesday

Luke 10:25-37

The *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* comments about this parable: “To the expert in the law, the wounded man was a subject to discuss. To the robbers, the wounded man was someone to use and exploit. To the religious man, the wounded man was a problem to be avoided. To the innkeeper, the wounded man was a customer to serve for a fee. To the Samaritan, the wounded man was a human being worth being cared for and loved. To Jesus, all of them and all of us were worth dying for. Confronting the needs of others brings out various attitudes in us. Jesus used the story of the good but despised Samaritan to make clear what attitude was acceptable to him.”

What is your attitude when your agenda is interrupted? In all honesty, this is a growing edge for me. It seems my days are packed full already. My resources are stretched thin, and confronting the need in others often reveals in myself my own inabilities (something I am not good at facing). All of this means that I find myself more like the expert in the law than I care to admit. I know the answers. I know what I should do. But in my attempts to follow Jesus, I more often than not miss what He is really asking of me.

In what ways do you *think* you “know enough about Jesus,” and as a result you miss the Holy Spirit’s leading? Real living is not found in knowing about Jesus. It is not found in trying to live as we think Jesus would want us to live. Real living is found in being spent, taking risks, and being open to the Spirit’s detours. Real living is found in being sacrificially generous, in helping without others noticing. Real living is in relationships, not in knowledge.

Today ask the Spirit where you allow your attitudes to interrupt your ability to live abundantly. Jesus came to give us abundant life, but such a life comes through walking hand in hand with Jesus and being willing to take up whatever cross or interruption He puts in our way.

Thursday

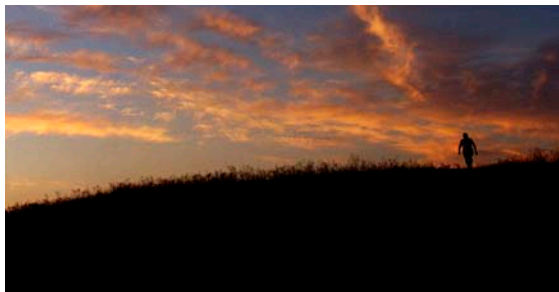
Deuteronomy 6; Leviticus 19:18

In the discussion with the expert in the law, the qualifications for inheriting eternal life were discussed. Jesus agreed with the man that loving God and loving your neighbor are at the heart of God's desire for each of us.

“To ‘love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind’ means that every area of a person’s life should be focused on God. Nothing must be held back. The word for love is *agapao*, referring to totally unselfish love, a love of which human beings are capable only with the help of the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit helps us love Him as we ought. While God wants his people to obey Him, He also wants their love. The heart (*kardia*) is the center of emotions, desires, and affections; the soul (*psuche*) is a person’s ‘being’ and uniqueness; the strength (*ischus*) refers to the drive or will; the mind (*dianoia*) is the center of the intellect. These words are not used to divide up the human personality, but to show that love must be complete—the whole person must do the loving. To love God in this way is to fulfill completely all the commandments regarding one’s ‘vertical’ relationship.”

“But there’s more, for another command from the law says to love your neighbor as yourself. This refers to ‘horizontal’ relationships—among people. A person cannot maintain a good vertical relationship with God without also caring for his or her neighbor. The word ‘neighbor’ refers to fellow human beings in general. The love a person has for himself or herself (in the sense of looking out for oneself, caring about one’s safety, etc.) should be continued, but it should also be directed toward others.” (*Life Application Bible Commentary: Luke*, Tyndale House Publishers)

None of us can perfectly keep these commands, which is why Jesus died to make up for what we are lacking. But the commands stand as God’s desire, through the power of His Holy Spirit, for how we are to live our lives. How are we doing?



Friday

Luke 10:38-42



We are in a series titled “The Jesus I Never Knew.” Because we live in the 21st century, we are all too familiar with this story about Mary and Martha. But in the first century, as in this century in the Moslem world, this story was very radical. This would have been a Jesus that the Jews of this day did not recognize. In Jesus’ day—as is true in some places today—women and men were separated. In the temple women were confined to a courtyard further away from the Holy of Holies. In the synagogues they were confined to the back, often with a curtain of some sort separating them from the men. In homes they were not allowed in the same area where men were present. What was radical about this story is not that Mary was not helping; it was that Mary was behaving like a man. She was in the public space, sitting and talking with Jesus along with the other men. Mary was breaking down what would have been considered appropriate social divisions.

In days not long ago, people were divided from each other based on their race. Many today still feel this division. It has been less than fifty years since Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream Speech.” In some areas of the world, there are still wars over one’s ethnic makeup. In many ways, there exist divisions that we have become so acquainted with that we do not even notice their existence. Often, like in India, these divisions are such a part of the culture that to breach them would result in social chaos. But Jesus breached them. Jesus broke down the walls between male and female, slave man and free man, Jew and Gentile. Why is it, then, that so many people still feel like second-class citizens?

Sitting at the feet of a rabbi meant that you were seeking to be a rabbi yourself. Mary did not let social norms get in the way of becoming what she felt God was calling her to be. Are there things that prevent you from becoming what God is calling you to be? Maybe someone once told you that you did not have a particular gift mix or skill set. Maybe a past failure prevents you from stepping out into a ministry area that God is calling you to? Is there a way you might encourage another to reach his or her full potential? Do you have prejudices that you excuse rather than face?



1700 East Palopinto Ave.

Glendora, CA 91741

(626) 914-4833

www.GlenkirkChurch.org