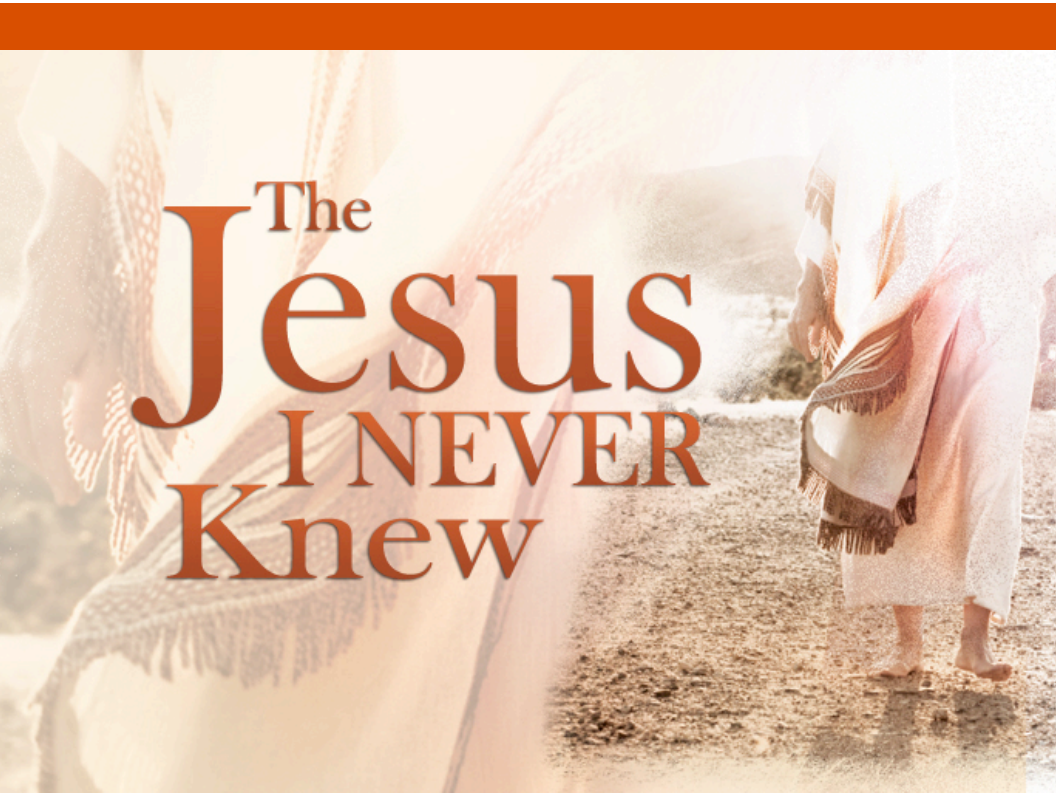


Weekly Devotional



The Jesus I NEVER Knew

October 24-28, 2011

Questions

1. Why was Jesus in the synagogue instead of out on the street exposing unGodly people to himself?
2. When you go to a worship service or to Bible study, do you feel broken and in need of healing? Are you conscious of the fact that your neighbors in church might be in need of healing? How might the reality of being broken effect the way we approach community?
3. Some of the worshipers in the synagogue were not there to worship at all but to advance their own agendas. Many were trying to prove that their interpretations of the Scriptures were correct. Do you ever come to church or small group with a similar attitude? How does it affect your experience?
4. Sometimes, as in Mark 3:12, Jesus heals without seeking public attention. Why do you think Jesus turned this healing into a teaching moment?
5. Why do you think Jesus was angry with them (v 5)?
6. Put yourself in the place of the man with the shriveled hand. Reread the account of his healing and imagine all of these happenings from his perspective. What could he have been feeling? How might his life have been changed after he was healed?



Monday

John 1:21-28, Matthew 23:1-37



Even though John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, the world was not ready for Him when He appeared and began His public ministry. He was an anomaly and He turned life, as it was at the time, upside down. For most, He could not be conceived as the long-awaited Messiah. Viewed as a radical by His opponents, He emerged at a time when tradition, ritual, and regulation were the order of the day. Such bold statements as “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work” (John 4:34) and “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17) labeled Him as controversial and blasphemous from the start.

In constant conflict with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and teachers of the Law, Jesus challenged their pride and hypocrisy – and He chastised them for their lack of justice, mercy and faithfulness. Devoted to the details of observance, these leaders missed the central focus: God Himself. For the followers whom Jesus was gaining day by day, a new message was being taught and heard: repentance, love, humility and forgiveness. At first they were curious about His ministry—healing, teaching, and driving out demons; now the crowds were beginning to pay attention to Jesus Himself.

Unafraid of the religious leaders, He kept company with those society deemed offensive; He cared neither for money nor possessions; He was well acquainted with the Scriptures; and He possessed a power that caused more than wonder in many. Clinging tightly to the Law and so afraid that Jesus would lure followers from it, the religious leaders were perplexed by Jesus even further when He made this statement: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17). Though they could not know it then, the winds of change had already begun to blow.

Pray for all of Glenkirk’s missionaries today that they might be strengthened and refreshed in their work.

Tuesday

Mark 3: 1-6



You would think that in the synagogue, on the Sabbath, those of higher learning would be centered on God alone and on keeping the day Holy. This they knew to do (Exodus 20:8-10) and were dedicated to honoring God with worship and praise. Of all people, this group should have known that the Sabbath was not an ordinary day like the six others in the week—this one was made for restoration, renewal, refreshment and reconnection with a Holy God. But the revolutionary in their midst changed all priorities. Desiring so earnestly to trap Jesus and have something to accuse Him of, He became their primary focus and target. In Jesus they found someone who dared to question their authority and their morality.

It is interesting that the man with the shriveled hand never asked for healing—perhaps he was just at the synagogue worshipping his God.

While the Pharisees were hopeful that Christ would break the Law by working on the Sabbath, He was drawn to the condition of their hearts. In the Pharisees, Christ confronted silent, proud, stubborn and conniving spirits. Their disassociation from their wrong-doing left Him angered and “deeply distressed” (v. 5). When Jesus completely restored the man’s hand, it evoked an even deeper response within the Pharisees. Their humiliation and indignation drove them to seek revenge.

Jesus didn’t just come to be a rebel and to challenge society with His teachings. He came to offer a different message, and to turn the hearts of men toward a Holy God who wants and longs for restoration with His people.

Pray for all the small groups and their leadership today.



Wednesday

Matt: 15:1-20

The arrival of Jesus disrupted the status quo. Every word and action of His was a departure from what was so ingrained in the culture of that time. Having sat for so long under the watchful eyes of the Pharisees—concerned always with outward appearances—the people could not help but be drawn to Him. Jesus was about His Father’s business and taught or spoke to them in parables about change from within, the kingdom, and faith. Apparently, for the Pharisees the Scriptures and Jesus’ teachings fell on deaf ears. Although they were God-fearing, the inner-examination of the heart was not for scholarly men such as themselves. To think that their words and actions could all be connected to their hearts never occurred to them. To think their motives could be misguided was inconceivable. Yet this was the crux of Jesus’ message.

Searching the Old Testament, we find Scriptures such as the following: “The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). These were God’s cautionary words to Samuel when he was searching for Saul’s replacement as king. Jeremiah reminds us, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). And it was for a “pure heart” that David cried out to God after the confession of his transgression (Psalm 51:10). In His own teaching Jesus made it clear that our words and lives reflect whom or what we worship —“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21).

The Pharisees were concerned about clean hands before a meal. Jesus was concerned about clean hearts before a Holy God.

Pray for all Children’s and Student Ministries at Glenkirk today.

Thursday

Luke 19:1-10

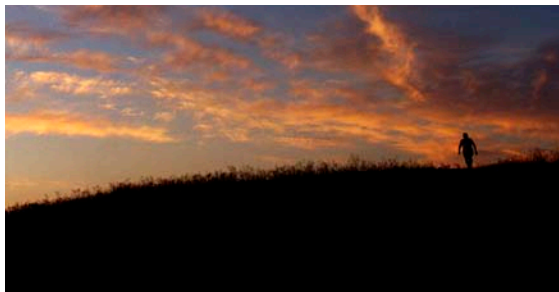
Jericho might have been just a stopover on the way to Jerusalem, but it turned out to be a very significant city in Christ's ministry. As always, crowds followed Jesus wherever He went, but since "the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost" (v. 10), Jesus was looking for just one man that day, and He knew exactly where to find him.

A quick synopsis of Zacchaeus' life might look like this: short in stature, chief tax collector, very wealthy, powerful, corrupt, and loathed by those around him. That's what we see on the outside. What we don't see—but we get a glimpse of it—is that something must be happening on the inside, which is indicated in verses 3 and 4: "He wanted to see who Jesus was . . . so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see Him." Zacchaeus wanted to know. He was interested. We definitely know Zacchaeus' heart has been moved because of his joyous response to Jesus calling him by name and his immediate recognition of Jesus as "Lord."

Of all those present, the one who was the most despised was the one who was the most desirable to Jesus. The irony of this story is that although Zacchaeus appears to be the main character in need, "the crowd" themselves might be more so in need. With judgmental, critical, antagonistic, and hostile attitudes and no sign of repentance, they missed the opportunity that so transformed Zacchaeus' life.

Transforming societies and building the Kingdom is what Jesus came to do — one person at a time.

Pray for Glenkirk's Adult Ministries today.



Friday

John 8:1-11



As the adulterous woman watched the Pharisees and teachers of the Law walking away from her one by one, I wonder what went through the mind of this woman. Approaching Jesus with a totally different agenda in mind, these “learned ones” did not expect to have the tables turned on them and become part of the problem themselves.

Where before they sought to bring humiliation and condemnation on Jesus, now these respected teachers whom others looked up to were shamed and disgraced before the common people in the temple courts. In their eyes, the adulterous woman deserved the ultimate penalty for her wrong-doing—what the Law would have called for. What they really wanted, though, was to see what Jesus would do—both with her sin and with her. They expected confrontation, but never dishonor.

The Scriptures indicate that there was no question as to this woman’s guilt. Isn’t this the way each one of us stands ultimately before Christ—guilty? That Jesus might have encouraged some form of punishment for her sin, we could probably all understand. But, lest we forget, this is Jesus. This is the Son of God. This is the One who understands sin fully and the depths of it. When all had walked away and only Christ and the woman were left, there was neither questioning nor condemnation. She stood before Him already accused; He regarded her already forgiven. She could offer Him nothing but her guilt; He offered her all His mercy.

Jesus—“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Reformer. Restorer. Redeemer. God.

Pray for Glenkirk’s outreach programs and our influence in the neighborhood.



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