Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Jesus' Actions – Week 10

Jesus not only spoke the path, He lived it – He said, and He did. His actions reveal a lot about the path -- and a lot about Jesus. God has a path which He intends all humanity to follow, and Jesus' actions showed the path as well as His words.

Day 64: Jesus sought out those who did not follow God or who were looked down on

Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at a tax booth. "Follow me," He said – and (Matthew) followed Him. … many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with Jesus and His disciples ... (Jesus) said, "Those who are healthy don't need a physician, but those who are sick do. Go and learn what this saying means: *'I want mercy and not sacrifice.'* I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Tax collectors were viewed as betrayers of their people because they profited from the rule of Rome and 'stole' to their and Rome's benefit. They were despised and ostracized by the community at large. Sinners were people who sinned – a technical term meaning that they did not do what God wanted them to, that they missed the mark of God's holiness – they broke the commands of God in some way. This may have been items such not attending worship, not giving a tithe (10% of their income to the church), lying, stealing, or a variety of other crimes. They were also often ostracized and looked down on.

Why would Jesus, if He truly was God and man, seek out those who did not follow God? What does He mean by "I desire mercy, not sacrifice?"

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 65: Jesus healed in many dimensions (again)

A woman who had been suffering from bleeding for twelve years came up behind Him and touched the edge of His cloak. She said to herself "If only I touch His cloak, I will be healed." Jesus said, "Have courage daughter! Your faith has made you well." The woman was healed from that hour.

"Suffering from bleeding" in this case means the woman would have been ritually unclean, prohibited from worship and being a part of her community for that time (for the rule was she would have to live outside the community until her bleeding stopped). Once the bleeding stopped, she was open to re-establishing relationships with her loved ones and her wider community.

When a woman of that town, who was a sinner, learned that Jesus was dining at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfumed oil. As she stood behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the perfumed oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner."…. Turning toward the woman, Jesus said to Simon (the Pharisee), "Do you see this woman? I entered your house. You gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss of greeting, but from the time I entered she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfumed oil. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which were many, are forgiven, thus she loved much; but the one who is forgiven little loves little." Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace (shalom)."

The innuendo in this example is that this woman was probably a prostitute. As such, she would have been shunned and condemned. Jesus proclaimed her not only forgiven (healed of her broken relationship with God), but to go in shalom: wholeness, completeness, health. She has been restored communally as well as religiously.

These are two examples of Jesus healing not only physically, but relationally. These are also examples of Jesus extending healing to a person who was, by the society of the time, considered second class and not one whom a male (especially a Rabbi) should acknowledge in public (to do so was scandalous).

(Pharisees were members of one of the most important and influential religious and political parties of Judaism in the time of Jesus. The Pharisees were strict and zealous adherents to the laws of the Old Testament (part of the bible) and to numerous additional traditions.)

How do these healings demonstrate that Jesus was intent on sharing shalom with everyone, no matter their background or condition? What are your thoughts on Jesus' comment, "those who have loved much have been forgiven much?" How about "your faith has saved you?"

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 66: Jesus was Lord

At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on a Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pick heads of wheat and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is against the law to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, … "I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. If you had known what this means: 'I want mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

Jesus is making two remarkable claims:

1.) "something greater than the temple is here." The temple was widely regarded as where heaven and earth met – it was God's house.
2.) "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." The Sabbath (a weekly day of rest) was instituted, it was believed, by the divine command of God.

Jesus was implying that He, and the Kingdom of God that He proclaimed, was greater than God's house – in effect, He was replacing the old house with a new one. He was also claiming that He had authority to decide on things that God had initiated, that God upheld – authority that, it would be presumed, only God had.

How would you react if someone spoke round-about with you, yet clearly implied an astounding claim, such as they were God, or equivalent to God? How do you think the Pharisees reacted? We are told a few verses later:

"… the Pharisees went out and plotted against him, as to how they could assassinate him."

Do you think the Pharisees were evil? Why would Jesus beat around the bush while implying such incredible claims? Did Jesus' actions back up His words?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 67: Jesus invites people in

While Jesus was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and brothers came and stood outside, asking to speak to him. Someone told him, "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside wanting to speak to you." To the one who had said this, Jesus replied, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" And pointing toward his disciples he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

"whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

We covered some of Jesus' rules and guidelines earlier – they were part of Jesus' teaching about the will of His Father (Jesus commonly called God "His Father"). The basic foundation of the Fathers' will was, according to Jesus, to love (implement what is healthiest). You could paraphrase the above to be "whoever does what is healthiest for others and most pleasing for God is my brother, my sister, my mother."

How does it feel to be welcomed into Jesus' family just because you are trying to do what is healthiest? How does it feel to be loved because you love?

As shown previously Jesus actively sought out the lost and forsaken, the shunned and despised, as well. How does it feel to be loved because you <u>need</u> love?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 68: Jesus taught through stories with meaning

"The kingdom of heaven is like a person who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and sowed darnel among the wheat and went away. When the plants sprouted and produced grain, then the darnel also appeared. So the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Then where did the darnel come from?' He said, 'An enemy has done this!' So the slaves replied, 'Do you want us to go and gather it?' But he said, 'No, since in gathering the darnel you may uproot the wheat along with it. Let both grow together until the harvest. At harvest time I will tell the reapers, "First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burned, but then gather the wheat into my barn."'"

Jesus gave many stories which people had to figure out by themselves. The above story may be an indicator of God's love, who refuses to get rid of evil in case doing so actually harms His children. It may be a warning that we shall have evil and good existing side-by-side all our lives. It may be a statement that evil will be destroyed at some point, once it is safe to do so without harming good. It may be a warning to therefore pursue good, not evil. Or, it may be a caution that evil must be assumed and accounted for, worked around and opposed. There are several possible interpretations (Jesus' explanation is recorded in Matthew 13:36-43).

Why would Jesus not only speak obliquely, but also hide meanings in stories which had several possible interpretations? Why did He want His actions to perhaps inform more clearly than His words? Do the two reinforce each other? Were there people who Jesus did not want to be able to figure out the truth?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 69: Jesus demanded a morality

Pharisees and experts in the law came from Jerusalem to Jesus and said, "Why do your disciples disobey the tradition of the elders? For they don't wash their hands when they eat." …. He called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. What defiles a person is not what goes into the mouth; it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles a person. Don't you understand that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach and then passes out into the sewer? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these things defile a person. For out of the heart come evil ideas, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are the things that defile a person; it is not eating with unwashed hands that defiles a person."

Naturalism (a popular type of Atheism) would have us believe there is no morality, that nothing has value from a moral sense. Jesus disagreed. He also disagreed with the leaders of the day, who interpreted morality from a ritual observance point of view. For Jesus, morality came down to choosing what is healthiest vs not. It was action-oriented and very foundational to a healthy life versus a fearful and depraved life.

What are the implications of living in a totally non-moral society? What are the implications of living a life of strong morality? What would you prefer? Why would God care?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 70: Rest

We come again to the seventh day, so today we rest. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.