Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 70: The Kingdom of God: healing, relationships, trust, acceptance

Day 483: Healing

Now when Jesus finished these sayings, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan River. Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there." (Matthew 19:1-2)

Jesus said such and such, and then He healed people. Jesus did such and such, and then He healed people.

The key to Jesus' ministry was healing. As we attempt to be "Little Christ's", that is the key, the basis, to your ministry as well: healing.

But I cannot heal people like Jesus did! I cannot just walk up to someone, spit on their eyes, say, "Behold! You see!" and it happens!

Maybe, maybe not. What kind of healing do you think you can do?

Ummm… I don't know. I'm not a doctor.

Even doctors don't heal --- they put in the conditions for healing, but they don't do the healing. God does. This may be a better question: what healing conditions can you put into place?

Well… I can listen to people.

Listening can be very healing! Combine that with prayer, and you have potent healing conditions being created. All of us are gifted differently. If we use the gift(s) which God has given us, combined with prayer, people around us can be healed, circumstances can be improved, love (providing what is healthiest) given, in some way. That is our fundamental ministry. You are to provide what is healthiest, because love is healing.

It is critical to understand that no one heals, not even the most advanced doctor. All we do is put the conditions for healing in place. **It is God alone who heals.** So, ask not how you can heal – ask how God can heal through you: what conditions do you need to put in place?

What has our heavenly Father gifted you with? How can you use your gifts to heal?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 484: Marriage

Then some Pharisees came to him in order to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful to divorce a wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

They said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" Jesus said to them, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because of your hard hearts, but from the beginning it was not this way. Now I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another commits adultery."

The disciples said to him, "If this is the case of a husband with a wife, it is better not to marry!" He said to them, "Not everyone can accept this statement, except those to whom it has been given. For there are some eunuchs who were that way from birth, and some who were made eunuchs by others, and some who became eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who is able to accept this should accept it."
(Matthew 19:3-12)

The key question is: *what is the healthiest thing to do?* What is healthiest for the husband, for the wife, for the children? Marriage is intended to be a relationship for life-long stability and support. There will be problems, but the life-long nature of marriage gives motivation to work through the problems, each time asking, *'What is the healthiest response for this situation? What is the healthiest thing to do going forward?'* Marriage is intended to be where two unique individuals become one, spiritually. Adultery is breaking that one-ness. To re-phrase Jesus, *whoever breaks the one-ness of Marriage, unless it is already broken, is guilty of harming both parties.*

What would break the one-ness of marriage?

Jesus was probably referencing sex outside of marriage (the classic definition of adultery). However, I suggest that any un-loving behaviour may break the one-ness of marriage. Abuse, terror, and yes, adultery are all methods of inflicting harm on the partner, of saying "I don't wish you to live with me" (or, perhaps even more insidious, "I wish to own you"). In those cases, if healing cannot be found, it may be healthiest for the affected partner (if not both partners) to dissolve the marriage. Contrarily, if someone leaves a marriage just because they are bored, or tired, or greedy for something other, then they are guilty of causing harm – and that is one of the definitions of sin. As Jesus says, if you cannot discipline yourself to the practice of a holy marriage, then discipline yourself to the practice of a holy single-ness. To be holy, both require discipline, both require love.

In your relationships, always ask: "what is healthiest?" If you are married, have a conversation with your partner regarding what is healthiest for each of you and for the family as a whole. If you are single, think of your relationships (including with yourself) and ask yourself for each one, "what is healthiest?" Write down some of your conclusions.

Share your thoughts but only if appropriate.

Day 485: Hard hearts

Jesus said to them, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because of your hard hearts,
(Matthew 19:8)

Stubborn. Unyielding. Refusing to listen. Unaccepting. Judgemental. These are all symptoms of a hard heart. Sometimes, God can only take us so far, and then, like a non-comprehending donkey, we are unable to go any further. We bite and stomp and kick and bray – anything but go forward.

Yet the kingdom of God is so very, very close – if we could but take that extra step into it. Sometimes, the hardest thing of all can be to relax and let go – to let God give us shalom.

Where are you hard of heart? How can you relax the hardness of your heart, so you have a soft heart which can fully embrace God and God's love?

Share your thoughts with those you love.

Day 486: Who the kingdom of God belongs to

"Then little children were brought to Him for Him to lay His hands on them and pray. But the disciples scolded those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me and do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." He placed His hands on them and went on His way." (Matthew 19:13-15)

What are children like?

Mischievous, trusting, playful, emotional, curious … children are many things.

True! A better question may be, "how are children different from adults?"

Hmmm. More trusting perhaps, because they are more dependent. More curious, because everything is new. More "all in", because they haven't yet learned restraint.

Yes. Children are, for the most part, the same as adults, except in manner of degree. If I were to summarize God's message to us through the bible, I would say:

1.) Do not be afraid, 2.) Trust God, 3.) Love.

Fully embrace those three approaches to life, and God's Kingdom, His shalom, belongs to you.

Where do you fear? Where do you not trust God? What is stopping you from pursuing what is healthiest? Bring those to Jesus and ask Him to walk with you so you too may get closer to God's Kingdom.

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 487: Questions

Now someone came up to him and said, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to gain eternal life?" He said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." "Which ones?" he asked. Jesus replied, "Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "I have wholeheartedly obeyed all these laws. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." But when the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he was very rich." (Matthew 19:16-22)

The kingdom of God..

I'm sorry to interrupt, but I have a few questions about this passage.

Oh! Interrupt away! What are your questions?

a.) *Is Jesus telling us He's not 'good'? Or, that He's not God?*
b.) *When Jesus abbreviates the ten commandments in His answer, is He saying those are the only ones we need to follow?*
c.) *Do we get eternal life without being perfect? Will God let us in without us being perfect?*
d.) *How is following Jesus related to this exercise?*

Excellent questions! I'm not sure I have the answers you want, but here goes:

a.) Jesus doesn't explicitly say He's not good, nor that He's not God, but rather He questions where the other person is coming from, while answering the question being posed. He could be saying, 'Only God is good. Only God knows what is good. When you ask me like this, do you realize who and what you are asking?' As we know, Jesus was very cryptic in making claims and wanted people to figure out for themselves who He was.
b.) Jesus has already told us that at least one commandment was because of 'hardness of heart'. He has also told us that all the commandments are wrapped up in 'love God and love your neighbour as yourself.' The commandments are a guide to loving – they are not an end unto themselves. As you seek, guided by God, to do the healthiest action in the circumstance you are in, you will find yourself following the will of God – which is what the commandments point to. Follow those commandments which help you to love in the context you find yourself in at the moment.
c.) If we don't get eternal life without being perfect, none of us will get it. Jesus calls us to perfection but does not reject us in our lack of it. Rather, He looks for us to not fear, to trust God, and to love. This all comes by knowing that we are loved first – which is the bedrock message of Jesus. He loves us, so that we might love too.
d.) Following Jesus is key. If we put our treasure in Jesus, if we use Him as the pattern for how we live (which is what a disciple does), if we try to look at things like He did, if we maximize our capacity to love through the use of our gifts, we are on the holy path – and

things will turn out all right. Jesus is the living will of God. The commandments point to Him, love points to Him. It's all about Him.

What questions do you have which have risen from your daily reading of scripture, from your prayers, or from today's meditation?

Share your questions with your fellow explorers.

Day 488: Entering the Kingdom

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven! Again I say, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of God." The disciples were greatly astonished when they heard this and said, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and replied, "This is impossible for mere humans, but for God all things are possible."

Then Peter said to him, "Look, we have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth: In the age when all things are renewed, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. And whoever has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first." (Matthew 19:23-30)

It is impossible for humans to get into the kingdom of God by their own devices.

Say what?

You cannot get into heaven by guile, hard work, cunning, intelligence, wisdom, payment, even by how much you love.

I may as well give up then. I'm toast.

No.

Why not? If I cannot get into heaven?

'This is impossible for humans, but for God all things are possible.' If you realize that you cannot manage to get into heaven through your own capabilities, that you are utterly dependent upon God not only for your creation but also your salvation, and if you say to God, 'I will not fear. I trust you. I shall love. Please forgive me when I miss the mark, and guide me in aiming better' – then, you are oriented the right way. Many who the world values highly will find that they have pointed their lives in the wrong direction, because they have not simplified their lives down to: 'Be brave. Trust. Love. Walk with Christ.' Never give up on Christ. This simplifying includes getting rid of anything which distracts you from following Christ – which is why wealthy people will find it so hard.

You cannot work your way into God's kingdom, but you can be given it as a gift. As you ponder this statement, what thoughts, fears, and hopes come to you? How does this influence how you live your life? What is distracting you from walking with Christ, and can you get rid of it?

Explain your thoughts to your fellow explorers.

Day 489: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! Fill yourself with Light. 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.

Know that God loves you. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God. Be in shalom.