Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Jesus' Actions – Week 11

As opposition to Jesus grew, His words and actions became more dramatic.

Day 71: Jesus wanted His identity to be known through personal revelation.

Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They answered, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "You are blessed, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven! And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades (Hell) will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven." Then he instructed his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Jesus apparently did not want His identity known through "flesh and blood" (i.e., you believe because I told you so), but to be revealed by His Father in heaven (i.e., through an epiphany: a heavenly revelation). He instructed His disciples not to tell people He is the Christ while He was with them (later He changed that, but we'll get to that in a while). In other words, He wanted people to be convinced of their own volition that He was who He claimed to be, not accept it because of some "authority" telling them so.

Why is it important that you convince yourself rather than have someone persuade you? What would convince you that there is a God, and that Jesus and God are one?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 72: The Transfiguration

Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and led them privately up a high mountain. And He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as Light. Then Moses and Elijah also appeared before them, talking with Him. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you want, I will make three shelters – one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While He was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my one dear Son, in whom I take great delight. Listen to Him!" When the disciples heard this, they were overwhelmed with fear and thew themselves down with their faces to the ground. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," He said. "Do not be afraid." When they looked up, all they saw was Jesus alone.

As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Do not tell anyone about the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."

Jesus' disciples had a collective vision of Him being transformed in front of them. Moses (the law-giver) and Elijah (the prophet to come before the final Messiah or Anointed One) talk to Him about His upcoming journey of suffering. Moses and Elijah together represented the Law and the Prophets, the entire wisdom of the holy book of the Israelites. Peter, feeling He is seeing the beginning of the end-times, offers to make primitive shelters to commemorate the shelters the Israelites lived in during their journey from Egypt, new shelters which would declare the new exodus, the new journey, from the kingdom of the world to the kingdom of God. And the voice from the cloud interrupts Peter, declaring that Jesus is indeed God's Son, that He is the long-awaited one to be followed and listened to, the One to be Obeyed, who will lead them into the new and eternal kingdom.

The disciples were full of awe and fear – they had entered a place, they were following a man, they could not hope to understand. They were greatly confused; the interruption of Peter told them that things would not unfold how they thought they might. They were with a strange teacher, in a strange place, with unforeseen consequences and fear.

How would you have reacted?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 73: Who is the Greatest?

The disciples came to Jesus saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, had him stand among them, and said "I tell you the truth, unless you turn around and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven! Whoever then humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

"The greatest among you will be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

"… the one who is least among you all is the one who is great."

Trusting like a little child trusts its parents. Serving without regard for recognition. Humbly always seeking what is healthiest, and not seeking reward. Jesus' Country has an upside-down social hierarchy – those who are most humble, most serving, trusting and dependent, the least of humanity's societies – those are the ones who God regards most highly.

Can you live, today, and uphold the humble and meek? The trusting and serving? Can you be one of them?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 74: The importance of forgiveness

Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother who sins against me? As many as seven times? Jesus said to him, "Not seven times I tell you, but seventy times seven times!

Peter wanted to impress Jesus – and Jesus told him, "No Peter, you are not going near far enough. Forgive endlessly." (70 x 7 stands for 'infinity'). Forgiveness (see day 16 for a refresher) is critical for living in the God's Country. Jesus taught to seek what is healthiest no matter how many times the person violated you, or how severely – He demonstrated this even to Jesus' very death itself. If you bring your faults to Jesus, no matter how severe, no matter how awful, and earnestly wish to change your life, He promises forgiveness to you through Him. He has forgiven murderers, rapists, adulterers, liars and thieves – and He wants to forgive you.

What is the limit to how much you should forgive? What is the limit to what you should forgive? That Jesus should forgive you of?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 75: Was Jesus violent?

(Jesus) found in the temple courts those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting at tables. He made a whip of cords and drove them all out of the temple courts, with the sheep and the oxen. He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold the doves He said, "Take these things away from here! Do not make my Father's house a marketplace!" …. And he said to them, "It is written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are turning it into a den of robbers!" …. So then the Jewish leaders responded, "What sign can you show us, since you are doing these things?"

They didn't call the police. They didn't grab Jesus and take Him off to jail. They instead asked Him, basically, "if you are a prophet, how can you prove it?" They suspected that Jesus was enacting prophecy, and they wanted to make sure (otherwise, he was just a violent rabble-rouser who *should* be sent to jail). Many years before Jesus, a prophet named Zechariah had written down in speaking of the coming of the Day of the Lord, "on that day there will no longer be a merchant in the house of the Lord" Jesus also referenced the prophet Jeremiah, who had written, "do you think this temple I have claimed as my own is to be a hideout for robbers? … you have refused to respond when I called you to repent (change your life)! So I will destroy this temple …". Through His actions, Jesus was claiming that now was the time, and He was the person through whom it was happening. He was also claiming the existing temple where people worshiped God would be destroyed, replaced by a new one.

We have defined love as "doing the healthiest thing for people, the most pleasing thing for God." How were Jesus' actions above, actions of love?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 76: Jesus claimed an exclusive family (revisited)

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."*

The Israelites believed they were God's people because of their inheritance through Abraham. Jesus is defining God's people differently – in one way much more open, and in another much more restricted. More open, because it did not depend on inheritance through bloodlines – membership was available to anyone who did the Father's will. More restricted, because membership was to those who did the Father's will. You could have all the credentials, but if you aren't living according to the will and desires of our heavenly Father, Jesus is warning that you aren't in the family.

What are the implications of not being in the Father's family? If you haven't been living according to the will of God, can you "make amends?" How do you become part of the family?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 77: 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.