Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Jesus' Actions – Week 9

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.

Day 57: Jesus healed

Jesus went throughout all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and sickness among the people.
People brought to him all who suffered with various illnesses and afflictions, those who had seizures, paralytics, and those possessed by demons, and he healed them.

Jesus travelled around from town to town, teaching and preaching – and healing. Virtually all experts on the history of Jesus—whether Jewish, agnostic, or Christian—agree that the man from Nazareth performed deeds which his contemporaries interpreted as miraculous. That he enjoyed the reputation as a healer is beyond dispute. People who healed, while very rare, were not unheard of at the time. A man named Josephus wrote around AD 90, 150 years after the Rabbi Honi's death:

> 'Now there was a certain Onias (Honi), who, being a righteous man and dear to God had once in a rainless period prayed to God to end the drought, and God had heard his prayer and sent rain.'

Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa was active a couple of decades after Jesus:

> 'When he would pray for the sick, he would say 'This one shall have life' or 'This one shall die.' They said to him, 'How do you know?' he said to them, 'If my prayer is fluent, then I know that it is accepted, and the person will live. But if not, I know that it is rejected, and the person will die'.

There are only a couple of sources each for Honi and Hanina, versus many copies of the gospels for Jesus. Virtually everyone involved in the academic study of Jesus, regardless of their scepticism about miracles generally, concludes that in the case of Jesus the evidence establishes that he did things which those around him considered to be miraculous. That is a conclusion without parallel in the study of antiquity.

How would healing reinforce Jesus' mission? What may healing say about Jesus the person?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 58: Jesus healed in many dimensions.

A leper approached and bowed low before him, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand and touched him saying, "I am willing. Be clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you do not speak to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest, and bring the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

If you had leprosy in Jesus' time and place, you were not allowed to associate with other people – you were not only physically sick, but ritually unclean – you were not allowed to worship or come near others while you had the sickness. For most of them, this meant a lifetime of being excluded from society. By healing someone of leprosy, Jesus not only physically healed them, but also opened the door to them being healed socially and ritually – they could now rejoin the community in worship (pending the ok of the priest), and hopefully re-establish themselves with their families and communities socially as well. In essence, Jesus had given this man his life back.

In healing this man, what different facets of shalom did Jesus give him?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 59: Jesus didn't only heal "the chosen ones".

A centurion came to him asking for help: "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible anguish." Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof! Instead, just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave 'Do this!' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found such faith in anyone in Israel! I tell you, many will come from the east and west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; just as you believed, it will be done for you." And the servant was healed at that hour.

Jesus didn't only heal the Jewish people. This person was a leader in the occupying army of Rome – the dreaded enemy – and yet, Jesus not only healed his servant, but was amazed by his faith. Then, Jesus used the opportunity to tell people that many from around the world are invited into the New Country – but those who assume they are in yet do not show appropriate fruit will be excluded.

Would you *want* to heal a person who, as far as you knew, may have participated in killing your friends and neighbours? Whose role was to make sure that you remained under enemy authority? If you didn't want to, would you do it anyway?

Why would faith be important to Jesus? Why would Jesus be setting boundaries on who is welcome into God's Country, and who is not?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 60: Jesus' healings had a purpose.

Now when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying down, sick with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her. Then she got up and began to serve them. When it was evening, many demon-possessed people were brought to him. He drove out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick. In this way what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled: *"He took our weaknesses and carried our diseases."*

Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, and she resumed her life and valued role. Jesus healed people who were spiritually sick, people filled with destructive impulses against themselves and against others. These people could then turn to God and enter shalom in God's Country. Unlike the other miracle workers talked about on Day 57, Jesus' miracles were not the result of Him praying to God, but rather Him doing the healing Himself with a word, an action, or a phrase – His authority was very, very unique – in fact, it was totally unheard of. Also unheard of was identifying Jesus as the answer to prophecy.

What message might Jesus have been trying to give through His healings?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 61: Jesus was more than He seemed.

A great storm developed on the sea so that the waves began to swamp the boat. But he was asleep. (His students) woke him up saying, "Lord, save us! We are about to die!" But he said to them, "Why are you cowardly, you people of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it was dead calm. And the men were amazed and said, "What sort of person is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him!"

Jesus' students may have been excited and delighted by his teaching and healings, but they were amazed, confused, and fearful by his calming of the storm (another version states, "But they (His students) were afraid and amazed…"). The scriptures which his students were familiar with had this to say about calming of storms:

"They cried out to the Lord in their distress; he delivered them from their troubles. He calmed the storm, and the waves grew silent." (Psalm 107)

"O Lord God of Hosts! Who is strong like you, O Lord? Your faithfulness surrounds you. You rule over the proud sea. When its waves surge, you calm them." (Psalm 89)

There are other examples as well: the one who calmed the seas was none other than God.

How would you feel if you understood scripture as the disciples (students) did, and Jesus calmed the storm you were in? What kind of message was Jesus giving His students, both in the calming of the storm and in Him rebuking them for their lack of faith?

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 62: Jesus claimed authority.

"Some people brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Have courage, son! Your sins are forgiven." Then some of the experts in the law said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming (claiming something which only God can do)!" When Jesus perceived their thoughts he said, "Why do you respond with evil in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—then he said to the paralytic— "Stand up, take your stretcher, and go home." He stood up and went home. When the crowd saw this, they were afraid and honored God who had given such authority to men."

The "Son of Man" is a reference to a prophecy which Jesus' compatriots would have been familiar with:

"I was watching in the night visions, and with the clouds of the sky, one like a son of man was approaching. He went up to the Ancient of Days (God) and was escorted before him. To him was given ruling authority, honor, and sovereignty. All peoples, nations, and language groups were serving him. His authority is eternal and will not pass away. His kingdom will not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14)

Jesus was implying that His actions, where He could forgive sins, heal people, even calm the storm – were because He had authority, authority which could only come from God. The crowd was afraid because the implications, if true, were tremendous – it meant nothing less than the inbreaking of God's Country, under Jesus' authority. It meant the total changing of the world.

Describe the implications if Jesus indeed has ruling authority, over everyone and everything.

Share your thoughts with your others you trust.

Day 63: 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.