

A Study in Luke

Week Eight

Luke 4:31-5:16

Day One

31 Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. 32 They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority. 33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, 34 "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

v. 31 – Jesus adopted Capernaum as his residence. I have been to Capernaum and it still has such a different atmosphere than Jerusalem—much more peaceful. The residents there were open to His message, whereas the people in His real hometown of Nazareth had tried to kill Him.

Jesus was a teacher. The people often referred to Him as such. Don't underestimate the power of teaching; it is still a powerful and relevant way to disciple and train people. When you teach, you are really learning; that is why you should have some teaching outlet, even if you aren't a particularly gifted teacher. Teaching causes you to study and "connect" with people.

v. 32 – Jesus had authority, not like the others who were teaching. He was in touch with His Father and taught in the power of the Spirit:

“For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say” (John 12:49-50).

Not only did the Father instruct Jesus what to say, but also how to say it. No wonder the people were amazed at His teaching! What is the source of your teaching? Is it the Father or someone else's voice? Do you have faith that the Father can teach what to say and give you a strategy for which to say it? I am personally challenged as I read this to do a better job of allowing God to speak through me, both with words and technique.

v. 33 – Jesus' authority always led to encounters with the world of evil. This should not surprise us when it happens to us, for if we are speaking the words of God, then those words will torment those spirits who rebelled against God. Your obedience to speak will remind them of their own wickedness and it can cause them to try and disrupt what you are saying.

v. 34 – This evil spirit gave testimony as to who Jesus really was. This showed intelligence and the ability to communicate. Don't every underestimate the kingdom of darkness. There is only one means by which we can be victorious against Satan and that

is through the blood of Jesus. We are no match for the kingdom of darkness by ourselves, but that kingdom is no match for us when we are in Jesus. Don't go looking for evil, but when it confronts you, stand in the power of God and in the protection and authority of Jesus.

Day Two

35 "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. 36 All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" 37 And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

v. 35 – There is always much debate about demons and whether they are around today and whether they can be present in a believer's life. My own experience shows that they can, for the demonic seems to influence the realm of the soul—emotions, thoughts and attitudes—with physical manifestations as well. You cannot reason with an evil spirit or debate or counsel one. You can only cast them out!

There may be a situation or person you are dealing with right now that can only be handled as you take authority over the evil behind that situation. You may have to say, "In the name of Jesus, I bind this evil and command it to cease and desist. Be gone, in Jesus' name!" You cannot do this in your own wisdom or strength, for you have no spiritual power in and of yourself. But you can do this in and through Jesus. Go into your place of employment, school or other place where God has placed you, and pray over the equipment or desks and anoint them with oil. Use a prayer of authority to bind and dismiss the powers of darkness with which you have been dealing.

v. 36 – The people were amazed when Jesus confronted evil and had results. People are still amazed when this happens. While our western culture usually denies the reality of the world of evil spirits, people still flock to see horror films because somehow they know that evil exists and that it is powerful and scary. I don't ever have to go see a horror film; I live with enough horror as I travel and minister, seeing evil in many different forms and cultures.

Please don't be naïve. Satan is alive and well and has legions of helpers who attack people's bodies and minds. But fear not! We have authority over them in the name of Jesus. You need to stop being passive if evil has attacked your money, family, ministry or work. Ask God what you should say and how you should say it and be aggressive! Cast the evil out! Don't take "no" for an answer, but stand on God's promise:

"No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me" (Isaiah 54:17).

Day Three

38 Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. 39 So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them. 40 When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. 41 Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.

vs. 38&39 – Much has been made of the fact that Simon's mother-in-law got up to serve Jesus after she was healed. I would put the emphasis on Jesus leaving the synagogue to go do good deeds. Most of the miracles that Jesus performed were outside the walls of the place of worship. The modern church wants the people to come to the church before the church will even consider helping them. But Jesus took His ministry to the people and consequently the people then came looking for Him. I think we have things backward today. Do you agree?

v. 40 – You see, once Jesus healed this woman, it opened the floodgates and people came to Him from all over. One of the questions I ask people who are searching for their purpose is: What situation, group of people or problem always seeks you out? What comes looking for you? My purpose is to bring order out of chaos. I never have to go looking for chaos; it comes looking for me. What or who comes finds you no matter where you are?

Jesus laid His hands on people. People want to touch you; they don't always want to see you on a video screen or from a distance. I make a conscious effort to touch people, not only when I am praying for them, but even when I meet them or I am talking with them. I don't understand the power that's in touching, but I know it's there. But touching isn't something I'm always comfortable doing. If it's important to others or if there is some spiritual transaction when I touch, then I want to do it. Who do you need to touch today?

v. 41 – The demons knew Jesus was the Christ, but the Pharisees and leaders of Israel did not. That always amuses me that the kingdom of darkness had more spiritual insight than the covenant community.

It occurs to me that Jesus did very little to clear up the confusion that surrounded His life and identify. When people asked Him, "Who are you?" he would respond, "Who do you think I am?" He never cleared up the confusion about His birth or His ministry. In fact He seemed to go out of His way to confuse people even more! Why? I think because that people had to see who He was through a revelation from the Father. They could not determine He was the Christ through the miracles or by intellectual assent. It had to be the way Peter saw who Jesus was:

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, ***for this was not revealed to you by man, but by 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 will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ (Matthew 16:16-20 emphasis added).

Are you trying to "figure God out?" If you are, you can stop. You don't need to be smarter where God is concerned; you need to hear from the Father. And that comes through humility and seeking, not through study and intelligence.

Day Four

42 At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. 43 But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." 44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

v. 42 – Jesus commitment to prayer fascinates and humbles me. If He, being God, felt the need to pray as much as He did, then I should discipline myself to do the same. You would think that Jesus' close relationship with the Father would require less prayer, but instead it led to an abundance of prayer. How is your prayer life? If you aren't happy with it, don't commit to prayer an hour a day immediately. Make a commitment to 15 minutes and grow and go from there. I confess that I'm not sure I have much of a prayer life when I compare mine to Jesus' model.

The demands of public ministry were the same for Jesus as for us today. He was trying to get away from the people and they were trying to get more of Him. Then when they found Him, they tried to make Him their local "pastor." They tried to keep Him all to themselves and not share Him with others.

v. 43 – Jesus was a man of purpose. He knew what He was supposed to do, so He said "no" to their request for Him to stay. How often do you say "no?" Probably not often enough. But saying "no" isn't the right thing to do unless you are carrying out your "yes." What are your priorities today? Can you say "no" to the urgent things today so you can do the vital things? Jesus was able to do that, even when people pressured Him to deviate from His plan. Yet Jesus always had time to heal or minister to those same people. He just refused to be controlled by their agenda for His life, because He had an agenda of His own.

v. 44 – Jesus stayed focused on His top priority and that was seeking and saving the lost as He taught in the synagogues of Judea. Do you know your purpose? If not, then please go to my website at www.purposequest.com and use any of the resources there to help

you clarify your purpose. If you know your purpose, it will help you stay focused on the truly important things and help you say “no” to the less important. Your purpose will help you pray, for it will bring you closer to God and cause you to seek Him for help to do the really important things in your life.

Day Five

5:1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, 2 he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

vs. 1-11 – I decided to keep this story together and not to break it up with a verse-by-verse analysis:

- People will still come out to hear a good preacher and teacher. “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).
- Jesus taught outdoors, which was not considered proper by some who felt that the synagogue was the proper place for this activity.
- The fisherman had been up all night and now had no choice but to listen to Jesus. Perhaps the fishermen were wondering why the Teacher had to choose this spot. They were tired and busy.
- Simon, the fisherman listened and then obeyed the command of Jesus. That is a good pattern to follow for anyone who comes near to Jesus – listen and obey.
- Jesus isn't interested in fish; He's interested in men's souls.
- There was something about this catch that brought Simon to his knees. I suppose it was the sheer quantity, but it also represented an act of God after they had put forth their best efforts. That is often how it goes; Jesus shows up when you are tired and have done everything you know to do.
- Jesus told Simon not to be afraid. When the Lord tells you not to fear, it is often too late!

- This incident was Jesus' calling these men to follow Him, to find and fulfill their purpose. What is Jesus asking you to do? Are you willing to leave everything and follow Him? In some ways, Jesus was very indirect with Simon, yet Simon heard the call of God. If you are waiting for an "engraved invitation" to follow Jesus, it will probably never come. You will have to "read the signs" of what God is saying and respond in faith. (To see the "call" from Elijah to Elisha, read 1 Kings 19:19-21. Notice how "low key" the call was and how Elisha responded. That may be a model for how God is speaking to you and what you must do to follow the call.)

Day Six

12 While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." 13 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

v. 12 – Luke's gospel highlights Jesus' compassion for women, lepers and the downtrodden. Here a leper approached Jesus and humbled himself, falling to the ground and begging Jesus for his healing. Leprosy was a dreaded disease and a type of sin in the Old Testament (see Leviticus 13 & 14). Please note that I am *not* saying that sin caused leprosy, but rather it was symbolic of how sin ravages a man's being, just like the disease ravaged someone's flesh.

The leper begged Jesus to cleanse him "if you are willing." The leper, used to being an outcast to be avoided, wasn't sure if Jesus had the will to heal him. He knew Jesus had the power but wasn't sure if God felt about him like everyone else did. Everyone else may avoid and reject the sinner's condition, but God never does, especially if the sinner approaches God with humility.

v. 13 – Jesus touched the man. He just didn't say, "Be healed!" He touched the leper. That must have meant a lot to the man who was used to being shunned. There is power to heal in physical contact. As I asked earlier, is there someone you need to "touch" today? Remember the promise in Mark's gospel:

*"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; **they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well**" (Mark 16:17-18 emphasis added).*

It doesn't say that certain believers will lay hands on the sick and see them healed. It states that all believers will do so. So what are you waiting for? Start laying hands on sick people!

Day Seven

14 Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 15 Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

v. 14 – Jesus had an unusual “public relations” strategy. He worked to keep His name and reputation a secret. That is the opposite of how I approach my ministry, for I want as many as possible to know about my good deeds or spiritual success. Jesus said:

"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. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matthew 5:17-19).

The Law required that a healed leper do what Jesus ordered this man to do. This practice was to instill and give opportunity for a sense of gratitude for healing, for the healed could not just go about his or her business. They had to consciously go to God’s house and God’s servant to bear witness to the fact that they were healed. I think that is a healthy practice to cultivate, don’t you? What has God done in your life that you need to bear witness to today?

v. 15 – It is hard to keep reports of healing under wraps. There must have been much sickness in Jesus’ day and of course little medical care. The people came to Jesus, not because of who He was, but because of what He could do. That remains the same today; yet Jesus welcomed the people and ministered to their needs even though they were “using” Him to receive something.

v. 16 – Jesus did not take His identity from the crowds, but from doing the Father’s will. That is why He often withdrew, to keep His focus and to remain balanced and centered on what He had come to do. The more I deal with crowds, the more I find the need to withdraw to refresh myself and to not take myself or my success too seriously.

I posed this question earlier: Do you need to withdraw and find some solitude? Do you need some silence in your life right now? Can you find 30 minutes to do this today? Busy-ness will always clutter your life and success breeds more busy-ness. Take some time away from the crowds of people and duties today to hear the voice of God and renew your focus on what you were created to do.