

4. Jesus Preached in the Next Towns

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to answer questions from the Word of God instead of their own opinions. We also saw that we want to help them understand that Jesus has all power over every demon. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus began to give His disciples a vision for the people in other areas in addition to their own town.

Jesus had spent a busy Sabbath ministering to the people of Capernaum. However, that did not hinder Jesus from spending time with His Father. Mark 1:35-37 says, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those *who were* with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for You.’” Here, we see that Jesus got up long before daylight. Jesus gave each of us an example of the importance of fellowship with the Father. In 1 John 1:3, we read, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Jesus wanted that fellowship with the Father, even if it meant getting up long before daylight.

Jesus also gave us an example of taking time to be alone with the Lord as we spend time in fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Jesus gave an interesting illustration of this in what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 6:5-6 says, “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” In the time of Jesus, many of the religious leaders prayed in public places so that they would be seen by the people. Jesus said that those who chose to do that did so because they were hypocrites. They prayed to be seen by men and not to enjoy fellowship with the Father. To really enjoy fellowship with the Father and the Son, we need to regularly spend time with the Lord alone.

Jesus was praying in a solitary place when Peter and those with him found Jesus. Peter and the others had a message to give to Jesus. They said, “Everyone is looking for You.” The people had seen the miracles that Jesus did and many were probably looking for more miracles. A statement that Jesus made later about Capernaum shows that most of the people in that city did not truly turn to Jesus. Matthew 11:23-24 says, “‘And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.’” Jesus knew the hearts of the people, and He knew that many were just looking for Him, because they wanted to see more miracles.

Mark 1:38-39 goes on to say, “But He said to them, ‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.’ And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” Instead of returning to Capernaum, where the people were excited about the miracles, Jesus told these disciples that it was more

important for Him to carry out the purpose that the Father had for Him. Jesus had just promised these disciples that He would equip them to become fishers of men. In order to become fishers of men, the disciples needed to learn what to preach. As a result, Jesus said, “Let us go into the next towns.” In each town Jesus and the disciples visited, the disciples were going to hear what to preach and what Old Testament passages Jesus used as He preached.

The area of Galilee had two hundred and three cities and towns. Each of these cities and towns had a synagogue, so that meant Jesus would be sharing His message in many different places. The trip to visit many of these towns may have taken several months and the disciples heard Jesus preach many times. Matthew 4:23-24 says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.” The disciples were being shown what to preach as they heard Jesus preach the gospel of the kingdom.

Jesus also healed all kinds of sickness and disease. In addition, He healed many who were demon possessed. Later, the apostles were given similar signs to verify their message about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” Here, we see that God gave the apostles special signs and gifts to verify their message about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We read more about one of the miracles Jesus did in Mark 1:40-45, where we read, “Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, ‘If You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’ However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.” We see the reason why this particular miracle was mentioned in three of the Gospels.

The last recorded leper healed in the Old Testament was in 2 Kings 5. Naaman, the Syrian, had been healed about eight hundred years earlier through the ministry of Elisha, the prophet. Jesus spoke about that miracle in the synagogue in Nazareth, in Luke 4:27-29 which says, “‘And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’ So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.” The people of Nazareth became so angry that they tried to push Jesus off a cliff to kill Him.

This leper recognized that Jesus was a great prophet because of the miracles that He was doing. As a result, He came and knelt down to Jesus and begged Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” No one wanted to touch a leper for fear of catching leprosy themselves. In contrast, Jesus had compassion for this man and reached out and touched the man. Then, Jesus said, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Instead of Jesus getting leprosy when He touched the man, the man was healed. The leprosy was immediately cleansed. Then, Jesus gave this man some very important instructions.

Jesus told the man not to tell anyone. Instead, Jesus told the man to go and show himself to the priest. Jesus told the man to then offer the sacrifice that Moses commanded. That command is given in Leviticus 14:2-7. Those verses say, “This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine *him*; and indeed, *if* the leprosy is healed in the leper, then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living *and* clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was* killed over the running water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.”

Jesus also told the man why he was to do this. Jesus said that he was to do this as a testimony to the priests. The priests had not pronounced Naaman clean since he was a Gentile. As a result, even though instructions were given telling the priests what to do to pronounce a leper clean, the priests had never done this. That was why Jesus wanted this miracle to be a testimony to the priests. However, this leper did not follow the instructions that Jesus had given to him. Instead of going to the priests, the leper talked about what Jesus had done to everyone that he met. This prevented the testimony to the priests which would have forced them to publicly declare that the man had been cleansed of leprosy when Jesus touched him.

This created a problem for Jesus because people just started coming from everywhere to see Jesus do more miracles. As a result, Jesus was not able to go into the city because such large crowds started coming to Him. However, most of them were coming to Him for the wrong reason. They wanted to see Jesus do more miracles, instead of coming to hear the message that Jesus was preaching. This made it necessary for Jesus to be out in the deserted places. However, even in the deserted places, the crowds came to Him from every direction. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn why Jesus told this man to go and show himself to the priests as a testimony to the priests. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the importance of this miracle.