

### ***Jesus moves to Capernaum***

(Luke 4:31-37) After the attempted assassination we don't hear of his family around him. It seems that with the town's attitude they distanced themselves. It must have been a lonely Jesus who walked the road to Capernaum. But the call was clear and He knew what He had come to do. He began in the synagogue of Capernaum.

The ruins of the synagogue in Capernaum today stand over the one that the Centurion had financed. In the ruins below the current level were found first century coins so this must be the very place Jesus preached. Peter's house is only a block down the street. The Roman highway passes adjacent to the synagogue, an ancient stone inscription right there marks the mileage to Caesarea. It was a town of 1000 – 1500, with a Roman garrison stationed there.

News of Jesus' miracles had spread to Capernaum and so He was invited to speak. It was around November of the year 28. We don't know the text but we do know the people sensed that same conviction and authority. But He was interrupted. A man with a demon spirit cried out, "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!" Jesus commanded him to be quiet and come out of the man. Immediately he was his old self and sat down quietly. Now the people had witnessed one of his miracles themselves.

(Luke 4:38-44) Soon the streets were filled with the sick pleading for a touch from Jesus. Unlike some places where Jesus seemed to choose whom He would heal, this time He healed them all, including Simon Peter's mother-in-law. It is probable that Jesus stayed with Peter in his home near the synagogue. From now on Jesus would refer to the city as his hometown.

Early the next morning the people found Jesus alone praying, and pleaded with him to stay in the city. But Jesus told them he had to keep going and preach in other towns. Jesus had a very clear picture of the need and referred to it as fields ready to harvest. Before He would leave on this trip he would stop by the lake and preach again.

(Luke 5:1-11) The crowd grew and Jesus backed up to the water and finally into Peter's boat. Once the sermon was finished Jesus asked Peter to go fishing. Peter was a seasoned fisherman and knew when and where the fish congregated. He told Jesus they had fished all night and caught nothing but if Jesus wanted they would go out. When they let down their nets they caught the biggest catch of their lives. They caught so many they overloaded two boats.

At shore Peter realizing what had happened knelt before Jesus and asked for him to leave. Peter, in the presence of Jesus' holiness, realized his sin. Jesus' response was a display of the grace and mercy of God. "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." Before they had come and gone as they desired, for it was their decision to follow him. But now, Jesus was calling them from their jobs to follow him. We tend to think that sinners are far from God, but it is the ones who recognize their sins in the light of God's holiness that are in touch with reality. God can use the ones who recognize their need. Jesus didn't call the Pharisees or Sadducees (religious leaders) but common everyday people who could see their sin and knew their need for God. Someone once said, "You can never be too bad for Jesus, only too good." Do you recognize you are a sinner? Then the grace of God says the same thing to you, "don't be afraid, from now on you will catch men."

Jesus had some important decisions to make, but his decisions are never his own. John 5:30 (NIV) "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." (see Luke 6:12) He spent all night in prayer and the next morning chose 12 disciples. One was a hated tax collector. Another was a zealot, the political group that preferred guerrilla warfare against Rome. What a motley crew, but again, they were men that knew their need.

He traveled throughout the cities of the region of Galilee teaching and preaching in the synagogues, his band of 12 following. It has been said that one of the greatest proofs that Jesus was God is that after three years of camping with the 12 they still believed He was God. Large crowds began to follow him also and many would bring their sick from great distances to be healed, even from Jerusalem and Greek cities of the Decapolis region. There was no kind of sickness He could not heal. This was the winter of 28/29.

(Luke 5:12-16) He reached out and touched lepers and their skin was transformed before their very eyes. To touch a leper was to become defiled and risk getting the disease yourself, but in Jesus' case it seemed to work in the reverse. His wholeness was more powerful than their disease, and they became clean and whole. ( Luke 7:1-10) Once a Centurion (leader of 100 Roman soldiers) asked Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus did not turn away the non-Jewish. The soldier went on to explain that He believed that if Jesus just spoke the word his servant would be well, there was no need to come to his home. Perhaps he had seen the authority with which Jesus cast out demons and healed the sick, for he said, I am a man under authority, give orders and they are obeyed. Jesus was impressed. He said, "I have not found such great faith, no not in Israel". The servant was healed the very moment Jesus said the word.

On a journey through a nearby town of Nain, Jesus met a funeral procession. (Luke 7:11-17) A widow's son was the deceased. In that time women had little or no opportunity to earn income and the son was not only her last family member but her last hope of support. Jesus approached the widow and told her not to cry. Then he touched the coffin – another taboo of Jewish custom that would mean religious defilement. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" And the boy climbed out of his coffin – alive! Not only is Jesus touch more powerful than disease, but it is more powerful than death. Death does not defile Him, He conquers it!

But healing was not Jesus main thrust, rather it was to preach the good news of the Kingdom. Healing was a confirmation that the message was from the Messiah foretold by the prophets. Jesus healed because he had compassion on the people and the power to transform the very physical condition of a person.

What place did prayer have in Jesus' decisions? In yours?  
What do you think made Peter suddenly so aware of his sin?  
Is any illness too difficult for Jesus? Why?  
What was it that impressed Jesus about the Roman soldier?  
What does Jesus' power over death mean to you?

### ***The good news of the Kingdom*** Luke 5:17-26

Among the incredible claims of Jesus was his claim of being able to forgive sin. Once when He was preaching in a home the crowd was so packed in that some men broke open the roof so they could lower their paralyzed friend down to Jesus. Jesus first forgave the man's sins. He immediately sensed the shock in the religious leaders. They had a God given formula for the forgiveness of sins. It included sacrifice and ritual at the Temple. Who did this man think He was? He knew who He was. Only the One offended can forgive an offense. Sin is an offense against God. God forgave the man's offenses. But to help the religious leaders open their eyes to what was really happening He asked them. "Is it easier to forgive sins or to say to a paralyzed man get up and walk. But so you know I have power on earth to forgive sins, I say to this man, stand up, take your bed and walk."

I would really liked to have seen those Rabbis' faces when that man began to move. Imagine it today. Scientist are trying to find ways to connect severed nerves but have never been successful. If a man did it, not by touch, but by his very words, that man would be the One who spoke the world into being, the One who holds it all together by the power of his word. Hear the man laugh for joy as he tries his legs for the first time, walking like a baby, learning to balance. And wonder with the disciples at how God could become a man.

News of Jesus miracles had spread like wild fire. Contrary to most workers of magic or signs, Jesus asked that people not tell others. It is as if Jesus wanted to keep his identity a secret as long as possible. But people could not help but talk about the amazing things they had witnessed or their personal healing. It must have been hard not to speak of the compassion they faced when they met Jesus. Once the leaders of the country heard rumors of a Messiah his days of ministry would be numbered. Just as King Herod had tried to kill him at birth, those in power would act the same trying to retain their positions.

After healing a man with a withered hand in the Synagogue on the Sabbath, the leaders were not going to allow him to use the Synagogue any longer for his message. Their legalistic interpretations of the details of the law kept them from seeing the wonder of who was present with them. Jesus wanted to get about his business of preaching the kingdom. On the hills outside Capernaum is a bay that is believed to be the place where Jesus would preach from Peter's boat, the Bay of Parables. The shoreline drops like a natural amphitheater and has been proven to have exceptional acoustics. The crowds were quite large and brought the sick from throughout Syria and Decapolis. So with a boat as his pulpit he went about sharing truths in the form of parables. Here the crowds were no longer only Jewish and the format of reading a passage was not required.

Jesus began a whole new way of teaching by using illustrations from daily life that they could relate to. Some of the Gentiles would not understand Biblical texts but these stories were easy to understand. Those whom the Holy Spirit was working on would understand the pictures and the parallels in Jesus' messages.

(Luke 6:12-56, Matthew 14:12-36) Seeing the crowds swelling He took his disciples up the hillside and began to teach them. When He was gone they would have to take up the message to the needy world. He had to instruct them in Kingdom thinking. This message to them became known as the Sermon on the Mount. It was a whole different way of looking at things. Many times Jesus would begin a subject with, "you have heard that it is said" and then quote some common saying. Then He would follow with, "but I say to you" and give them a perspective that was straight from the Father. He put into words why his actions were so different. He saw things very differently than man and so reacted differently. His words cut to the very core of man's actions exposing them for the evil that was in them. He went right to the real spirit of the law bypassing the legalism of the exact wording.

Before long they were surrounded by thousands of people who had climbed the mountain to hear more from Jesus. Late in the day the disciples suggested Jesus send the crowds home to eat. But Jesus, knowing that many had come from great distances, and wishing to test the disciples on their training said, "You

give them something to eat." The disciples discussed the impossibility of feeding such a large crowd. Jesus was ready to demonstrate what He had just taught them, "ask and you will receive". Jesus took the five loaves and two fish and blessed it and broke it, and broke it, and broke it filling basket after basket. The crowds had their fill and went their way for the night. Jesus had the disciples pick up what was left on the ground and they gathered 12 baskets full.

He sent the disciples ahead by boat while He went up higher in the hills to pray. During the night the wind was against them as they rowed and they were not making much ground. Jesus came walking by on the water! They thought they were seeing the spirit of a dead man and were frightened so Jesus shouted to them, and they recognized his voice.

But Peter asks, "Lord if it is you, ask me to come to you on the water." Jesus calls him and he steps out onto waves. As long as Peter's eyes are on Jesus he is fine, but as the wind whipped water across his face, he turned and looked at the waves and began to drown. Jesus took his hand and helped him into the boat. When Jesus stepped in the boat the wind died down. Again the disciples were amazed. They said, "Truly you are the Son of God." Matter doesn't seem to behave in its normal way when it is around the its Maker.

Several things about Jesus' teaching angered the Pharisees. Jesus saw things quite differently than they had been taught through commentaries so their perspectives were often at odds. But I imagine the thing that irritated them the most were the large crowds. Why could they not gather such crowds? Jesus speaks of their desire to be seen and respected and that cut them to the core, especially when it was in front of a large crowd they wished were listening to them. This jealousy caused them to always be watching for some little misstep so that they could accuse him of breaking the Law. Their favorite was working on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a day of rest but Jesus explained that it was right to good and not evil. To ignore a need of your fellow man was evil. If in following your tradition you let his need go unmet you were not observing the Sabbath. He added that the Son of Man (Jesus reference to himself) was Lord of the Sabbath. At every turn they were trying to find some kind of fault, but Jesus always used it as an opportunity to teach them the error of their way of thinking.

Once Jesus was recognized a crowd quickly grew. Those from the feeding of the 5000 tracked him down. Jesus knew their intentions were misguided and He had to discourage them with truth. First He spoke to their true motivations. "You seek me because you want another fish sandwich." In seeking a king/ messiah they wanted to be free of Roman taxation. They weren't so much seeking truth as they were monetary relief. And then He told them something they would not be able to understand at the time. "I am the living bread that came down from

heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

He was turning them from the physical to the spiritual, but they were not able to understand. The crowds began to leave until finally just the disciples remained. Jesus asked them if they too wanted to leave. "To whom shall we go," came the reply, "You alone have the words of eternal life." His last six months based out of Galilee would be focused not as much on preaching and healing but more on training his disciples. Besides the 12 there were about 500 others who continued to follow and believe. He has been rejected by the majority who are seeking and immediate victory over Rome. Still within those following this hope lingers but they are willing to wait and be patient and focus on the spiritual. Indeed Christianity did spiritually conquer Rome in about 400 years. The Kingdom of which Christ taught was not of governments of man, but his Lordship in their hearts.

Is it easier to forgive sin or heal a paralytic?

In what ways were Jesus miracles different from magicians?

Why did Jesus tell people not to spread the news about his work?

How much does Jesus need to do a great work?

Why did Jesus give such hard sayings that drove people away?

Do we have the same tendencies today to look to physical success instead of Christ as Lord in heart and in our church?

### ***Jesus the Missionary*** Luke 8:22-39

From there they returned to the boat and headed to Kursi in Decapolis. This is Jesus first venture into Gentile territory. If the Jews could not hear perhaps the Gentiles would be more receptive, after all Samaria certainly was. As they sailed the winds came up and the waves began to get higher. Jesus had not slept much, between staying up to pray and rising early to find quiet time with his Father, the constant demand for healing, He was exhausted. First century Jewish boats had a quarterdeck under which the nets could be stored to keep from walking on them and tearing them. It was a good place to store things to keep them dry. It also made a good place to catch some shuteye with the nets as a mattress. As the waves grew the disciples fear of sinking also grew and finally they shook Jesus till He woke out of his deep sleep. "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" Jesus stands up and rebukes the wind and the waves and they are calm. The dumbfounded disciples say in awe to each other, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

The wind and waves have no will of their own but are controlled by another. What is it that that one is trying to prevent? They sail on and arrive at the

shore. The cliffs here have many tombs. The worship of the people included sacrifice of pigs to demons. And who should come to meet Jesus, the royalty of the region? No, a demon possessed man. Jesus asks the demon his name and the demon replies, "Legion". A Roman legion from Pompey had founded the city here. There may have been some connection because of the wickedness discovered in the ruins of Pompey, but certainly as Scripture tells us the words did indicate a whole army of demons was in this tormented man. Chains could not hold him, but before Jesus he pleads for mercy to go into the swine. Jesus allows it and the swine run off the cliffs into the ocean like a herd of lemmings. What was Satan up to? When the people of the city found out Jesus was the reason for their financial and loss they asked him to please leave their coasts. To the Jew pigs were unclean. Perhaps they thought Jesus was forcing his faith on them destroying their sacrifices.

The healed man pleaded with Jesus to go with him but Jesus sends him back into his hometown to tell what had happened. "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." He became the first Gentile missionary. It seemed Jesus' effort was thwarted but God had another plan. Jesus would be back after this healed man had done a work similar to John the Baptist in preparing the way for Jesus. Mark 7:31-37

Jesus also journey in the other direction – northwest. (Mark 7:24-30) Tyre and Sidon must have been more successful for Jesus tells those around Galilee that Tyre and Sidon has will have a better chance in the day of judgement because Galilee had seen so many miracles. The more we witness, the more we are accountable for. Evidently Jesus did not do so many miracles there. We only have one story and it seems out of place with what I am telling you. A woman asks for help for her demon possessed daughter. Jesus says He is sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now this seems contrary to what we see of his ministry. When we come to a confusing statement like this we must look closely and carefully and see the end result that Jesus produces from the encounter. We know certainly that Jesus believes He is a light to the Gentiles. We know He tells the Jews he has other sheep that aren't in this fold.

What did it draw out of the woman? And the woman at the well, another Gentile, what did she respond to, "salvation is of the Jews"? Expressions of faith and humility came from them both. And this is what draws the power and love of Christ – a recognition of our true condition. Jesus heals the woman's daughter because of her great expression of humility, "even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table". With the Samaritan woman the conviction that Messiah was coming was the response.

Sometimes God presents us with very humbling facts that cause us to see our condition and recognize our need. This is not a mean thing, on the contrary, it is

a loving thing to open our eyes. As we elicit a humble response we open the door for Him to give us all He desires to pour into our lives.

They returned via a northern route through Caesarea Philippi. This time the Decapolis is receptive to Jesus, perhaps because of his testimony. Now as a mostly Gentile crowd gathers around Jesus the same problem presents itself. The people have stayed three days to hear his message and many have waiting to be healed and have run out of food. (Mark 7:31-37, Matthew 15:29-39) Again the disciples ask where they could get food. It's as if they didn't experience the first feeding miracle. This time they have seven loaves and a few fish and feed 4000 men plus women and children. The clean up crew netted 7 baskets full of bread. Jesus is sufficient for both the Jewish nation and the Gentiles with plenty to spare.

Jesus made these trips into Gentile territory and then after his death commissioned his disciples to do the same. Sending them to the uttermost parts of the earth meant this Gospel of the Kingdom was for all mankind. As the angel announced at his birth, Jesus is "good news for all people".

What kinds of opposition did Jesus face as He went to the Gentiles?  
What kind will you face if you step out of peoples expectations to share Jesus?  
Why was it so hard for the Jews to accept Jesus was sent for the world?  
Why do groups today find it so hard to accept Jesus is sent for the world?  
Why does God sometimes make things difficult for us?

### ***Back to Capernaum***

Back in Capernaum the crowds swelled again. This time in desperation one of the religious leaders of the Synagogue, Jairus, asked Jesus if he would help his only daughter who was just 12 years of age. Jesus said He would go to see her.

But on the way there a woman approached Jesus through the crowd. Tradition said the tassel of the Messiah's garment would have the power to heal. She had been hemorrhaging for 12 years and was desperate for help. She was expected to cry, "unclean" so she would not defile anyone, but if she did that she would never make it to his tassel. So in a last desperate attempt she pushed her way through the crowd and made to Jesus tassel and reaching out in faith, touched it. Immediately she knew she was well and stopped in awe at the spot. As the crowd moved on forward Jesus then stopped and turned back and asked, "Who touched me?" He knew power to heal had gone out from Him. The woman spoke up and told the story. Again, what was by the Law defilement was made completely whole by the presence of the Holy One.



Jairus' servants then approached and told him his daughter was dead. He didn't need to bother Jesus about it now. But Jesus told Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." Imagine the mixed emotions! As they approached Jesus asked all the mourners what they were crying for. The declared the daughter was dead. Jesus told them she was just sleeping. I think this is the same issue of not wanting to spread his fame and end his ministry early. They all laughed at Him but Jesus was about to have the last laugh. He took in Jairus and his wife, Peter, James and John. Then he told the girl to get up. She did! Just like that. This was the second person to rise from the dead at Jesus command. Again Jesus asked that no one tell what had happened.

(Luke 9:1-9, Mark 6:7-13) Jesus sent his disciples out in teams of two on a training mission. They were to take nothing for the journey and expect to be provided for by people to whom they preached. He gave them authority to heal and cast out demons, and told them to preach the message of repentance.

About this same time Herod executed John the Baptist. Herod, hearing about Jesus, thought that John's spirit had entered Jesus.

After sailing across the lake to the western shore, the religious leaders demanded of Jesus that He give them a sign of his authority. (Matthew 16:1-4, Mark 8:11-12) Jesus told them that only a wicked and adulterous nation sought a sign and the only one He would give was the sign of Jonah. Perhaps they were upset with his Gentile success so Jesus reminds them of a prophet that had come from Gath Hopher, a town very close to Capernaum. He had gone to the Assyrian capital of Ninevah. They had repented on hearing his message. That huge Gentile city was more receptive than they were. And as Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish, Jesus would be in the grave three days. If resurrection from the dead was not enough proof, no miracle will ever convince them. In fact, the more they saw, the more accountable they were, the greater the judgement they would receive. Jesus told them that if Sodom had seen what they had, Sodom would have repented.

How was Jesus secret ministry to physical needs different from much of ministry today?

Why was it easier for Gentiles to accept Jesus than His own people?

Do we fall into the same error of the Pharisees, wanting to walk by sight?