

"DAVID THE SHEPHERD BECOMES KING"

2 Samuel 5:1-12

Biblical Principle: Because David was a man after God's own heart, God raised him from shepherd to a king.

I. David was from the family of Jesse. His trade was that of his father, a shepherd. God had a plan, however, for David's life. He went from being a shepherd to a king. Literally, he became the greatest king Israel ever had. (Acts 13:22) His accomplishments would expand the borders and territory of Israel's reign, and his leadership would catapult Israel into becoming a leading power in the region.

David is a great example of how God has a great plan for all of us. He can use the ordinary to do the extraordinary. His plan starts with salvation, and continues with a daily walk through faith in Christ. Jesus said that he came so we would have life to the full. (John 10:10b) Living fully in Christ is to experience the guiding hand and power of God who leads us to spiritual adventure after spiritual adventure. Living by faith in Jesus means we are able to see God through our service, worship, giving, Bible study and fellowship. Jesus said we will be blessed if we do these things. Most believers miss the opportunity to see incredible things from God because they fail to follow through with trust and obedience. They bail before ever seeing God's incredible work in their life. (2 Corinthians 9:13)

Do you believe that God has a plan for your life? Are you seeking to let Him use you?

—Proverbs 16:9 —Acts 1:8 —Ephesians 3:20 —John 13:13-17

II. Ephesians 2:10 says that we are God's "workmanship," meaning he is doing a transforming work in us and through us. The word for "workmanship" is an artistic term, meaning God is making a masterpiece out of us. We are his work of art. His plan is to make us what we were meant to be in the beginning. He is the potter and we are the clay. All God asks is that we seek Him with all our heart and He will do the rest. There is no limit to what God can do through the heart of a believer who is totally yielded to him.

In addition, when God's people join their hearts and their gifts together for the service of God's glory, great things happen. The body of Christ flourishes. When the hand and the eye work together, the Bible says (1 Corinthians 12:12-26), God's plan for a lost world is revealed and those who are seekers around us see the beauty of God's love for them. Miracles, like in Acts 2:42-47, begin to happen. People grow. People are blessed. People's needs are met. People get saved!

—Matthew 6:33 —Romans 12:4-8 —John 13:34-35

"DAVID'S THRONE FOREVER"

2 Samuel 7

Biblical Principle: Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promise to David that his throne would be established for eternity.

I. David was a great ruler and king, a man after God's own heart. God desired to bless David and promised him that David's throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16). This meant that someone in David's lineage would always reign on the throne of Israel. Even further, the Hebrew people understood that the Messiah would come through David's line (Matthew 2:4-6—Bethlehem is the town of David). The fullness of this prophesy and promise came to pass in Christ Jesus, the Messiah, a direct descendent of David. Jesus was fully human, from David's line, but fully divine, the Son of God (Romans 1:2-4). It was fulfilled through Mary who was a virgin, chosen by God's grace to carry the Son of God. This was the continuation of God's plan to redeem a lost world.

Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38 are written to verify that Jesus was in fact in the line of David. One would notice, however, that there are some variances between both accounts. The difference is understood by the realization that Matthew's account was the lineage of Jesus through Joseph, Jesus' stepfather, which was the typical way of defining a Jewish person's heritage. Being a tax collector, Matthew would have had access to such records. Luke, on the other hand, traced Jesus' line through Mary's lineage. This was not the typical way to define a Hebrew person's heritage that is through the line of the mother, but to ensure that on both accounts there was no question as to Jesus being the son of David and the Son of God, Luke traced Jesus' line through Mary.

Jesus is truly the fulfillment of all of God's promises and prophecies. He is the only true Savior, Messiah, and the only true hope for us to be accepted and forgiven by God and restored to a right relationship with our Creator forever.

—1 Kings 8:25 —Hebrews 1:2-3 —2 Corinthians 1:20-23

Our hope lies squarely in the fulfillment of God's promises. One thing, we as believers can count on, is that God always keeps his promises. His promises and call are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). God's promises give us hope and courage to continue to trust him when times seem difficult. God also uses his promises to build our faith and trust. Characters like Abraham, Joseph and Joshua are just a few examples of what it means to wait and trust in the promises of God. Abraham had to wait for a son; Joshua had to trust God to deliver the land of Canaan to the Israelites; Joseph had to wait on God's promise that he would rule one day even though it meant great hardship. God develops our character as we wait. When he gives us his promise, it very rarely means it will happen right away. He teaches us faith and character development through waiting.

—Romans 5:1-5 —Joshua 1:4-5 —Psalm 119:140 —2 Peter 1:3-4 —2 Peter 3:9

"DAVID FAILS, GOD FORGIVES"

2 Samuel 11:1-27, 12:1-13; Psalm 32:1-5

Biblical Principle: No matter how great the sin, God will forgive in Christ Jesus.

I. Though David was a great king, he sinned against God. David allowed lust for Bathsheba to take control of his heart, leading him to commit adultery. Sexual immorality displeases the Lord because it causes so much harm and destruction. It negatively affects marriages, families, selfishly uses others, and even causes the spread of deadly diseases. God's ideal is for one man and one woman, freely and totally committed to each other in marriage for life, to enjoy sexual relations.

—Genesis 2:23-24 —Hebrews 13:4 —1 Corinthians 7:3-5

II. David created even more of a mess by trying to cover up his sin. He had Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, a Hittite mercenary, loyal to David and armor bearer to Joab (according the Dead Sea Scrolls and Josephus, the historian) killed in battle. (2 Samuel 11:6-17). This illustrates the fact that sin breeds sin. It certainly has a contagious power to it. The story of David's cover-up harkens back to the story of Adam and Eve and their attempt to cover disobedience. The fact is that when we try to cover our sin, it only gets worse. (Galatians 6:7) Also, the guilt associated with our sin robs us of peace of mind, driving us further away from the freedom that God wants for each and everyone of us. (Psalm 32:3-5)

The solution to our sin problem is repentance. Through repentance God's grace is poured out through Jesus Christ, and we are released from the grip and power of sin. Furthermore, the grace of God counteracts the destructive power of guilt and shame. Guilt places us in bondage, but God's grace and forgiveness in Christ grants us true freedom. God is eager to be gracious as Isaiah 30:18 tells us. He even longs to show us the extent of that grace. Hiding from God and not being open and honest with him prohibits the dynamic effects of grace.

—Psalm 32:1-5 —1 John 1:9 —Romans 7:24-25; 8:1 —Romans 5:20-21

III. David is also a great example that, even when we fall, God gives second chances. David was forgiven and God still continued to use David as a great king. So many times we are convinced by the Evil One that, if we fail, we have no hope of ever being used of the Lord. It is not true. God restores, forgives and grants second chances to all of us. His grace is not limited. Our fear is what limits our service. Making our life right with God and humbly accepting God's plan puts us in the right place to once again enter into God's service. Peter is a prime example of God's grace and restoration. He denied Jesus and lied about his association with him, but Jesus forgave him and restored him to the place of being leader over the church.

—1 Timothy 1:12-16 —Philippians 1:6

"ELIJAH AND ELISHA, PROPHETS OF GREAT FAITH"

1 Kings 18 and 19

Biblical Principle: Elijah and Elisha were prominent prophets who were servants of great faith and sacrifice.

I. The Lord selected Elijah and Elisha as prophets to serve in the midst of a kingdom run by a corrupted king called Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Both were willing to serve during a time when it was highly unpopular to be a faithful follower of God. Israel had strayed and was living in rebellion to God, and these two men were called to steer God's people back to a right relationship through faith and obedience. Many times God will call us to serve in a time where it is not popular to be a believer, but God promises to stand with us, and sustain us through even the most difficult of circumstances. Elijah and Elisha were great examples for us, demonstrating what it means to be totally sold out for God's glory.

—Matthew 5:11-12 —2 Corinthians 1:8-11

II. Elijah was willing to stand with courage against all the evil forces that surrounded him. He encountered much opposition to his ministry of calling back the Israelites to the Lord. Ahab, the King, and Jezebel, the queen, especially detested Elijah because they were evil leaders who worshipped the false gods, Baal and Asherah. (These were gods of the pagan nations surrounding Israel. This false worship involved sexual immorality and sacrificing of children, burning them to death on hot alters —Deuteronomy 12:31). Elijah was willing to stand against even the 850 false prophets (1 Kings 18:19). He wanted the people to know the right way, the truth, not the lies of Satan. This was costly to Elijah, placing his own life in danger. He was willing to pay the price so that the people would know the truth.

God calls us to be as willing to give all we are to serve others with the truth.

Sometimes it demands great courage and faith. Jesus served us in truth even though it cost him his life. Love was his motive. Are we willing to serve with such love?

—Revelation 12:11 —Joshua 1:6-9 —Ephesians 6:10-20

III. Elisha stands out to us because of his willingness to give up everything to serve the Lord. When called by the Lord to go into service, Elisha willingly gave up everything to obey God's plan. He gave up his livelihood, his career, his wealth (1 Kings 19:21). He was a strong and wealthy man who farmed the land. Also, he was highly skilled and greatly respected (1 Kings 19:19). None of that, however, was as important as his commitment to the Lord.

Nothing should ever come between us and the Lord, not money, people, jobs, pleasure or recreation, etc. We are to love God with all we are. Jesus warned us in a parable to avoid excuses or allow other things to hinder our love and devotion to him. Luke 14:15-24 reminds us that excuses won't do. The man with the new land was distracted by his wealth; the one with the new five yoke of oxen (10 oxen) was distracted by his business. The one who just got married allowed another person, his wife, to come between him and his devotion to the Lord. All of these are good things, but not adequate excuses. What hinders you in your walk with Christ?

—Luke 14:33 —Matthew 10:37 —2 Corinthians 5:20 —Philippians 3:4-11

"EXILE"

2 Kings 25

Biblical Principle: Sin separates us from God, robbing us of the quality of life God intends for us.

I. Sin and rebellion against God's word and authority continued to grow worse in Israel until finally, under King Zedekiah, the nation of Israel was completely destroyed by the Babylonians. God had warned them all along that, if they obeyed, He would bless them, but if they disobeyed, he would punish them (Deuteronomy 11:26-28). It was a slow disintegration, however, for Israel. The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell in 725 B.C. to the Assyrians. (The ten northern tribes were removed and sent abroad and still to this day some of the tribes cannot be accounted for). The Southern Kingdom, mainly centered around Jerusalem, lasted until 586 B.C., falling to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed Jerusalem and exiled the people to Babylon, making them slaves. God had warned them along the way and had even given grace to Jerusalem to repent and follow him by not being like the northern kingdom, but in spite of his grace and love, they ignored him until he brought judgment upon them.

God is a gracious God. (Isaiah 30:18) He longs to show us that grace, but we cannot ignore his leadership, his word and his will. God is patient, but his will is for us to move toward his truth and live out obedience for the sake of our love for him, for the sake of our life and for the love of others. Sin cannot be ignored, and God works to draw us to righteousness. The Bible says he loves those who are his by disciplining them. His discipline is love because he wants us to have the best quality of life we can possibly possess. His truth provides for that healthy existence. Sin, the opposite of truth, robs us of that opportunity.

—Galatians 6:7-8 —Hebrews 12:4-11 —James 4:1-10 —James 1:13-18

II. Even in captivity God was working to bring his people back. He rose up prophets like Daniel and leaders like Nehemiah and Ezra, who he sent back after the seventy years of captivity to rebuild Jerusalem. Israel would once again begin to offer sacrifices before the Lord and re-establish worship, but it would not be long lasting. We as human beings, unfortunately, have a propensity toward sin, a sinful nature. We gravitate toward that which is opposite of God's best plan for us. Paul spoke of this dilemma in Romans 3:23 and 7:14-25. For this very reason, God in all his grace and love sent us the ultimate solution to our sinful problem. He gave us his son Jesus, who became for us complete forgiveness and acceptance from God. The right relationship was established because all the righteous requirements of the law were met in Jesus' sacrifice for us at the cross. It is not by works, but by grace that we are saved and that we live. That atonement for sin is complete for us in Christ, past, present and future.

—Romans 8:1-4 —Romans 10:4 —Matthew 5:17-18 —Hebrews 7:25

"PROPHECIES ABOUT THE MESSIAH—CHRIST"

Biblical Principle: The Old Testament prophecies prepared us for who the Messiah would be.

I. There are numerous places within the Old Testament that tell of the coming Messiah. These passages describe what the Messiah would be like and what he would do. Israel was waiting on the appearing of the Messiah, God's Son. The true Messiah, Jesus Christ, has fulfilled each and every one of the prophecies. It was necessary for him to meet every part to verify that he was the one. Peter Stoner tells us that the probability of Jesus fulfilling just 48 prophecies in the OT (there are more than 48) is one in a trillion to the 13th power, an astronomical number. Jesus did it! The purpose of this lesson is to study, though there are many others, a few of these prophecies and appreciate their power and impact upon us as the Church.

Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6-7

—These passages tell us that the Messiah would be "God with us," Immanuel. He would be God's son and he would be our salvation. This echoes John's testimony that Jesus was fully God. (John 1:1-4) Also, Paul echoes that same fact in Colossians 1:15-20.

In addition, Isaiah specifically tells us that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. We know that the fulfillment of that prophecy occurred with Mary as Luke 1:26-38 records for us. Just these prophecies alone are so amazing in that we see how the Creator God walked among us in the flesh. What a miracle.

III. Psalm 22:1-24

—This passage of scripture is a description of the crucifixion of Jesus, the Christ. It describes in detail his suffering, telling us the specific events which happened on that Friday. Verse 1 is the very words Jesus quoted when all the sin of the world was poured out upon him (Matthew 27:46). Verse 14 describes the effect of crucifixion upon the body, ultimately causing heart failure due to a build up of acidosis in the blood, engorging the heart with fluid because of the inability to breathe properly. The downward pressure of hanging with arms stretched out did not allow for exhalation. You could breathe in, but not out. Verse 15 was the dehydration Jesus experienced because of his loss of blood. Verse 16 tells of the actual nails driven into the hands (at the top of the hand and base of the wrist to avoid tearing down through the hand), and feet of Jesus. The description of crucifixion here, written around 1000 B.C., is so amazing because this form of execution had not been invented yet and wouldn't come into being until around 7th century B.C., first utilized by the Assyrians as a display of a dead body, but not widely used as a form of execution until the Romans, around 150 B.C., some 850 years after this prophecy. David was prophesying about something he had never seen. Verse 18 was the very act of the Roman soldiers on the day of Jesus' death. (John 19:23-24) Amazing!

IV. Isaiah 52:13-15; Isaiah 53:1-12

—This passage too, written around 740 years prior to Jesus' death, describes for us the crucifixion of Jesus. It tells us in particular how that it would bring our healing and our forgiveness. (53:5) Even further, it tells of the resurrection that would bring us victory. (v. 11)

"THE MESSIAH IS BORN"

Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-20

Biblical Principle: Jesus, God's Son, was born in a humble state to begin God's plan to redeem humanity.

I. Both Matthew and Luke record for us the birth and events surrounding the coming of the Messiah, the Christ. Both agree and point out the humble state in which Jesus, God's Son, was received upon this earth. His entrance did not come in a palace as would be fitting for a king. Rather, he came to us through a poor, virgin teenage girl, Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit. She was frightened and separated from family. Joseph was her attendant, and they witnessed the entrance of the king in a stable, placed in a manger and wrapped in rags. It doesn't seem to fit until we begin to understand the heart of God. First, God was willing to do whatever it would take to redeem us. Second, God does not receive his value from material possessions or surroundings like us. We are deceived at times believing our joy and happiness is determined by how much money we possess, where we live, what size house we live in, what expensive clothes we wear and by what we drive. God was demonstrating that true joy and fulfillment comes from knowing his love, period. Where do you find your value?

—2 Corinthians 8:9 —Psalm 139:14 —Matthew 6:19-33 —1 Peter 1:18-21
—James 1:9-11

II. Jesus' birth and life challenges us to evaluate our attitude and motives. Paul spoke of the coming of the Messiah and his powerful example to us which encourages us to walk humbly before the Lord with right hearts and motives. Philippians 2:3-11 admonishes us to be like Jesus. Verse 6 says that even though he was God, he chose to set aside his deity rights, making himself nothing, becoming a servant. He laid aside all his glory for us. He places that same calling on us to humble ourselves, setting aside our rights and being a servant to others in the name of the Lord. Verse 8 says he even went to the extent of a cross, death for us. That is amazing love because he who had no sin became sin for us so we could live. That sacrifice ushered in the grace of God which now allows us to live free in His love. Verse 9 tells us that, because of the obedience of Jesus, the Father "exalted him to the highest place..." Jesus says if we humble ourselves he will exalt us, but if we exalt ourselves he will humble us. (Matthew 23:12) He also says that in the midst of our humility, we will find our greatest fulfillment. Furthermore, there is great blessing and reward in serving and caring. (John 13:16-17) Do you find fulfillment in serving others, or do you demand to be served? Do you need to be first, or do you put others first?

—Ephesians 2:8-9 —2 Corinthians 5:21 —Matthew 11:28-29 —Mark 10:43-45

"JESUS' BAPTISM"

Biblical Principle: To demonstrate our belief and salvation commitment in Christ, we follow him in baptism.

I. Part of being a follower of Jesus is to demonstrate our faith decision in him through the act of baptism. It is our public profession of faith in Christ, our public testimony of our love and commitment to his gospel which saves us from our sin and separation from God. (That faith commitment saves us, not baptism. But baptism is essential because it is our expression of total obedience to Christ—Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus commands us to make this next step after our faith commitment to Christ to establish among our sphere of influence our loyalty and surrender to him. Hence, we call it believer's baptism because the Bible only gives examples of baptized individuals who have made a conscious, willful decision for Christ. Infants do not have the capacity to make such a commitment or as Peter put it, "the pledge of a good conscience toward God." (1 Peter 3:21)

—Acts 2:38 —Mark 16:16 —Matthew 28:19-20 —Acts 8:34-39 —Acts 10:44-48

II. We understand the power and meaning of baptism by first beginning with the example of Jesus' baptism. Matthew 3:13-17 tells us that Jesus came to the place where John the Baptist was baptizing people whose hearts were opening to God. It was called a baptism of repentance (Luke 3:3). They were preparing for when the Messiah would come so they would be ready to receive God's Son. John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of Jesus, called to prepare the way for the Messiah, felt very unworthy to baptize Jesus. Jesus, however, said "It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15). What Jesus was saying and doing in his act of baptism was to begin his three year ministry by identifying with the sinner at a place where sinners were gathering. He ultimately identified with the sinner at the cross where he died for our sin, though he had committed no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). It was there he fulfilled the words he spoke at his baptism that he would fulfill all righteousness. (Romans 10:4; Romans 8:1-4) Hence, the Savior identified with the sinner and our baptism is the sinner identifying with the Savior, our righteousness.

We see the ultimate explanation of all of this in Paul's description of the meaning of baptism in Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12. Paul tells us that in our baptism we have died to this world (sin), been buried with Christ and now raised to a new life in him. It is our public proclamation that we are buried and raised in faith and commitment to Jesus. It is the outward demonstration of what has happened inside us because of our faith response to Jesus. He, the Savior, identified with us, the sinner, through his death, burial and resurrection, and we, the sinner, identify with these same important tenants of the gospel through our baptism.

Also, what we find in Jesus' baptism, as recorded in Mark 1:9-10, is that Jesus was baptized in water. He was immersed. This was the method of his baptism, and it is the example to us of the method of our baptism, immersion in water. That water symbolizes the grave. It is our total identification with the Savior in commitment and method. The very word "baptism" in the Greek, ("baptizo") literally means "to submerge."

"TEMPTATION OF JESUS"

Luke 4:1-13

Biblical Principle: Jesus understands what it's like to struggle with the temptations of this world.

I. Directly after Jesus' baptism, he was taken into the desert to fast for forty days and forty nights. This was a preparation time for the next three years of Jesus' ministry which would ultimately lead him to the cross. His desire was to glorify and fully obey his Heavenly Father. The Father had given him the mission to pay for the sins of the world. This would require a sinless and perfect life. This temptation story reveals that Satan was determined to undermine Jesus' mission. No doubt, Satan felt confident since Jesus, God's Son, was now in the flesh and Satan had a 100 percent track record of leading all of God's creation, the human race, into sin, separation from God.

One important thing for us to understand here is the fact that Jesus was divine and human. As Paul tells us in Romans 1:3, he was the son of David. That meant he had all the limitations and struggles of every human being walking the planet, past, present and future. As our great High Priest, he had to experience life like us in order to understand us (Hebrews 4:14-16). That obedience also meant his sacrifice would be complete and pure, full payment for our sin. He had no sin, but became sin for us at the cross.

It is further interesting that Matthew 4:2-3 tells us that Satan came to tempt Jesus toward the end of his 40 days of fasting. It says he was "hungry." Obviously, Jesus was at his weakest point. It is also interesting that Satan attempts to place doubt by saying "If you are the Son of God." It goes without saying that Satan always attacks, tempts and attempts to place doubt when we are at our lowest point, the most vulnerable. It is here that we have our greatest tendency to fall into sin. Peter says be careful and resist because the Devil is prowling (1 Peter 5:6-11). Where are you vulnerable? When must you be alert?

—John 1:29 —2 Corinthians 5:21 —Hebrews 7:24-26

II. Satan tempted Jesus in three key areas (Luke 4:1-13). These represent the largest struggles we have in our own temptations. They are: 1. Breaking our commitment to God. 2. Failing to worship God alone. 3. Living outside the proper boundaries of God's will.

A. V. 3 tells us that Satan tempted Jesus to turn the stone into bread. This temptation would break the vow and commitment to his Heavenly Father. Through this fast, he was preparing himself for such an important mission which required total obedience to the end. We many times are tempted to break our commitments to the Lord for the sake of convenience. Psalm 22:25 Others are hurt or unreached because we fail to follow through with our commitment.

B. V. 5-7 tell us that Satan tempted Jesus to worship him, not the true God, his Heavenly Father. He offered him power and possessions if he would bow down to him. Jesus countered the temptation by resorting to scripture (v. 8—refer to Deuteronomy 6:13). Scripture is always our major defense. We must stand in the truth. —2 Timothy 3:15-17; Ephesians 6:14.

C. V. 9-11 was the temptation to live outside the proper boundaries of God's will. It is the temptation to live recklessly, foolishly and selfishly. The Bible warns us that there is a price to living in such a way (Galatians 6:7-9). Jesus' choices brought victory. So will ours!

"THE MIRACLE WORKER"

John 6:1-15

Biblical Principle: The miracles of Jesus prove he is always able to meet our needs.

I. Much of Jesus' ministry involved the performance of miracles. He, being the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, demonstrated the awesome power of God to reveal not only his validity as the Messiah (the Christ), but also His ability to problem solve and meet our needs. With each episode, Jesus taught His disciples that they must cease to rely upon self and instead have faith in him. Miracles were never a sideshow or circus performance, though some desired it that way. Instead, they were invitations for people to open their hearts and lives to God who had come to them in the flesh and would perform the greatest miracle of all with his death and resurrection, bringing forgiveness and life. Have you opened your heart and life to the great miracle of salvation through Christ?

—Colossians 2:13-15 —Revelation 3:20 —John 1:12

II. In John 6:1-15 Jesus presented the disciples with a challenge. He knew the needs of the people who were hungry. It was a massive crowd and an overwhelming need. Philip and Andrew both (v. 5-9) attempted to fix and solve the need in their own abilities. They were limited in both ability and vision. Jesus then expanded their horizon of faith by feeding the 5000 plus people (more than just 5000 men). This story is a lesson in trust and faith. So many times we attempt to live life in our solution and abilities. We limit our experience of the power of God to only what we can see and do. Joy and excitement arrive when we learn to trust Jesus and call on him for our every need. Ephesians 3:20 says that he is "able" beyond our ability to even imagine the solution. Faith is sustained and enhanced through holding to the fact that he is "able." Without believing in the "ableness" of God, we spiral down into defeat. How able do you believe Jesus is to solve your problems? Does your life reflect it?

Interestingly, Jesus revealed in this story that even with just a little, He can do a lot. We as believers bring our very best to him and watch God do the impossible with it.

—2 Timothy 1:12 —Philippians 4:19 —Matthew 19:26 —Mark 9:23

III. Prior to performing a miracle, Jesus asked a very important question to a man who was crippled and had attempted for many years to find a solution to his need. It was at the Pool of Bethesda, according to John 5:6, where Jesus asked him "Do you want to get well?" What a powerful question because Jesus was challenging him to something bigger than just a healing. He was leading him toward a changed life in him (John 5:14-15). This illustrates the point that many, unfortunately, want the miracle without any response to God. They want all the blessings of God as long as Jesus doesn't ask them to change. They have no desire to grow in the Lord, to really get well. They only want his blessing with no strings attached with no real relationship. "Do you really want to get well?"

—Romans 12:2 —James 4:3 —Luke 18:22-23

"FISHERS OF MEN"

Matthew 4:18-22

Biblical Principle: Jesus calls us to be his witness to a world that is far from God.

I. After Jesus' baptism and his preparation in the desert, he was now launching out with the good news of God's love and redemption through him. He began to preach and to heal, but he also began to invite people to join him in his mission. The first calling was to Peter and Andrew, James and John. These two sets of brothers were invited to do something with their life that would make a true difference in this world. They were ordinary fisherman and business men, but Jesus was calling them to an extraordinary life that would bring people to a right relationship with God. Their hearts were ready, and the Bible tells us they immediately left everything to pursue a lasting and meaningful purpose for their life. They were ready to glorify God through proclaiming the gospel to the world.

Jesus commissions all of us as followers to join him in proclaiming this great news. God loves the whole world and God wants people saved, but they will not know unless we share with them the gospel. Matthew 28:19-20 tells us to go (literally "as you go" or "as you are living your life") and make disciples. Tell them that God loves them in Christ and wants them forgiven and redeemed. We as believers should have a passion for this purpose. Our passion should be the same as God's passion. Do you have that same passion?

—John 3:16 —Romans 10:13-16 —Philemon 6

II. The Bible tells us that evangelism must be done in the power of God, his Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 tells us that we will receive power to carry the gospel, and that He will grant us the success of seeing people impacted as we join him in spreading the good news. As a church we want to be obedient and cooperative disciples to take God's love all around the world. We share here in our region, across the United States and all around the world. God's power is already working to prepare hearts to receive his Son. God's power is also working through us, if we will only let him.

Peter and John, though they were ordinary people, demonstrated this power in Acts 4:5-22. They were facing overwhelming opposition, but God spoke boldly through them, and impressed the high officials so much that they could not stop them. Verse 13 says the officials were astonished that these ordinary, unschooled men spoke with such power and purpose. Furthermore, it says they recognized that they "had been with Jesus." When we stay close to the Lord and seek after him in prayer, Bible study, worship, serving, and giving, we will stay equipped and empowered to bring the news. Also, people will be astonished and take note that we have been with Jesus. Will you allow Jesus to shine through you?

—Luke 21:12-19 —Acts 20:24 —Matthew 5:14-16

"THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY: PALM SUNDAY"

Luke 19:28-44

Biblical Principle: Jesus, the King of Kings, is God's lamb provided for us.

I. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the Sunday before Passover, is often called Palm Sunday among the Christian calendar. It was significant in so many important ways. One particular reason that made it so important was the fact that this event fulfilled the prophecy about the Messiah found in Zechariah 9:9 (also quoted in Matthew 21:5). It was another piece of evidence that alerted us to the fact that here was God's Son, the Christ, who came for us. Another prophecy fulfilled was in Psalm 118:25-26 (also quoted in Matthew 21:10). Hosanna meant Lord Save! It was the expectation that the day of salvation had arrived with the coming of the Messiah.

All the festivities that day were an expression of homage given to a conquering king. Many Old Testament and inter-testamental kings (e.g. Maccabees), were greeted in such a fashion as they would return from battle—the waving of palm branches, placing of cloaks, and victorious shouts, etc.. Unfortunately, the crowds misunderstood what kind of king Jesus was. They wanted a king, riding like a conquering general, who would throw off their oppressor, the Romans. Jesus' mission was far greater. He came to save the people for eternity, not just for today. His mission was to free them from themselves, their bondage of sin, not a government. True freedom is when our souls are clean and whole. Governments can't do that, only God. God's grace sets us completely free in Jesus Christ.

—Hebrews 7:25 —Galatians 5:1 —John 10:10b —Mark 8:36

II. Another interesting point about this particular day is what it meant there in first century Jerusalem. This particular Sunday was "Lamb's selection day." It was the beginning point of the week, just after the Sabbath on Saturday, in which the people would begin preparing for the observance of Passover. The first step was to select the Lamb that would be offered before the Lord at Passover. That lamb represented the lamb which was prepared back when the Israelites were delivered out of bondage from the Egyptians (Exodus 12). The blood of the lamb was placed upon the door post and judgment passed over. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Lamb's selection day, he was presenting himself as the true Lamb of God who would be sacrificed on Passover for the deliverance of the People. (John 1:29) God was saying choose my lamb. Unfortunately, many did not recognize his coming and why it was so significant. Jesus said in Luke 19:42, while weeping over Jerusalem, that if they had only known and understood who he was, God's lamb for the sins of the world, it would have saved them from disaster, eternal separation and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

We must choose the Lamb of God, who takes away our sin, as our Passover Lamb in order to escape from judgment (Revelation 20:11-15, 1 Corinthians 5:7) He is our true deliverer. He is the only one who can truly conquer death, hell and the grave. He is the only one who can truly conquer the grip of sin. What will you choose?

—John 1:12 —Revelation 3:20 —Romans 10:9-10