

More About Jesus, Part 1



TouchPoint 7

I've been telling you about Jesus in the last few TouchPoints, but mostly in the context of His unique position as God/man, and also that He is the one who found the way to break the separation between God and persons that evil has caused. He did it by dying in our place for our sins, so that we can once again be given the righteousness of God, thus restoring us to our initial purity and innocence.

This time, I want our conversation to be about the life of Jesus, so that you can get to know Him as the people who were around Him knew Him. Of course, we can't do the biography of Jesus justice in a couple of TouchPoints, but at least we can get you started discovering Him in more of the dimensions in which He operated.

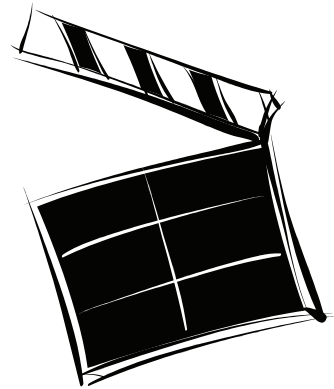
So, I'll tell you about Jesus the storyteller, Jesus the healer, Jesus the philosopher, and Jesus the submissive one.

Jesus the Storyteller

Most stories are told today on the screen, the big screen or the small one. Movies are how our modern generations tell their stories. Were Jesus alive today, he might well be a filmmaker. He would use the best medium available to let people know what he was about.

Of course in Jesus' day, about the only option available was story told by Jesus Himself and heard by those curious enough to come listen to Him. Sometimes Jesus would talk directly to issues and people, but often He told people about Himself and what He was on earth to accomplish by the use of stories. The word for story that's used in the Bible is "parable."

You have undoubtedly heard of some of them, even if you don't know the stories themselves. For example, when you hear the term "the good



Samaritan,” that’s referring directly to a story Jesus told. Other well-known phrases lifted from Jesus’ words or concepts include things like “turn the other cheek” or “go the extra mile.”

Some of His stories were real zingers meant to harpoon the stale religious hypocrites of his day. Jesus had little time for these kinds of people, and He seemed to love to skewer them whenever possible. It wasn’t that He had a mean streak – He was frustrated at them because of all the spiritual heaviness they heaped on the shoulders of the people. The people were worn out from practicing the minutiae of this religion forced upon them, but they didn’t know how to get out from under it. (see Luke 11:39-46).

“Some of his stories were real zingers...”

But mostly His words were meant for people who really longed for the same kinds of things that you and I long for: freedom, peace, joy, escape from evil, a good family, a good home, good health.

Space permits only one story here. It’s one of His most famous, and I’m personally glad beyond words that He told this one. It’s from Luke 15:11-24 (NIV):

Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

“Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

This story is known as “the prodigal son” and is one of Jesus’ clearest statements about God the Father and the way He loves us. God gives us our free choice, and even when we decide we don’t want anything to do with God, he lets us go. But every minute we’re gone, he watches for us, hoping against hope that we will return. And when we do, we are welcomed back home with love and affection we don’t deserve, but that’s just the way He is!

Here are a couple of other stories Jesus told. Read them over and then write down what you think is important in each of them:

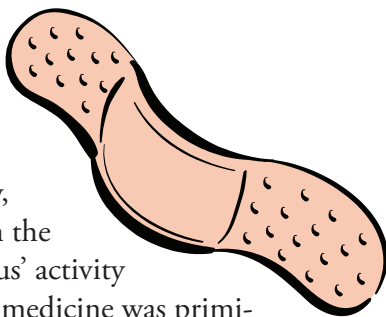
Luke 15:3-7 _____

Matthew 18:21-35 _____

Luke 18:9-14 _____

Jesus the Healer

As you begin to read more and more of the four books that talk about Jesus’ actual life – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – known as the Gospels in the Bible’s New Testament, you’ll see that a lot of Jesus’ activity centered around healing people. In an age where medicine was primitive by our standards, someone who could heal disease was bound to attract attention. But Jesus didn’t do it for that reason. In fact, He often asked the people He healed not to tell anyone about it because it would end up actually hindering the larger work He came to do (see Mark 1:40-45).



I just have to show you this one, because it says something really important

about Jesus. It comes from Mark 7:31-37. A deaf/mute is brought to Jesus to see if there was anything He could do for the man.

After He took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then He spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!"). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. (verses 33-35).

While the whole healing incident is miraculous, what grabs me are these words: He looked up to heaven with a deep sigh. Why the sigh? Was Jesus maybe tired of healing? Was He bothered that somebody interrupted His day and caused Him to lose a little time on His journey from one place to another?

“He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh.”

I think Jesus sighed because He never got used to seeing people who were sick, crippled, blind, deaf, leprous, or who had any number of other ailments. Jesus remembered the day He got down on His knees and with His own hand fashioned the human body (Genesis 1:7). He molded us in perfection, and how His heart ached when He saw what sin and evil had done to people.

Now don't misunderstand me here. I'm not saying that there's a direct cause/effect relationship between our physical state and our sin (though there are some cause/effect relationships we do know exist. If you insist on a high fat, high sugar diet, you might as well learn the name of a good cardiologist in your area because sooner or later you are going to need one).

When Jesus told Adam and Eve to leave the fruit alone on the one tree He asked them to avoid, it was precisely because He knew the nature of sin would cause real trauma to our bodies over time. He hated to see what sin, passed down from generation to generation, would actually do. He hated that this man had been deaf for his whole life. Can you imagine never hearing the laughter of children, the sound of waves on the shore, or the voice of your lover telling you that you are loved?

He sighed because our plight touched Him in the deepest parts of His own heart. He never planned for our lives to be this way. That's why He spent so much of His time healing. He tried to put right again as many as He could while He was here.

Here are other examples of Jesus' healings. Write down what you think is most important about each one.

Mark 5:18-23 (there are two stories in this reading) _____

John 5:1-9 _____

I don't know what you noticed in these stories, but I want to end this Touch-Point with a couple of observations that strike me.

In the Mark 5 reading, there were two stories. In the story of the little girl who was raised from the dead, I loved that Jesus isn't bothered at all by death! What is so horrible and final to us does not affect Jesus the same way. His life was all about breaking death, so He was only too happy to show it every chance He got!

The woman in the Mark story intrigues me most, though. Jesus gave her two kinds of healing. When she touched His garment, her disease immediately stopped. But it was His words to her that gave her the healing most needed. It happened with Jesus' first word to her! He said, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace, and be freed from your suffering."

All of His words were important, but that first word gave her the healing she craved. The word "daughter" is a word that denotes family. It's a word of belonging. It's a word of personal connection.

“It's a word of personal connection.”

In her day, a woman with a chronic disease was perpetually kept out of the synagogue and the temple because she was "unclean," as the Bible called it. A person who is sick for 12 years "with an issue of blood" (as Holy Scripture named her disease), probably had few social interactions. The constant drain of iron meant she may have been anemic, so she had no energy to carry on normal life. She was dirt-poor because all the docs of her day just took her money but couldn't fix her problem. No money to dress well, eat well, live well. She looked a mess. There was no way to solve her problems.

She was probably used to people turning their backs on her when she came their way! A social outcast, a woman without a spiritual life, no money to fix herself

up, no way to mix with “polite” society. The fact that she had lowered herself to ground level at Jesus’ feet, content with touching the hem of His clothes so that she wouldn’t have to meet His gaze says volumes about how she felt about herself.

So when Jesus called her “daughter”, it meant that she was noticed, that she was valued, that she mattered to Jesus. Jesus had a knack of finding the people that society had thrown away, and helped them see that they belonged. Jesus told her in one word that He didn’t feel about her the way she felt about herself. And something pretty amazing happens to a person when they realize how Jesus feels about them!

That last story from John 5 is there because of what it says about Jesus. There were lots of sick that day around the pool. I like how Jesus noticed the one man, picked him out of the crowd.

Now this isn’t to say that the others there were not as important – only that Jesus felt he was the one most important to heal on that day in that place.

It does a lot for me to realize that the same God who’s in charge of creating and running a whole universe still notices the little people – people like you and me. We are not lost in the crowd. Our needs are known to him, and He has a plan for our healing. That’s what a healer does. •

More About Jesus

Questions

How did Jesus teach the lessons He wanted the people to learn?

According to Luke 11.39-46, why were the common people spiritually tired?

Matthew 11.28-30 has some surprising words from Jesus. How do they contrast with the attitudes of the professional religious crowd of Luke 11?

Where do you find yourself in the story of the son who left home?

What do you think each of these actions by the father in the story means?

1. Letting his son go
2. Graciously sharing his wealth with his son
3. Watching for him every day until he returned
4. Running to meet his son
5. Dismissing his son's excuses and welcoming him home
6. The party

Why did Jesus let out a sigh when healing the deaf/mute man?

Why do you think healing was an important part of Jesus' life and ministry on earth?

Please send this answer sheet, either by e-mail or land mail

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