



grow. pray. study.

April 21, 2024 *A Faith to Heal Our Broken World*

Jesus brought a faith that could heal our broken world

MONDAY 4.22.24 Matthew 25:31-40, Ephesians 2:11-22

People without enough to eat or wear, who lack good (or any) health care, who are in prison, who have special needs, any outcasts or outsiders—most of us are willing to do a little something to help “them.” In Matthew 25, Jesus called them “the least of these brothers and sisters **of mine.**” Jesus wants us to love **his** brothers and sisters, not as “them” but as “**us,**” one human family, caring and sharing as he did. Ephesians said God’s plan for this big mission is to draw all who love him into God’s “household,” working together.

- In Jesus’ story, those he said had helped him were surprised: “When did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink?” They saw a need to meet, not a chance to earn a reward. What can help you learn to see the face of Jesus in the faces of the people you meet, especially those who are outcast or hurting? When have you found the freedom and joy that comes from blessing others because you know God cares about them?
- God has a big mission for the church to join in carrying out, so Resurrection has [big, challenging goals](#) about ways we aim to change the world by 2030. In what specific ways can you personally join in Jesus’ purpose (at Resurrection or elsewhere) to change the world for the better? In prayer, invite Jesus to ignite your imagination and give you big dreams. Write or print those God-given dreams and put them where you will see them often.

Prayer: O God, keep my eyes and my heart open to see your face in the faces of hurting people around me who need your touch through me. Amen.

Jesus healed people who were suffering

TUESDAY 4.23.24 Matthew 4:23-25, Mark 2:1-12

In Jesus' day, many of today's medical and psychological insights into human suffering didn't exist. People saw nearly all mysterious ills as "demon possession" (e.g., [Mark 9:14-27's](#) story of a likely case of epilepsy). The gospels' key point was that people needed physical, emotional, and spiritual healing, and that is still true. "The list of diseases emphasizes the enormous range of Jesus' healing activity. In this way, the good news is experienced as "a great light... in [the] shadow of death" (Matthew 4:16)." *

- Jesus' healing power was most obvious when a paralyzed man got up and walked. But Jesus knew physical healing wouldn't last forever in this world, so he linked it to eternal issues. Would you have been surprised to hear Jesus say to the man lowered through the roof on a stretcher, "Your sins are forgiven"? What does Jesus' choice of remedy suggest to you about his "diagnosis"? What might link forgiving the man's sins and restoring his physical strength?
- Scholar N. T. Wright said Jesus came to rescue people "from the destructive forces that enslaved them. So whether it was shrieking demons, a woman with a fever, or simply whatever diseases people happened to suffer from, Jesus dealt with them all.... Jesus had joined in a struggle against the forces of evil and destruction." * Do you ever shrug off suffering and pain as "just the way things are"? In what ways, as a Jesus follower, do you join his struggle against those forces?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for caring about the well-being of both my body and my inner self. Help me to live each day in the beautiful reality of your forgiving, restoring grace. Amen.

* Eugene Eung-Chun Park and Joel B. Green, study note on Matthew 4:23 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 12 NT.

Jesus healed social divisions in Israelite society

WEDNESDAY 4.24.24 Matthew 9:9-13, Luke 19:1-10

In Jesus' day, "righteous" people grouped Matthew and Zacchaeus under the label "tax collectors and sinners." Tax collectors helped pay the Roman occupiers by collecting taxes (usually excessive) from other Israelites. But Jesus ignored labels in favor of responsive hearts. "The Jewish historian Josephus (A.D. 37–93) explained that the first-century [Jericho to Jerusalem] road was... about eighteen miles long." * There, almost to Jerusalem, Jesus met another tax collector, and his caring outreach transformed the man's life.

- Matthew was an outcast from respectable society. Just imagine the type of friends who came to his house to eat with Jesus! (*The Message* paraphrased "tax collectors and sinners" in Matthew 9:11 with colorful precision as "crooks and misfits." **) Who might you see as "tax collectors and sinners" in 2024? How do you believe Jesus would treat (and have us treat) those people?
- Jesus said his mission was "to seek and save the lost." Scholar William Barclay said, "'Lost' does not mean damned or doomed. It just means in the wrong place.... A lost [person]... has wandered away from God; and is found when once again in the rightful place as an obedient child in the Father's... family." *** In what ways has God offered you your "rightful place" in God's family? When have you been able to help God "find" someone else?

Prayer: Loving Lord, help me to see others through your eyes that lit up with love and compassion at the sight of a "sinner." Help me to love and serve anyone I can in your name. Amen.

* From <https://www.israelandyou.com/jericho-to-jerusalem/>.

** From Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message*. NavPress, 1993-2002.

*** William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Luke* (Revised Edition). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, page 257.

Jesus healed political divisions

THURSDAY 4.25.24 Luke 6:12-16, Acts 1:12-14

When Jesus launched his public ministry, he had a key decision to make at the very beginning. Who would he equip to join him in his ministry? What types of people would be able to carry on and expand the mission long after he was gone? Today's passages named the disciples, or apostles, that Jesus chose. In a politically divided Israel, the list included Matthew, a tax collector for Rome, and Simon, a zealot (a group that despised any who helped Rome).

- We don't have a full biography of Jesus' disciples. We know the group included fishermen, a tax collector, and a Zealot. Fishermen caught and sold fish and paid Roman taxes. People hated the tax collectors for the occupying Roman Empire as traitors. Zealots tried to kill Roman soldiers if possible and dreamed of a military defeat of Roman troops. Jesus chose people with wildly different outlooks. What can we learn from the people Jesus chose? Why do you think Jesus chose such different people?
- Jesus knew that unity of purpose, grounded in prayer, could and would heal political and cultural divisions. He also knew that diversity was a strength for his mission, not a weakness. When have you worked towards a common goal with people that were very different than you? How can Jesus' ability to unite diverse people in a common purpose help you be effective next time you're working with others you may or may not agree with?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you valued diversity and healed political and cultural differences. Help me to see differences with others as something that is positive rather than something to be avoided. Amen.

Jesus healed divisions with neighboring people

FRIDAY 4.26.24 John 4:4-15, 39-42

Hatred and distrust between Israelites and next-door Samaritans went back over 500 years, to Israel's return from exile in Babylon (cf. [Ezra 4:1-5](#)). Yet, as in today's reading, Jesus regularly and repeatedly treated Samaritans with respect and compassion (cf. e.g. [Luke 10:25-37, 17:11-19](#)). And his actions were not an isolated, "one shot" event only he could carry out. He made that clear by commissioning his followers to reach out to the whole world (cf., [Matthew 28:18-20](#)).

- Today's reading taught two vital lessons. It bore witness to God's clear longing for peace among all God's children. And it pointed to the life-giving, soul-cleansing, peace-making, world-changing water that bubbles out from the one who made us; the thirst-quenching inner spiritual water that gives eternal life. Where in your daily living do you see prejudice? Are you willing to bear witness to God's work by deliberately going out of your way to confront the prejudice you see?
- As Jesus' ordered (cf., [Acts 1:7-8](#)), the apostle Phillip preached in Samaria. If any doubt was left (and it was), the Holy Spirit showed that God accepted Samaritans like everyone else (cf., [Acts 8:4-8, 14-17](#)). Later, Peter baptized Roman soldiers, and told upset Christians, "If God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then who am I? Could I stand in God's way?" (Acts 11:17) Can you welcome anyone from anywhere who wants to be part of God's human family?

Prayer: Lord God, you made many different trees, flowers, birds, and horses. Forgive me for ever sinfully imagining that somehow you only made and loved humans who were a lot like me. Amen.

Jesus even healed divisions with military occupiers

SATURDAY 4.25.24 Matthew 8:5-13, Mark 15:33-39, Acts 11:2-18

A “centurion” was a Roman invader in Israel, commanding 100 soldiers. He held military authority, but deferred to Jesus as a healing authority, sensing that Jesus’ power could heal all hurts, across all human boundaries. Scholar Craig Evans wrote of Mark 15, “The Roman centurion confesses.... Caesar is not the ‘son of God’; Jesus the crucified Messiah is.... Calling Jesus the Son of God, the centurion has switched his allegiance from Caesar, the official ‘son of God,’ to Jesus, the real Son of God.” * But it wasn’t just Romans who had to accept healing. It was hard for Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to give up their reflexive rejection of Romans. “Pressure [in Jerusalem] was mounting that would eventually lead to a massive revolt and the bloodiest and most disastrous war in Jewish history ending with Jerusalem being destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.... circumcision and the food laws... were [like] the national flag at a time when the whole nation felt under intense and increasing pressure. To welcome Gentiles as equal brothers and sisters must have looked like fraternizing with the enemy.” **

- Wright also wrote about the scene in Mark 15: “A battle-hardened thug in Roman uniform, used to killing humans the way one might kill flies, stands before this dying young Jew and says something which, in Mark’s mind, sends a signal to the whole world.... The Roman centurion becomes the first sane human being in Mark’s gospel to call Jesus God’s son, and mean it.” *** What did the centurion see or hear that moved him to that brave, amazing confession? What leads you, like the centurion, to believe and testify that Jesus is God’s Son? Can you feel Peter and the believers’ wonder, in Acts 11, after he’d met and baptized some of the Romans who’d violently invaded their land, when he reported, “God has enabled Gentiles to change their hearts and lives so that they might have new life”? When has Jesus’ love reached astonishingly past what you expected or thought possible?

Prayer: Jesus, many of the big problems in the world sometimes trouble me. My own internal struggles also trouble me. You are Lord of all—guide me through all the struggles inside me as well as outside. Amen.

* Craig A. Evans and N. T. Wright, *Jesus, the Final Days: What Really Happened*, edited by Troy A. Miller. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009, p. 35.

** N. T. Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part One: Chapters 1-12* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 175). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

*** N. T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, p. 216.

Prayer Requests – [cor.org/prayer](https://www.cor.org/prayer) Prayers of peace and comfort for: