

JOINING JESUS ON HIS MISSION

SESSION 3: Chapters 5-6

Warm Up: What is the most complex challenge you have ever taken on? How did it turn out?

Dear Friends,

Last session we were introduced to the powerful metaphor of a river that moved, making a state-of-the-art bridge useless. This metaphor helps to describe how our ministry context has shifted. This week we will look at how Jesus was always on a mission and how following his example is not as difficult as we may have thought. Once again let's begin by considering a few Bible passages:

At the House of a Sinner

He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. 3 And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." 6 So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 8 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19.1-10)

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. (Luke 7:36-38)

God Promises His Spirit

22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. 24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:22-27 NRSV)

DISCUSSION GUIDE: Joining Jesus on His Mission: Could It Be This Simple?

An Inefficiently Effective Strategy

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, that I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11.29-30)

1. Read Matthew 11:29-30, what does it say about joining Jesus on his mission? What do these verses mean to you personally?

2. Read Sir Francis Drake's prayer at the beginning of Chapter 5 on page 51. React to the petitions in this prayer and reflect on their implications for the way we "do church" today.

3. Respond to Finke's quote on page 54, "it is of highest importance that we listen carefully to how Jesus divides up the work that needs to be done:

- Jesus does the incredibly complex work that requires the Son of God;
- We do the incredibly simple work that requires a little child."

4. What are your thoughts about the two things we are called to do:

- Enjoy people
- Be open to respond to the things that Jesus is already doing in their lives

5. In 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 Paul talks about "making himself a servant to all" in order to present the Gospel to even a few. How could this look today?

6. What surprises you about the way that Jesus chose to engage the task of bringing people into the Kingdom? (Remember how on the night he was betrayed and arrested Jesus said, "Don't you know that I could have asked the Father and He would have at once sent 12 legions of angels?") This would have been "power"! Jesus chose weakness instead, relationships, caring and loving people, even using flawed people like his disciples.

- a. Why might this also be the best approach for us today?
- b. If it is the best approach for us what keeps us from imitating Jesus' strategy today?

7. As a result of today's discussion, what is Jesus teaching you?

With all this in mind take another look at the scripture passages from the beginning of this lesson:

Sometimes we think we have to change people – and that scares us. How do Jesus' encounters with Zacchaeus and the woman he forgave speak to that perception? How then does God change hearts, what might be our role in "changing hearts"? In the story of Zacchaeus what is significant about the fact that Jesus went to his house? What impact did Jesus doing this have on this "sinner"? What can we learn from this as we engage people in our "neighborhoods"? The Ezekiel text talks about God's Spirit changing hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. How does this text relate to Christ's missional strategy to reach people?