

Oct 15-21

## **Week 42**

This week we will continue to focus on Act 3, scene 2, “Christ’s Ministry: God’s True King Manifests His Kingdom.” As you read, think about ways Jesus was making the kingdom clear. He manifested his kingdom in many ways, for instance by various kinds of miracles, revealing his power over nature, the demonic, sickness, and death. As you read each story, ask, What does this story tell me about Jesus?

This week we will also read a great deal of Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom and will see a variety of his teaching methods. Jesus not only stood against the religious power structures of his day, embodied by the scribes and Pharisees, but also trained his disciples for their future role as the leaders of his movement. The week will climax with the transfiguration account, in which Jesus’ identity and the nature of his kingdom became gloriously clear.

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**Day 1**

**Read Matthew 13:1-53; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:1-18**

**Act 3 - Scene 2 - Reading 10**

A great deal of Jesus' teaching was in parables, and our reading today focuses primarily on parables having to do with seeds. The parable of the Sower in some ways is the foundational parable for all others (see Mark 4:13), for in it Jesus spoke about receptivity to the Word of God. In his explanation of this parable to the disciples, Jesus identified the dual role of parables. A parable is a story placed alongside spiritual truth to elucidate that truth. For those who have spiritual ears, the parables bring greater clarity to spiritual reality. They teach people how to think about God or about a relationship with God and others in the world. Jesus also pointed to Isaiah 6:9-10, saying that parables are a form of judgment on those who are spiritually imperceptive. As you read the parable of the Sower and the other parables in these chapters, notice the details as explained by Jesus.

*Think about your receptivity to God's Word. Which soil are you?*

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## **Day 2**

**Read Matthew 8:18-34; 9:18-38; Mark 4:35-5:43; Luke 8:22-56; 9:57-62**

### **Act 3 - Scene 2 - Reading 11**

Today we read some of the most striking stories in the Gospels. There are three different kinds of miracles here—power over nature, power over the demonic, and power over sickness and death. As you read each miracle story, ask, What does this story tell me about Jesus' identity? Notice the details of Jesus' interaction with people. For example, in Mark's version of the demoniac story, to whom did Jesus say yes, and to whom did he say no when a request was made?

Read these stories in light of the Old Testament background. For instance, read the calming of the storm in light of Psalm 107:29-30 and Jonah 1:4-17. In each passage who has the ability to calm a storm? The woman healed of the flow of blood would have been considered ceremonially unclean for those dozen years (see Leviticus 15:25-30), and she would have made anyone she touched unclean. But Jesus reversed things, healing her by that touch. In the demoniac story, being in a graveyard would have made the man ceremonially unclean, and pigs show that this was Gentile territory. Yet Jesus' authority knew no bounds.

*How is Jesus' authority manifested in your life today?*

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**Day 3**

**Read Matthew 10; 14; Mark 6:7-56; Luke 9:1-17; John 6**

**Act 3 - Scene 2 - Reading 12**

Continue to think today in terms of Jesus' mission and identity. The choosing of the twelve disciples symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel; Jesus was reconstituting the nation of Israel in his ministry. The disciples had a ministry to the world, enabled by the Spirit and identified with Jesus. Persecution and division occur because of Jesus' lordship over life. He is a dividing line. One follows him wholeheartedly or not.

The feeding of the five thousand has strong messianic overtones. Like Moses, Jesus gave bread in the wilderness (see Exodus 16; John 6), showing that he was a prophet like Moses (see Deuteronomy 18:15-16). Walking on water showed Jesus was Lord of the stormy waters. Only the Lord can walk on the seas (see Job 9:8) or give someone else the ability to do so.

*What do Jesus' actions say about his identity?*

*What are the implications of the fact that Jesus is Lord?*

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**Day 4**

**Read Matthew 15; Mark 7:1-8:10**

**Act 3 - Scene 2 - Reading 13**

As you read today, think in terms of boundaries. Boundaries can be important in life, but they can also block our relationship with God and others if set up inappropriately. The Pharisees and scribes applied the law in traditional ways, which Jesus said at points violated the law, missing the issues of the heart about which God is most concerned. Their set boundaries, in this case washing hands ritually, were deceptive, leading people to think they were clean, while their hearts remained defiled.

The stories about the Gentile mother and the feeding of the four thousand show that the kingdom was pushing past traditional boundaries into the world of the Gentiles. Jesus used the metaphor of dogs in contrast to sheep (commonly used of God's people). Jews often referred to Gentiles as dogs, unclean animals, a word picture for those who were not Jewish. Jesus was testing the mother's faith, and she came through with flying colors.

*What religious boundaries have you embraced that are not really biblical?*

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**Day 5**

**Read Matthew 16; Mark 8:11-9:1; Luke 9:18-27**

**Act 3 - Scene 2 - Reading 14**

Matthew and Mark begin with the demand for a sign from the Pharisees (Matthew adds the Sadducees), an irrefutable sign from heaven to prove Jesus' identity. Jesus, of course, had given lots of signs (the most common word for miracles in the Gospels), and Jesus in essence said, "The signs are already there for the spiritually perceptive." The resurrection would be the sign of Jonah (see Matthew 12:38-42)—someone delivered from death.

In the next story Jesus used the word yeast metaphorically (a word picture used for comparison) to speak of wrong teaching, but the disciples took it literally. Caught up in a practical need of the moment, they forgot that Jesus, who had multiplied bread for the masses twice, would not have been concerned about a lack of bread. In Mark, Jesus pointed to Jeremiah 5:21 to underline their spiritual dullness.

A breakthrough of perception came from the Spirit while they were at Caesarea Philippi, for Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, God's Messiah. This was a turning point in the Gospels; they pointed to Jerusalem and Jesus' death from this moment on. Peter's rebuke of Jesus—a crucified Messiah would not have made sense to him at this point—led to Jesus' rebuke of Peter. Following Jesus would mean a path to death and self-denial.

*Taking up your cross means giving your life completely to Jesus. Are you sold out to him?*

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**Day 6**

**Read Matthew 17-18; Mark 9:2-50; Luke 9:28-56**

**Act 3 - Scene 2 - Reading 15**

Yesterday Jesus predicted his death in Jerusalem. When Jesus said some standing there would not die before the kingdom of God arrived in power, he was probably speaking about the transfiguration. Luke gave us the most detailed account of this event; he said Moses and Elijah were speaking to Jesus about his death (see Luke 9:31). So the context of the transfiguration had Jesus setting his face toward Jerusalem, where he would die.

The transfiguration was a moment when heaven broke into earth. Notice parallels with other places in Scripture where clouds covered a mountain, God spoke, and people were afraid (for example, Moses on Mount Sinai). But the glory of Jesus revealed who he was, God's Son (think of the Shekinah glory of God in the Old Testament; see 2 Corinthians 4:4). Peter's mistake was assuming Moses and Elijah were on the same level with Jesus (see Luke 9:33).

In the teaching portions today notice the variety of methods Jesus used. Hyperbole (purposeful exaggeration; see Mark 9:43-47), illustration, and parables are represented. Also notice the centrality of the kingdom in these teachings.

*Do you recognize the glory of Jesus in these passages of Scripture? Will you worship him accordingly today?*

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**Day 7**

**Reading Summary for Week 42**

We've read how Jesus continued his ministry both in word and in deed. As he taught about the kingdom, he began using parables to explain his message. He also commissioned the Twelve to multiply his ministry by sending them out. His miracles continued to confirm the truthfulness of his message. The feeding of the five thousand, the only miracle of Jesus' ministry told in all four Gospels, represented the climax of his popularity with the people.

**Prayer/Meditation**

Jesus, how exciting it must have been to have followed you in person during your time on earth, walking in your steps up and down Galilee in those days. I can't imagine what it would have been like to hear the words directly from your mouth. Yet I can just as truly be your disciple today, following you spiritually as I seek to have your character growing in my life. Thank you for giving me your Spirit to enable me to be your true disciple. Amen.

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