



Tell me the stories of Jesus

Week Commencing 15th September 2019

Notes for next Sunday's sermons – Luke 18:9-14 and various passages re Peter

We return for the next three weeks, to a series we always enjoy called “Tell me the stories of Jesus”.

These are either stories *about* Jesus or stories *by* Jesus – ie one of his parables. Each week in this series we will feature two sermons – so make sure you listen to the one you missed online, so you can enjoy this series to the full. Here's the plan (where T = Tewantin, SB = Sunshine Beach and P = Peregrin):

22 Sept T – the Apostle Peter – a life transformed, SB and P – The Pharisee and tax collector

29 Sept SB and T – Rich young ruler, P – Jesus calms the storm

06 Oct SB and T – Legion healed; P – Rich young ruler

DAY 1: Read Luke 18:9-14 – The Pharisee

Jesus continues his teaching on prayer with this parable and although he doesn't single them out, we see, by the description in v9, he is referring to the Pharisees. Jesus then goes on to tell us about two men entering the temple. One is a Pharisee who people admired for their religious leadership and the other is a tax collector who people despised and were referred to as traitors. The Pharisee goes forward, proud and erect. The tax collector, however, keeps well back, probably shrinking into a corner.

The Pharisee, confident in his own righteousness, cleverly expressed praise for himself in the form of thanks to God, and arrogantly looked down on everyone else. He provided a list of meticulous observances, assuming God will be as impressed with him as he is with himself. In fact, he doesn't really seem to need God at all.

Much as we would not wish to acknowledge it, there is a warning here for us. How easy it is to see those less fortunate and thank God that we are not like them, exposing that tiny bit of self-righteousness.

DAY 2: Read Luke 18:9-14 – The tax collector

The tax collector, in contrast, “stood at a distance”, conveying his sense of unworthiness to approach God (whose presence was represented by the altar complex at the centre of the court). His humbleness is seen by his body language; his eyes are lowered; he would not even look up to heaven. He beat his breast, an act of grief, sorrow and repentance. He is so aware of the sin in his heart. He openly acknowledges his guilt. He cries out for mercy through atoning forgiveness, acknowledging he is a sinner, and simply asks God to cover his sins with atoning blood.

This parable reflects what Jesus said in Luke 14:11 “For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” The Pharisee attempted to exalt himself, to justify himself, to prove himself righteous before God. He saw himself as someone great which he wasn't. The tax collector, however, approached God in humility, as a sinner needing God's mercy, which he was.

The justification of the tax collector was immediate. He humbly came to God on the basis of his atoning sacrifice and was justified.

Remember with thanksgiving, that what God wants from us is not a proud list of our achievements, but a frank acknowledgement of our failures. When we acknowledge these, forgiveness and justification is instant.

DAY 3: Read Mark 8:27-9:1 – The Apostle Peter

The opening verse of Mark's gospel reads: *The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, [or Christ] the Son of God.* From that point on, Mark sets out to show us why we should take such a claim seriously. Here in Mark 8 – approximately the middle of the story – is the first of two great moments of recognition – that Jesus is the *Messiah*. Right at the end – when Jesus dramatically draws his last breath, is the second powerful moment of recognition – that Jesus is the *Son of God*.

Jesus has moved 40 kms north of Bethsaida. He is in Gentile territory with few Jewish settlers. Beautiful snow-capped Mount Hermon towers about 3000 metres above the villages. *On the way* (a phrase used also at 9:33, 10:17, 32, 46, 52) Jesus asks the disciples the question we readers have been grappling with throughout the first half of the book. "Who do people say I am?" The same answers are given as were discussed when Herod felt under threat by Jesus – see ch 6:14-15. But what about you *Twelve?* – now that you have been with me along the way and seen what I've done and heard what I have to say and been out on mission for me; what do *you* make of me? The air must have been tense. Were they still blind? Or had the light begun to dawn? And in the first dramatic climax of the book, Peter answers on behalf of the others, "You are the Messiah". (Or "the Christ" which was the Greek form of the Hebrew "Messiah", meaning, 'the Anointed One'.) He is the King of God's Kingdom. With his coming, the kingdom itself has come!

But the disciples had more to learn. For Jesus would not be the type of Messiah long awaited by Israel. Their hopes and expectations of the Messiah lay in the overturning of the Romans and the establishment of God's kingdom right there in Israel. Their concept of "Messiah" is immediately shattered as Jesus speaks plainly of his impending suffering and death. Peter won't have a bar of it. Peter and Jesus rebuke one another! But in the last section here, we also learn the sobering reality, that Jesus' disciples must also lay down *their* lives in concert with their King. Cling to your life as if it was your own and you'll lose it. Give it over, lay it down for Jesus and you'll gain it. It was one thing for the disciples to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah, it was another thing for them to realise all that would mean both for Jesus – and for themselves.

DAY 4: Read Mark 14:27-31 and Mark 14:66-72

The context is the final night before Jesus' death. Jesus had shared the last supper with his disciples before heading to the Mount of Olives. Peter once more, is bold before Jesus. The first to proclaim him as Messiah (even if he hadn't understood all that that meant), now he's the first to proclaim loyalty and allegiance to him, even it means his own death. He is so bold, that he claims that if should all the other disciples fall away, he will not. He will be the last man standing! Jesus, however, knows the sad reality, that Peter, far from being the last man standing, will be among the first to deny that he ever knew Jesus.

And sure enough, Peter denies knowing Jesus, three times. It's easy for us to look at Peter with dismay, but we are also challenged not to deny Jesus in our own lives. Peter considers his own life and safety as being more important than loyalty to Jesus. What he proclaimed boldly to Jesus when all was well, he overturned as soon as his life was under threat. We see respectively in the examples of Peter and Jesus, what it means to save one's life but lose it and lose one's life but save it.

How wonderful when in John 21:15-19, Jesus, in his tender grace and mercy, gives Peter the opportunity as it were, to reverse his denial by proclaiming three times, that he loves Jesus. In the preaching recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter demonstrates that his renewed love for Jesus was real and significant, as he boldly puts his life on the line to proclaim that Jesus, whom the Jewish leaders had crucified, is now risen from the dead! (See Acts 2:22-24.)

*Days 1 and 2, by Marg Hansen
Days 3 and 4 by Mark Calder*