

## Bible Study For July 1, 2018

**Readings:** 2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27, Psalm 130, 2 Corinthians 8:7-15, Mark 5:21-43

**Theme:** Faith/Healing

This week's lectionary provides one of my favorite Gospel stories. It's a healing story that I can personally relate to. Without giving the sermon away, my cancer and the scars of my life are being used by God for healing and redeeming the world. Just as Jesus did in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Jesus continues to do today. But you might notice in Mark's gospel we begin to get a deeper understanding of Jesus' kingship and the power he has been given for the sake of our salvation. It begins with a simple act of faith. Jesus being faithful to God's will, and our believing in God's faithfulness and promise made to God's creation.

Mark's text is filled with so much fast paced, frantic energy that we might have trouble seeing the richness of scriptural context that is prevalent (purity laws – touching an unclean or dead person – are just one example). While Jesus seems to be a great multi-tasker, his attention to the desperate needs of both petitioners portrayed in the story becomes a reminder for us of the God who is never too busy to hear our prayers and respond to our pleas in amazing and unexpected ways. But it all begins with faith.

**Read:** 2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27

Characters in the Old Testament tend to be complex, a mixed bag of vice and virtue. Here we see two of David's greatest virtues shine forth unmixed for our own imitation: reverence and friendship. David's reverence for God causes him to have a supernatural respect for, and even love of, his king despite Saul's repeated hostility towards him. The more we come to love God, the more we come to love those people and things that are associated with him and voluntarily avoid those things that could displease him. And so it is with the virtue of friendship, which produces the true miracle of community, the miracle of selflessly desiring the good of another, sharing one's life and highest values with them.

**Q:** Learning from David, how might we go about healing and regaining friendship in our personal life; or in the church?

**Q:** What are some characteristics of Jesus that speak to you in this passage?

**Prayer:** Restore in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew in me right spirit so that I might do your will and not my own. Amen.

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Leviticus 25:8-13; 18-22; 25-28; 35-55

There was a time when I would cringe a little every time I heard one of these passages about financial giving in church. But now, I savor them as I seek to raise money to keep this ministry going. I am reliant on your generosity to reach the un-churched and to build God's kingdom up. St. Paul calls us to remember the example of Christ's own self-emptying in our

giving. The “collection” is an opportunity to test the genuineness of one’s love, how much the generous love that is in Christ Jesus is abiding in them. This generosity of Christ, when it is living in you, moves as naturally and instinctively to take care of the poor as you would move to take care of the wounds on your own body. I encourage you to read all of Leviticus 25 for a better idea on what God, Jesus and Paul are talking about.

**Q:** How have you felt enriched by sharing generously with others?

**Q:** What can our spending habits tell us and others about our relationship with God?

**Q:** How do you understand economic justice in these passages? Is it important to God?

**Prayer:** Lord God, you spared no expense to make me your beloved child. Reveal to me ways in which I might be an example to your generosity and grace through Jesus. Amen.

**Read: Mark 5:21-43; Leviticus 15:19-31; 21:11; Numbers 11:19**

According to ancient Jewish purity laws, any contact with one who is bleeding or is dead, would make you ritually defiled and thereby unworthy to approach the Divine Presence – the essence of wholeness and life – until he or she could be ritually purified. Ritual impurity was transferred like an infection from the impure to the pure. In this passage, we see two stories where Jesus comes into direct contact with perceived impurity, and rather than infecting him, the purity and power within Jesus instead transfer wholeness and life to the two subjects! Mark is showing us in this narrative that Jesus himself is the Holy of Holies, the Temple of God upon whom the Spirit dwells, walking among us and “counter-infecting” the world with holiness, purity, righteousness, and life. In reality, like the crowds in this story, we often brush shoulders with Jesus without any awareness of the fact. But when we touch him with faith and eager expectation, the power and life that are in his glorified body are made available for the healing and transformation of our humanity and world.

**Q:** In what ways can you be a conduit for Jesus’ power and grace to a world alienated from God’s presence?

**Q:** What sorts of things do you suppose might hinder a free flow of the life-giving Holy Spirit into our lives and circumstances?

**Q:** Why do you think Jesus ignores the purity laws of his religion?

**PRAYER:** Lord, it is by faith that I encounter you. And so I pray that my faith might increase so that when I am called to do so, I can be your presence in the world.

**Slow read: Psalm 130**

This is a psalm that should be in the emergency toolkit of every Christian. Here we are taught that, even in the depths of anguish, shame, and guilt, we can wait with earnest expectation upon the Lord’s forgiveness. As you read and reread, think about how you’d like God to restore and renew you.