

Excerpts from a Bible Workshop on "Jesus, the Master Teacher"

A workshop for Sunday School teachers and students of the Bible
presented by Genelle Austin-Lett, September 13, 2014

Think for a moment of the best teacher you have ever known. It could be a Sunday School teacher, family member, music teacher, athletic coach, or schoolteacher. Get that person clearly in thought and then list the qualities he/she expressed. You probably thought the person was loving, patient, forgiving, enthusiastic, honest, compassionate, humble, courageous, expectant, humorous, knowledgeable about the subject, and able to listen.

Do you see any or all of these qualities in Jesus?

We can agree that Jesus was a loving man. He expressed immense love for the downtrodden, outcasts of society, women, and children. He showed tremendous compassion in feeding the crowds of 5000 and 4000; courage in healing on the Sabbath; selflessness in forgiving Judas; humility in washing his disciples' feet; patience in answering his disciples' questions; and spiritual perspicacity in his expectancy of instantaneous healing. Some may be reluctant to think he had a sense of humor. But if children were drawn to him and massive crowds flocked to hear him speak, he must have had a special way of arresting their attention and holding it.

Today we'll look at Jesus as a teacher, his message and his methods for teaching that message, and how that combination results in healing.

Jesus as Teacher

The information in the four Gospels is foundational for what most of us know about the Master and his teaching. But what about a fifth Gospel found in the Egyptian desert near the town of Nag Hammadi in 1945? Many scholars believe that the Gospel of Thomas may be the most important manuscript discovery ever made.

The Gospel of Thomas is simply 114 sayings or teachings of Jesus. There is:

- no story
- no nativity
- no record of healings
- no indication of conflicts with authorities
- and no crucifixion or resurrection.



Jesus just teaches about life. We are entreated to find the meaning of life in his sayings. This document is considered to be one of the earliest accounts of Jesus. After one reading, you find yourself thinking, "Hmmm, this could use a little color, some context, perhaps a story-line, some events, more people." The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) provide these elements to approximately 50 of the 114 sayings in the Gospel of Thomas.

Knowing is a very important part of Jesus' teachings. There are many themes in the Gospel of Thomas. Some include: oneness; the need to know ourselves; the need to recognize that we live in the realm of God; the fact that we are at one with the light; the need to release any personal sense of ego; and the need to know the beginning.

Let's look at Saying 18:

"His followers said to Jesus: 'Tell us how our end will be.' Jesus said: Have you discovered the beginning that you ask about the end? For, in the place where the beginning is, there the end will be. Blessed is the one who takes a stand in the beginning. That one will know the end, and will not experience death."

The disciples' question suggests they want to know when this kingdom will arrive. For two millennia, orthodox Christianity has asked the same question. Mary Baker Eddy wrote, "To begin rightly is to end rightly" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 262:28). There isn't an end time we are waiting for if we understand the beginning. Is the beginning, then, Genesis 1:1, which says, "In the beginning God..."? Isn't that the only beginning—our always connection—God?!

If we accept all of Genesis 1, then we must accept ourselves in God's image and likeness, and that likeness never dies.

The Secret Teachings of Jesus: The Gospel of Thomas by Christian Amundsen offers this point of view:

“To take your place in the beginning, which Jesus says is blessed, is simply to move your knowledge into the deeper part of yourself—into the Spirit. That is the truth of you, your True Self—the spark of the divine. It cannot die nor be used up or consumed—it just is. When you know that essential truth, all talk of when the world will end becomes unimportant, because in a manner of speaking it has already ended with your recognition that you do not belong to it” (p 48).

Jesus’ life as well as his words set the tone for his teaching. If you want to learn, get close to the teacher. Jesus entreats his disciples to get yoked.

Look at Jesus’ invitation in Matthew 11:29-30 from Eugene Petersen’s paraphrase, *The Message*:

“Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.”

Isn’t that the kind of teacher we want working with us? So, how are we going to learn it? By watching the Master in action.

Jesus’ Message

What was his message? Was it: Life is eternal? The cross? The kingdom of God? Here, it’s interesting to note that Matthew wrote for a Jewish audience, so he is the only Gospel writer who uses “kingdom of heaven.” Jews were very careful not to say “God” so as not to look as though they were breaking the third commandment by using God’s name vainly. Mark and Luke use “kingdom of God” exclusively.

After the temptations in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says:

“Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”
(Matt 4:17).

If we are to repent, what does it mean?

Harper Collins Study Bible defines “repent” as:

“to change one’s mind for the better.”

Another definition is:

“A deep, radical change of both perspective and commitment, resulting in moral and spiritual transformation”
(*Richards Complete Dictionary of the Bible*).

One of my favorites is from the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*:

“The radical turning away from anything that hinders one’s whole-hearted trust in God.”

So, we must change our way of thinking about the kingdom.

Jesus told the Pharisees they were looking for heaven in all the wrong places when they asked him to pinpoint the

kingdom’s location. You won’t find it with a GPS because it is within you. The “neither...Lo here! or, lo there!” (Luke 17:21) immediately removes this kingdom from being established in time or space. Jesus knew God’s children had never been outside the kingdom. The Synoptic Gospels illustrate Jesus’ compelling and irresistible message as being within reach—right at hand or within us.

Why was this such a startling message? What kind of kingdom were they expecting?

I often take scripts to Sunday School of Bible stories I’ve rewritten in modern language. Now the class is coming with their own scripts on Sundays. At first, we just all read the script through with alternating lines. Then we discuss its purpose and select the roles we want to play. The students then work with me on rewriting and expanding some of the text, making sure we cover some of the tough aspects of Jesus’ message. Here’s a shortened version of an interview with Jesus before he gave the Sermon on the Mount:

Reporter: Tell us your name?

Jesus: Jesus.

R: I hear from people around town that you have a powerful message—just what is that message?

J: Change your way of thinking and come into the kingdom!

R: What’s wrong with my way of thinking? I have a journalism degree from Caesar College.

J: There is nothing wrong with your thinking—but what do you know about the kingdom?

R: Whose kingdom would that be? Rome’s? Caesar’s? Israel’s?

J: God’s kingdom!

R: Yeah, but don’t you have to die to get there? I’m a little too young for that.

J: No, the kingdom I’m talking about is within you.

R: Within me? Doesn’t that get a little crowded?

J: Why don’t you cover some of my training sessions where I explain it all. I’m going over to that mountain with my apostles and disciples and other interested listeners to teach this very message. You’re welcome to attend.

R: Could you give our viewers a sneak peek about your message, just in case they can’t make it?

J: Blessings! I’m going to talk about blessings and being blessed.

R: So you’re going to bless people?

J: I do all the time. Whom do you think should be blessed?

R: The rich, the influential—reporters like me getting out the word.

J: Actually, I'll be blessing the poor, the meek, the persecuted, those who make peace, not war, and then I'll show them how they will be rewarded.

R: Good luck with that one.

J: My message is for everyone. It's a "how-to" manual for living in the kingdom of God.

R: Rain check—I think I'll cover the Angels vs. Giants game.

The interview tells us some of the problems that people had with the kingdom of God. There was another kingdom in place, and they all felt it: Rome. Others thought the Messiah would usher in a mighty military kingdom to take over Rome or any other despots. The script opens the opportunity for the class to find out why the message about the kingdom would be so difficult for people to accept and why Jesus told them they had to change their way of thinking.

When given the context of what people were handling, we can understand why it was difficult for people to wrap their thoughts around Jesus' message.

Jesus announced his message as the "good news." How was that different from Rome's method? After a Roman conquest, messengers were sent out to announce the "good news."

"Caesar Augustus, for example, who ruled the empire from 27 BC to 14 AD, articulated his good news in this inscription found in Myra, Lycia:

"Divine Augustus Caesar, son of god, imperator of land and sea, the benefactor and savior of the whole world, has brought you peace" (*The Secret Message of Jesus*, Brian McLaren, 10).

The savior bringing peace wasn't a new message to the people—Jesus' message was just of a different ruler and destination. The people thought they had to die to get to his kingdom, and the early church and subsequent religious beliefs have made the kingdom a far-off event for which everyone is waiting. For centuries, scholars have said the kingdom of God hasn't arrived; and it won't until the end of the world.

But Jesus was not talking about a kingdom that had a beginning and an ending.

Jesus was an end-time preacher only in that he was showing each person that his or her material concepts of life had to end. Jesus' introduction of the kingdom is to bring an end to the world we hold sacred now, in whatever form of matter it may assume. Being aghast at wars, famines, droughts, fires, floods has to be broken now, not hereafter. Jesus' very presence and life bring it all to an end.

C.H. Dodd, in *The Parables of the Kingdom* (1935), argued against the popular scholarly belief that the kingdom of God

had failed to come. Dodd's thesis is that the kingdom of God was already a present reality during Jesus' ministry and that we don't have to have a catastrophic end to get to heaven.

Mary Baker Eddy did that for us when she gave us the spiritual sense of the Lord's Prayer:

"Thy kingdom come.

Thy kingdom is come; Thou art ever-present" (*S&H* 16:30).

Jesus gets the kingdom message rolling in the Sermon on the Mount, which really is a handbook on how to live in the kingdom. Mrs. Eddy expected us to be familiar with this important message from Jesus:

"Every man and woman should be to-day a law to himself, herself, —a law of loyalty to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount" (*Miscellaneous Writings*, Mary Baker Eddy 12:12-14).

"To my sense the Sermon on the Mount, read each Sunday without comment and obeyed throughout the week, would be enough for Christian practice" (*Message '01*, Mary Baker Eddy 11:16).

Jesus has already been preaching, teaching and healing for one year before he gives this sermon. Before sharing the handbook of the kingdom, he selects the apostles from among his many disciples. We're told in Luke 6:12-13 that Jesus spent all night in prayer over which disciples would become his apostles. They are then all invited to follow him to a mountain in Matthew and to a plain in Luke.

Handbook of the Kingdom

The beatitudes and the messages on "saltiness" and "light" round out the introduction. The beatitudes begin and end with being rewarded with the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus was known for being able to grab and hold attention. Can you hear the crowd muttering, "Poor in spirit? What's wrong with the rich?" He further rattles them by telling them they are salt and light.

Let's consider how *The Message* explains these ideas.

"Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness?

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill.

"If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand.

"Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light

stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven" (Matt 5:13-16).

Can you see why this is a kingdom manual? It is telling us to live generously and not to be afraid to let people know about God.

Jesus' message is so radical that he prepares his audience with the fact that he didn't come to destroy the law and prophets, but to fulfill the law. (See Matt 5:17) The dichotomy exists between the spirit and the letter. The Pharisees had the letter nailed, but the spirit not so much; and Jesus shows them the spirit of the commandments.

He introduces his discourse on the commandments with "Ye have heard that it hath been said..." not to murder, but I tell you not to get angry with anyone. It's just as bad. (See Matt 5:21-22) Jesus explains that the spirit of this commandment goes beyond taking someone's life. He is raising the standard on these commandments, giving them depth and dimension. Jesus tells them to get rid of anger because it is the basis of why people commit murder. He asks them not to insult anyone—it's character assassination.

Don't insult; don't call someone a fool. Insults and anger together can escalate into taking a life. So Jesus asks us to check our motive. And he's giving us the preventative to avoid even coming close to breaking the commandment. Jesus moves us away from doing physical harm to choosing our words wisely in order to do no harm.

He next discusses not committing adultery by looking at our motive, checking our thinking before it takes us in the wrong direction. If we're lusting in our hearts, chances are pretty good we can crank it up a notch if given the opportunity. Doesn't adultery usually start with lust?

Clearly, Jesus is dealing with the preventative—how to keep things from getting out of hand.

The kingdom the Jews knew in that time argued for revenge—an eye for an eye. Jesus raises the bar and teaches us not to react, but to reconcile our differences. Turn the other cheek; if sued for your shirt, give your coat also; walk with the soldier two miles instead of one.

I was never a fan of any of these responses until I realized their deeper message. On the surface, we're told to turn the other cheek. In McLaren's book, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, he explains turning the cheek in a totally new way. A Roman soldier would slap you backhanded on your right cheek, presuming he is right-handed. That is an insult from a superior to an inferior. But, if you turn the other cheek to let him have a crack at it, you are forcing him to think differently because the open-hand slap or a fist to the other cheek

makes you an equal. He has lost all ground for treating you as an inferior. So he probably won't hit the other cheek, and you have risen above a violent reaction. (See *The Secret Message of Jesus*, 126)

Since most people don't know what that means today, we might contemplate what Jesus is asking us to do when confronting conflict. Jesus is telling us there is no justification for us to move outside of kingdom behavior.

The same is true of the rich landowners who would often take poor peasants to court because they were in debt. In payment, they would take the debtor's outer garment. "Jesus says to strip down naked and give them your underwear as well! Your 'generosity' leaves you defenseless and exposed—but in a sense, your exposure exposes the naked greed and cruelty of your oppressors. Again, you have transcended the oppression without violence." (Ibid.)

In the case of walking with the Roman one mile—the second mile shows you as a "generous human being, strong, self-controlled, dignified, not dominated. The first mile may be forced but the second mile, you walk free, transcending your oppression." (Ibid.)

Love your enemies. Why? Because God does—He doesn't have any enemies. God loves. God is good to all. "He sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45). Isn't it our judgment call to make someone an enemy?

The Sermon handbook moves from societal behavior to spiritual worship and practices.

Don't let your pretense of piety interfere with your intent. Don't let people know how much money you throw in the collection, don't pray just to be seen praying, and don't opt for a gaunt, haggard appearance so you appear to be fasting.

That leads to instructions about praying. We go to our closets and pray in secret. The disciples want to know how to pray. So Jesus shows them a way to pray. The Lord's Prayer is the kingdom prayer—it starts with heaven and ends with the kingdom. We begin and end with God.

My Sunday School class dissected it this way for their "God and Country" Boy/Girl Scout badge: the first four lines get our thought centered on God and then we shift to three requests: to be fed, to be forgiven, and to not be forsaken. Then the prayer goes back to God and the kingdom.

Jesus' message continues with a directive about not seeking earthly treasures in this kingdom. Instead, we should aim for something higher, better, more long-lasting.

I've always wondered if people were as consumed in Jesus' day as they are today about what to eat, drink, and wear. How much time is wasted with questions like these: "What do you want to eat?" "I don't know. What do you want?"

You know the drill! Jesus turns thought to how the birds are fed and cared for by God.

Then there are the closet inquirers: "What should I wear today?" "I have nothing to wear!" Jesus moves them to thinking about how God cares for the lilies of the field.

Finally comes the sage advice to seek the kingdom of God first, and everything will be in place.

I love Henry Drummond's paraphrase:

"Seek the kingdom of heaven first. I promise you a miserable existence if you seek it second."¹

Jesus closes the handbook by requiring action: do more than hear; follow through and you're like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Again, I love the paraphrase from *The Message*:

"These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock.

"But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards" (Matt 7:24-27).

Now that we've looked at Jesus' message and one method of teaching it, let's consider other ways he taught.

Methods—Parables

Jesus was a great storyteller, holding the interest of his audience right to the end of the story and leaving his listeners in sufficient doubt about its meaning.

Parables invite the listener to plunge beneath the surface—to go beyond the literal meaning and seek the metaphorical. But I think there is another level—the metaphysical one. Mary Baker Eddy asks us to "look deep into realism instead of only accepting the outward sense of things" (*S&H* 129:22-24). If we look deep into the kingdom parables, we find a structure for healing.

C.H. Dodd gives my favorite definition of a parable:

"At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life,...arresting the hearer by their vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about their precise application to tease it into active thought" (*The Parables of Jesus* by Trevor Leach, 8-9).

Each "kingdom" parable helps us to better understand life

in the kingdom as well as elements of healing. After the Sermon on the Mount, the disciples witnessed healings of:

- the centurion's servant
- the widow's son
- demonics
- the woman with an issue of blood
- Jairus' daughter
- blind men and others.

But they also heard parables of the sower and of the tares and the wheat before they were given the directive to go out, two by two, and preach the kingdom and heal the sick. (See Luke 9:2)

What does healing have to do with parables? For Jesus, signs and wonders are the kingdom, and healing is natural in the kingdom.

So why is preaching the kingdom linked with healing?

Howard Ervin, in *Healing Sign of the Kingdom*, states:

"In the ministry of Jesus, the message of the kingdom and healing are indivisible, for healing is the sign that the kingdom of God has drawn near. Healings confirmed the message of the kingdom."

Since there are a number of kingdom parables, let's specifically look at a parable that teaches about the nature of the kingdom, such as Matthew 13:24-30.

We can liken the sowing of good seed to any one of us in our field of labor. An enemy comes and plants weeds among the wheat. Semitic farmers would often avenge a wrong done to them by scattering bad seeds so the enemy would suffer.² The Romans had stiff penalties for such crimes.

Darnel is another name for the tare or weed. It is poisonous. "Evil, like darnel, is a counterfeit of reality, not reality itself. It is a parasite on being, not being itself."³

The servants are totally absorbed with the problem. Jesus says to allow the tares and wheat to grow together until the harvest. "Let" = "aphete" in Greek, which means to let go, leave, forgive.⁴ One way of looking at how to destroy evil might be to forgive it.

I so enjoy Trevor Leach's two books on the parables. He really zeroes in on the metaphysical. Just listen to his comment on the tares:

"Do not be mesmerized or disturbed by the counterfeit, the appearance of evil and sin. Be patient and allow the Truth to take deep root and grow in your heart."⁵

As we think about healing, what things stand out in the mind of the healer?

- Don't be impressed with the physical evidence.

- Forgiveness brings healing.
- Thoroughly destroy the weeds at harvest.

It's the farmer's responsibility to burn the weeds and store the wheat. So, isn't Jesus instructing us in how to live as a practitioner? What we know about the patient is his/her true individuality, and that is the wheat. The unreal (tares) is destroyed so that it doesn't creep back into consciousness.

If we think of this in the light of healing, are we ready to be unimpressed with the weeds the patient may parade before us and to truly discern the real from the counterfeit? This parable serves as a lens through which to examine some of Jesus' healings. As you read the parables, ask yourself, "What is he telling me about my own practice?"

Parabolic Acts—Teachable Moments

A parabolic act is one in which actions not only gain attention, but also leave a lasting impact. Can you think of things Jesus did that would catch their attention? What would these acts teach you? How many of them did people consider impossible?

- Changing the water into wine would certainly seem impossible, but we are learning that matter in any form had no power over Jesus. Not even to distract him!
- Walking on the water is an opportunity to do more than prove Jesus couldn't swim 😊, but that he had power over all the forces of matter.
- Sleeping during a storm and then quieting the tempest sure made an impression!
- Talking to a tax collector in a tree certainly had an impact on Zacchaeus: he is ready to make amends for overcharging taxpayers.
- Stopping a funeral procession showed deep compassion for a widow who would no longer have the support of a male family member.

Can you see people remembering these acts? What about these others:

- whipping the money changers out of the temple
- responding to being questioned in the temple
- raising Jairus' daughter
- raising Lazarus
- healing the man who was blind from birth
- healing the mason's withered hand and restoring his dignity
- feeding the 5000 and the 4000
- washing the disciples' feet.

Questions

Jesus is the master of the question. There are at least 100

questions in the Gospels. As you read the questions listed below, see if you can recall the situation in which the question was asked.

Example: How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business? (Jesus is talking to his mother when he's in the temple; he is 12.)

1. Wilt thou be made whole?
2. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?
3. How can Satan cast out Satan?
4. Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?
5. Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?
6. Lovest thou me more than these?

(Answers on page 8.)

Jesus' Answers to Questions

Jesus tends to answer a question with a question. There are many to investigate, but let's look at the time when he enters the temple on the Tuesday before his crucifixion, the day after whipping the moneychangers out of the temple. The chief priests and elders are gathered to ask him:

"By what authority do you do these things? and who gave thee this authority?" (Matt 21:23)

It's an impossible question to answer because no matter how he responds, Jesus is going to be in trouble with the authorities. So he says, I'll answer your question if you answer mine. They agree, and he asks:

"The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" (Matt 21:25)

Jesus has just asked them the same kind of question they asked him. No matter what they say, they can't win: if they say, "From heaven," then Jesus can say, "Why didn't you believe him?" And if they say it was "of men," they'd have to worry about crowd control since the people believe John is a prophet. The safest response for them is to say they don't know. So, Jesus doesn't have to answer their question.

Overstatement

Through overstatement, Jesus impresses his listeners with how serious he is about changing their lives and jettisoning anything that might interfere with their spiritual innocence. If we go back to the Sermon on the Mount, one of my favorite passages to teach in Sunday School about conquering lust is the pirate section—complete with a black patch and hook. Jesus says to avoid anything that will stain your purity. If your eye offends you, pluck it out and if your right hand offends you, cut it off! (See Matt 5:29, 30)

Message + Methods = Healing

Now, let's look at the "touching" healing of two daughters. Often these stories are told separately. But a close reading of Mark 5:21-43 gives too many clues not to consider them together. In fact, told together, we discern a third healing.

Jairus is one of the most respected men in the community. He is the ruler of the synagogue. He expresses immense courage when he seeks Jesus' help with healing his twelve-year-old daughter. As they head to his home, Jesus is interrupted by a homeless woman with an issue of blood. Is her hemorrhaging related to an issue with blood relatives—a mother-in-law, a husband, a child? Or could it be an issue of bad blood among others in the community?

The Talmud offers unique cures for this woman's problem. There are tonics, and there are quite unusual approaches, such as carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag in summer and the same ashes in a cotton rag in winter. There is also the possibility of cure if you carry a barley corn found in the dung of a white female donkey. No wonder this woman has spent all her living on these cures and hasn't improved!

Jesus acknowledges that someone has touched him, and when the woman comes forward, he greets her, saying, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole" (Mark 5:34). No doubt, Jairus wants the master to keep going because his twelve-year-old daughter, on the brink of womanhood, is dying, and why stop for this woman who has been an outcast because of her womanhood for twelve years? See the connections? Both are daughters, both share the same twelve years: as long as the girl has lived, this woman has suffered.

The healing changes when these two stories are intertwined. The woman is healed instantly and she is told it is her faith that made her whole. Does Jairus really care if some homeless woman needs help when his daughter's life is at stake? Then, the message comes that the daughter is dead. What do you think Jairus is thinking? We can only speculate because Jesus doesn't give him the opportunity to respond. He tells him, "Fear not: believe only" (Luke 8:50). Jairus can either be terribly angry or sad, or he can have faith. He has just witnessed faith-in-action with the homeless woman and has seen the results. Could having faith bring back his daughter? Maybe it is the woman's faith that keeps Jairus from reacting to the circumstances. The result? He witnesses his daughter's complete restoration. The third healing that emerges is the growth of Jairus' faith.

God doesn't turn circumstances into winners and losers. Neither interruptions nor time can stop healing.

If we were to take one of the kingdom parables—let's say the parable of the mustard seed—and overlay it on these three

healings, what more would we learn about healing?

"Another parable he put forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (Matt 13:31, 32).

After a brief consultation with one's neighbor sitting to either side, the audience in the Arden Wood chapel responded with these ideas:

- The soil was good. We certainly could take that back to the parable of the good soils.
- Very small beginnings, but faith grew.

Whose faith?

- Jairus'

Was Jairus the only one with a "faith lift"?

- the woman
- the disciples
- the mourners
- the servant who delivered the message

We all agreed that Jairus' faith may have been small, but he did seek Jesus. We can watch his faith being forced to grow when he is told to hang on to it, and then his faith flourishes like the huge bush the mustard seed becomes when his daughter is healed.

- Since he was the ruler of the synagogue, wouldn't his newfound faith help his members?
- If the birds lodging in the huge bush represent the sinners, tax collectors and the like, wouldn't Jairus now have a new view of the homeless?
- As small as Jairus' faith was, he came with expectations of healing, similar to what we expect when we plant a mustard seed—we expect it to grow.
- Doesn't the healing of the woman with the issue of blood "water" Jairus' seed of faith?

As you read more of Jesus' healings and the kingdom parables, look for more examples of Jesus teaching us how to heal and the results of his teachings.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED TODAY?

The best teachers in your life were probably those who planted seeds—and you're still reaping the harvest from them.

We looked at Jesus as the Master Teacher. What is his major subject? The kingdom of God. Where is it located? Within!

We looked at the different pedagogical methods employed by Jesus from storytelling, to recognizing that actions speak louder than words, to the importance of good questions, to Jesus' Socratic approach to handling questions.

Now, can we all agree to love like the Master; pray like the Master; heal like the Master; and "Let this (M)ind be in (us), which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5)? As Jesus assures each one of us:

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

Answers to questions on page 6

1. Man with spirit of infirmity 38 years—Pool of Bethesda (John 5:2-9)
2. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:25-33)
3. Jesus talking to the Pharisees when they said that Jesus cast out devils by Beelzebub (Matt 12:24-26)
4. Jesus questioning Nicodemus (John 3:10, 12)
5. Jesus to his disciples (Matt 16:13)
6. Jesus to Peter at the morning meal (John 21:15)

Footnotes

- ¹ Henry Drummond—lecture in Appleton Chapel, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1893
- ² Rocco A. Errico and George M. Lamsa, *Aramaic Light on the Gospel of Matthew*. Smyrna, Georgia: Noohra Foundation, 2000, p. 197
- ³ Robert Farrar Capon, *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment: Paradox, Outrage and Vindication in the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002, p. 87
- ⁴ Trevor Leach, *The Parables of Jesus and Their Relevance to Divine Healing*, 2001, p. 62
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