

March Study notes.



Our John series gives us encounters of people with Jesus in the last phase of his ministry as we lead up to Easter.

March 3rd John 9. Healing the blind man

Healing was central to the earthly ministry of Jesus, the revelation of the nature of his Kingdom, and is an ongoing commission of the Church. 'While it is day we must do the works of him who sent me' Jesus says in John 9, works which include 'healing'.

Some questions.

- a) What does Jesus say about the reason the blind man is blind?
- b) How do we react to suffering and causation? Is it important to know a reason for suffering? Who do we instinctively blame for it, God, human beings, Satan or 'blind chance'?
- c) This chapter implies that at least for Jesus, Healing is Kingdom work. 'We must do the works of the Kingdom.' Is this a mandate and imperative for healing ministry for us to practice too?
- d) Why does Jesus spit, make mud for the man's eyes etc?
- e) Miracles and the 'nearness' of God, the 'day'.. seem to be factors in healing occurring. What about 'night is coming when no one can work'? How do we deal with unanswered prayer for healing?
- f) This healing is a prophetic sign about spiritual seeing and blindness. How do miracles speak beyond themselves to spiritual realities?
- g) How much is the man's faith and responsiveness key to his healing?
- h) He goes beyond healing to worship. V 38. How can we help people find the sozo wholeness of becoming worshippers, along a healing journey?

March 10th Jesus and Lazarus John 11.

This miracle is one which goes beyond the actual physical restoration of Lazarus to be a gauntlet thrown down to challenge the very powers of death and sin. Miracles do this! They are spiritual warfare and can produce a backlash (C.S. Lewis- miracles and martyrdoms go together).

In this account

- a) Timing. Jesus stays away when Lazarus is sick even though he loves him, and even though he knows he is going to die. Jesus has a bigger

picture in view, resurrection which will be a prophetic sign and a challenge to the powers. But what does this tell us about our own sense of the mystery of God's timing and purposes? Does God allow suffering to happen for good reasons of which we are ignorant?

- b) How might this miracle have helped the disciple's faith in their own 'dark night' (v 15)?
- c) Mary & Martha both say to Jesus 'If you had been here my brother would not have died'. Exactly! That's why Jesus stayed away. Healing happens in the presence of the King. What is the link between our 'hosting' of the presence of God and the release of healing? To what extent and how is Jesus 'here' or 'absent' in our gatherings?
- d) Jesus speaks with profound authority in calling Lazarus out of the grave. Where does his authority come from? Where does our spiritual authority come from? How might we grow in spiritual authority?
- e) Jesus told the onlookers to take off the grave clothes from Lazarus. There are things only God can do to help people, but also things we can do in a healing journey. What might it mean for us to metaphorically 'take off the grave clothes' over people who have encountered Jesus?

March 17th Jesus and Mary. Intimacy in worship John 12/Mark 14

What does it look like to worship Jesus in intimacy?

In Mark's account Jesus says of Mary 'She has one a beautiful thing to me'

What a wonderful thing for Jesus to say about someone.

- a) Mary is thankful, her brother has been raised from the dead, and her worship expresses thanks. How do we express our thankfulness to Jesus? How much is our love for Jesus based on what he has done in our lives?
- b) Mary is devoted to Jesus, her worship expresses love. Is a 'love' for Jesus something we know and experience? How do we return to our first love if we have lost some of it?
- c) Mary's worship is costly- what she offers is precious. What precious things can we offer Jesus in worship? Are we conscious of holding back some areas of our lives from him because they are deeply precious to us and we fear their loss?
- d) Mary's worship is prophetic- the Holy Spirit has orchestrated her action. John 12:7 How does our worship release the prophetic, bring us revelation of who God is and what his purposes are?

- e) Mary's worship is intimate (wiping Jesus feet with her hair) incredibly intimate and perhaps attracts revulsion and criticism from (male) onlookers. John 12: 4, Mark 14:4. What does 'intimate worship' look like today, and how do we react to it?
- f) Mary's worship is not at the expense of care for the poor but it is extravagant. How do we balance extravagance in worship settings and financial giving to the poor? Should Churches put money into worship resources, beautiful buildings and great P.A. systems, or should we have simpler worship centres and give more money away?

March 24th Jesus & Judas. John 12:4-8. John 13:21-30. Matthew 27:3-10

Judas's psychology has been a source of interest and speculation to many. What we can see however is that he has an open door at some place in his heart to temptation (John 12 4-8).

Questions about a negative secret history.

- a) Living a lie. Outwardly he is a good disciple, but secretly he is stealing money. He lives a lie right up to the last moment. Why do you think Jesus allowed Judas to be the treasurer for the group?
- b) It has been said that 'money, sex and power' are the great temptations that can cause people to fall, especially leaders. How does our culture in Church community help us guard against these things?
- c) Money is the vehicle by which his temptation is worked out. Matthew 26:14-16. (Mark 14:10 Luke 22:3-6 nuanced otherwise). How much of our internal world is concerned with money (The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil)?
- d) Judas seems provoked antagonistically to Mary's worship of Jesus. Why?
- e) The negative door allows 'Satan to fill his heart'. John describes him going out 'and it was night'. The picture of darkness and outer darkness is a secret history that takes us away from God rather than to him. Rachel Riddall brought a word to our Church about 'closing the door'. What doors do we need to close in our inner secret lives?
- f) The remedies to a negative secret history include coming into the open through confession and accountability, and cultivating a positive spiritual history (c.f. Matthew 6). What steps might you take to guard your heart in the light of this story?

31st March. Jesus in the Garden. John 20:11-18 Easter day.

In John 20 we read of the encounter of Mary with Jesus in the garden where he was buried.

- a) How is this story linked to the story of Eve in the garden of Eden in Genesis 3? What should it make us think about in the light of that reference?
- b) Why do you think Mary found it hard to recognise Jesus? What led her to recognise him?
- c) When Jesus Says 'don't hold on to me' what did he mean? What spiritual experiences have we tried to hold on to that stop us moving on in our faith?
- d) Mary is sometimes called 'an apostle to the apostles'. Why?
- e) In the light of a patriarchal society how radical are the stories of Jesus' encounters with women in John's gospel? How does this book affect the way women minister in Church today?

7th April. Jesus and Peter. Restoration and commissioning.

The last chapter of John has an extraordinary account of Jesus restoring and re-commissioning Peter which gives hope for all of us who have tried to follow Jesus and failed.

- a) Jesus knows Peter will deny him, (John 13:38). Why is the account of Peter's denial so revolutionary in the early histories of the Church?
- b) What is the tension between 'entrusting' things to people in order that they grow, with an awareness of their 'untrustworthiness', their potential to fail? Are we too slow to entrust things to people because we see their flaws?
- c) Jesus takes us back to the beginning, our first love, our first call. For Peter this is a miraculous catch of fish, but it is also (and John gives this detail) to a charcoal fire (v 9) which (18:18) is where Peter has denied Jesus. What does it look like to go through a process of restoration when we fall? How can we restore people successfully, especially fallen leaders?
- d) The comparison trap. What do you make of Peter's relationship with 'the beloved disciple' who we think is John himself? How much does our faith get affected by comparisons with other Christians? How can we avoid feeling diminished in the comparison trap?