

“A Day in the Life of Jesus”

Twenty-five years ago one of my greatest joys in life was coming home and asking my daughter “What did you do today?” And my daughter, the only extrovert in the family would tell me with incredible excitement in a single sentence with a hundred ‘ands’ in it what happened. “I got up and had cereal with fresh strawberries on it and that is just my favourite and then I put on my prettiest dress, the pink one with a bow in the back, and Mom and I went for a walk down to the lake and the birds were there and we played on the swings and Mom pushed me really high and I pretended I was a bird, it was so much fun and... Dad why are you looking so tired all of a sudden?”

Reading Mark’s gospel is just like that, he uses the word ‘and’ [Greek *Kαί*] over a thousand times. The gospel reading we heard this morning is just part of the day, but imagine for a moment that Mark is actually a young hyperactive boy telling his mother what he saw Jesus do that day.

Mom, Jesus came today and he was telling everyone “Time’s up, God’s way is now, be the change, awesome news. There probably is a God and it is not Caesar, so stop worrying and enjoy your life.” and then he went down to the lake where Uncle Simon and Andrew, were fishing, and Jesus said “Follow me” and just like that they put down their nets and followed him and just down the beach where James and John were helping their Dad mend nets, Jesus said ‘follow me’ and they did, just like that and I followed them too all the way to Capernaum where they went into the synagogue and Jesus began to do the teaching and everyone was amazed for it was awesome and then a man with an unholy spirit came in, he was scary and said “what have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” And Jesus just said, “be silent” and the spirit cried out and ran away and everyone stood there with their mouths open and then they said, “Wow, a new teaching and power—even the unclean spirits obey him.” And the news spread like wildfire. And then Jesus went next door to Uncle Simon and Andrew’s house along with James and John and I tagged along. Uncle Simon’s mother-in-law was sick in bed and Jesus just walked right over, took her by the hand and raised her up and she was well and she immediately gave us all something to eat and boy was it good and as soon as the

sun was set and the Sabbath was over people swarmed the house and brought everyone who was sick and Jesus healed them and then everyone went to sleep but Jesus got up early in the morning and went out to pray and I followed him just to watch and it could have been the sun but his whole head seemed to glow when he prayed and I could have watched that all day but then Simon came and the others came and said “Everyone is looking for you” and Jesus said, “Time to leave then and go to the next town. We’ve got good news to share.” And so they left. Mom, it was an awesome day!

Now I need to tell you that in my telling of my daughter’s day, I left out some of the details. Those of you who have ever walked with a child, even two blocks, know that details were missed. A child walking two blocks in not a couple of minutes because you have to stop and smell every flower, pick up every pretty rock and examine every bug that crawls along the ground. For a child the journey is as important as the destination.

In the telling of the story of Mark there is a very important detail that is left out and that is the worship service that occurs in every Jewish home to mark the end of the Sabbath. Havdalah begins when three stars can be seen in the sky. Three items are brought: wine, spices and a special candle that has more than one wick. You would first taste the wine, the spices usually cloves and cinnamon are smelled, you look at the candle and feel its heat and then listen to the blessings “Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.”

The Havdalah ceremony requires you to use all five senses. Taste the wine, smell the spices, see the flame of the candle and feel its heat, and hear the blessings. It marks the end of the week and a new beginning.

In ancient Judaism the Havdalah ceremony is associated with the fight against the demonic powers. Mark’s one-day account in the life of Jesus also reflects, as the beginning of each week does, a new creation where the demonic powers have been defeated and creation is returned to the holiness of God.

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You know the phrase ‘the holy land’ —well it is not all holy. Never was. In the time of Jesus the only holy place was the holy of holies, the tiny room in the temple where the high priest entered once a year and addressed God by name. This is represented at the centre of the diagram on the overhead. The next level of holiness was the temple, then the land of Judah and then the lands of the gentiles. As you move from the centre to the outside, holiness decreases until you get to the edge where God is not.

Now as you move to the outside you become unclean or unholy and, God forbid, if you touch someone from the other side then you become one with them—unclean and unholy. The path of a spiritual life is to move towards the centre, a path towards holiness.

So the good people of Capernaum, now that their sick were healed and the demons driven out, wanted to keep Jesus there so they could proclaim themselves to be a holy place – a sacred oasis in the midst of an unholy wilderness.

And Jesus says, “Well, it’s time to go.” Because it is the beginning of a new creation and holiness is for the whole earth, not just you in your small corner and me in mine.

Of course we don’t have concentric circles of holiness anymore. We have something much more demonic. We have a pyramid based on wealth. We don’t need to draw a diagram but you know that we in North America have 5% of the world’s population and we control over 30% of the wealth, so we are on the top of the pyramid. At the bottom of the pyramid are over one billion people who live on less than \$1.25 a day, and approximately half the people on the planet who live on less than \$2.25 a day.

And in the same way that the life of Jesus released the inner circle of holiness upon the whole world, so he wants to invert the pyramid, so that the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, the downtrodden are lifted up.

Remember the part of the story where Jesus took Simon’s mother-in-law by the hand and raised her up. Raised her up is a very important symbol, in Greek, it is the same word used to describe the resurrection of Jesus. And like her we are raised up to serve.

The vision statement for our new church is to be a spiritual oasis in Christ for the community. The emphasis needs to be at the end of the statement. If we concentrate on the ‘spiritual oasis’ we will be like those in Capernaum who tried to hunt Jesus down and keep a holy cosy community. To be in Christ is to walk with him into the neighbourhood.

One of the most popular poems about being lifted up by Christ is the poem “Footprints” by Mary Stevenson. I am sure you know it.

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there were one set of footprints.

This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints.

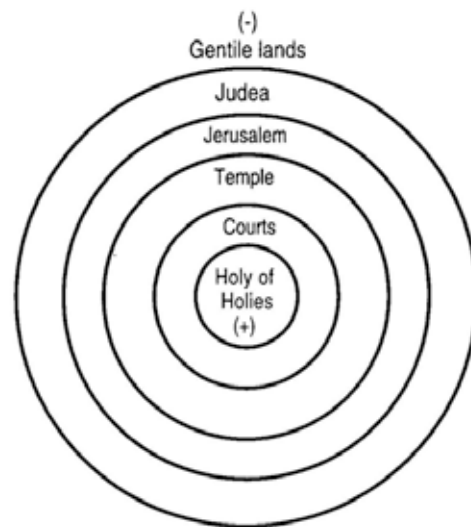
So I said to the Lord, “You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there have only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, you have not been there for me?”

The Lord replied, “The times when you have seen only one set of footprints in the sand, is when I carried you.”

A colleague, perhaps reflecting on this text from Mark, wrote this slightly irreverent version.

One night I had a wondrous dream. Footprints in the sand were seen. The footprints of my precious Lord, But mine were not along the shore. But then some stranger prints appeared, And I asked the Lord, “What have we here?” These prints here are large and neat, “But Lord, they are too big for feet.” “My child,” He said in sombre tones, “For miles I carried you alone. I challenged you to walk in faith, But you refused and made me wait.” “You disobeyed, you would not grow, The walk of faith, you would not know, So when at last, your time was up, I dropped you there, upon your butt.” “Because in life, there comes a time, when one must fight, and one must climb. When one must rise and take a stand, or leave their butt prints in the sand.”

May our oasis be a place we move out of, so that in Christ, God’s vision of a new creation may bless the world.



Robert R. Beck, Nonviolent Story, chapter 4, “The Symbolism of Power.”