

October 7 – A Touch of Faith

READ

Mark 5:1-43

Matthew 8:28-34, 9:18-26

Luke 8:26-56

Matthew 9:20-21, “...a woman who had been sick for twelve years with internal bleeding came up behind him and touched a tassel of his robe, for she thought, ‘If I only touch Him, I will be healed.’”

THINK

“Touch” was a touchy subject for many in biblical times – especially for those deemed “untouchable!” According to Jewish law, the bleeding woman was considered unclean. Even an accidental touch would defile others. So, stop for a moment and think what it was like for her to have no pats on the back, no handholding, no hugs, no intimacy for well over a decade. Life was hard for this woman. She was desperate, isolated, and hopeless – until she heard about Jesus’ miraculous healing power.

The Bible says God works through all things for our good and His glory. He leveraged this woman’s suffering to bring her to the point of surrender. And out of sheer desperation, she made a faith decision to risk everything by pushing her way through a large crowd just to touch the hem of Jesus’ robe.

The power of touch is undeniable! In this life-changing moment, the untouchable touched Jesus and became touchable! He healed her from the inside out. And right now, He is waiting for us to reach out to Him with a little touch of faith!

PRAY

Dear Lord, Thank You for Your touch on my life. Even when I feel “untouchable,” I can reach out to You, and You will shower me with peace and hope. Today, provide me with an opportunity to share this hope with someone and encourage them to place their faith in You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

October 6 – Seasick

READ

Matthew 13:10-52, 8:23-27

Luke 8:9-18, 22-25

Mark 4:21-41

Mark 4:39, *"He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down, and it was completely calm."*

THINK

Have you ever been in a boat on the ocean? The water can be peacefully calm, a little choppy on a windy day, or so violent that you can't get back to shore fast enough!

In Mark 4:39, Jesus and His disciples were on a boat crossing the sea after a long day. While Jesus rested, a huge windstorm arose, causing water to spill into the craft. Fearing for their lives, the disciples panicked and woke Jesus up. With three small words, He brought calm to the chaos by saying, "Quiet! Be still!"

When the storms of life hit, they're often unexpected and unsolicited. Like the disciples, our ability to navigate and overcome them is more about God's power than our own strength. No matter how high the waves or dark the skies, Jesus is in the boat with us! Therefore, we must place our FAITH in His ability to calm the chaos and guide us into peaceful waters.

But what about the times when Jesus allows a storm to linger? You can take comfort in knowing that Psalm 93:4 says He is *"Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea..."*, that He's working through it for your benefit and that He'll help you resist the floods of fear and anxiety. He is in control, so quiet your mind and be still! Choose instead to tap into the courage and peace Jesus offers. If He can calm the wind and the waves, imagine what He can do for you!

PRAY

Dear Lord, I know that life's storms are inevitable. Thank You for Your power that helps me to not just survive, but to thrive within them. Give me the faith to trust You in all situations. In Jesus' name, Amen.

October 5 – The Crowded Heart

READ

Luke 8:1-8, 19-21

Mark 3:20-35, 4:1-20

Matthew 12:22-50, 13:1-9

Matthew 13:7, 22, *“Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ... The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.”*

THINK

There are countless types of gardens – flower gardens, desert gardens, vegetable gardens, herb gardens — the list goes on. But, can you imagine someone intentionally planting a weed and thorn garden? No! In fact, they’re the bane of every gardener’s existence. The soil is fertile, the seed’s been sown, but they can quickly overpower and destroy the very life the gardener hoped to produce.

In today’s reading, Jesus likens our hearts to excellent plant-producing soil that’s being overrun by thorns. We may have been receptive to God’s grace and His Word of truth, but now we are allowing other aspects of life to choke out and stunt our spiritual growth. Our hearts can get so crowded with worry, fear, tangible possessions, and self-indulgence that we lose focus on that which matters most — our relationship with Jesus.

Do you have a crowded heart? If so, it’s time to pull out your gardening gloves, hoe, and shovel. It takes work to dig deep and root out whatever’s stunting your walk with God — but the growth on the other side is well worth the effort. The beautiful flowers of faith will have space to grow as you allow God to show you what needs to be weeded out. Then you can step back with a joy-filled heart as you admire the fruit of the harvest!

PRAY

Dear Lord, Produce in me a bountiful harvest! Help me eliminate the weeds of worry and the thorns of materialism and pride. Pull me close as I do the work to get back on track with what You want for my life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Heavenly Father, You always surpass anything I could ask or imagine. Thank you for sending Jesus not only to rescue a nation but the entire world. Help me to share with others so they, too, can be blown away by Your goodness and strength. In Jesus' name, Amen.

October 4 – Expectations vs. Reality

READ

Matthew 8:5-13, 11:1-30

Luke 7:1-50

Luke 7: 18-19, 21-23, *“The disciples of John the Baptist told John about everything Jesus was doing. So John called for two of his disciples, and he sent them to the Lord to ask him, ‘Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?’ At that very time, Jesus cured many people of their diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and He restored sight to many who were blind. Then He told John’s disciples, ‘Go back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard — the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.’ And he added, ‘God blesses those who do not fall away because of Me.’”*

THINK

If you have ever gone on a blind date, you know that there’s a real fear that the person you’re about to meet face to face may not look or act like you imagined. It’s often frustrating and confusing when things don’t measure up to our expectations! Imagine what it must’ve been like for those who were actively looking for the Messiah to arrive. They expected that He would arrive on the scene, free the Israelites from Roman rule and oppression, and immediately establish a new kingdom.

John the Baptist, Jesus’ cousin, had been the loudest voice in preparing the path for the Savior. But despite the miracles being done “at that very time,” John’s disciples expressed doubts — because Jesus didn’t meet their expectations. He wasn’t acting like a fierce warrior or challenging the Roman authority over God’s holy land. They didn’t understand that His mission was far more important and farther reaching.

Jesus may not do what we think He’s supposed to do, but He never disappoints. He didn’t come just to improve our circumstances; He came to save our souls and free us from the bondage of sin. And these invisible chains are far more restrictive than literal metal shackles.

Are you dodging the Lord because of presupposed expectations? If so, stop. Just turn to Him and follow. Let Him be the Messiah of your life and take you farther than you ever dreamed possible! A relationship with Christ always tops our greatest expectations.

PRAY

October 3 – Yank the Plank

READ

Matthew 6:5-7:29

Luke 6:37-49

Matthew 7:1-5, *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ... You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”*

THINK

Imagine an ophthalmologist walking into the examination room wearing a blindfold to check your vision. Within two seconds you'd be on your feet, headed for the door. You'd think, "What a quack!" Obviously, someone with obscured sight can't check someone else's. This hyperbolic scenario is precisely what Jesus is getting at in today's passage.

How is it that we can see the faults of others and still be blind to our own? Jesus isn't saying it's wrong to offer critique; He's saying it's ridiculous to ignore our own problems while calling people out for doing the same. He's telling us to address our weaknesses, sinfulness, and inconsistencies first! Then, and only then, can we see clearly!

What's your plank? Whatever hypocrisy exists in your life now needs examination. Because, usually, the fault we point out in others is exactly what we don't like about ourselves. So, as you check for "specks of sawdust" in others, consider why you're being critical of their actions. Ask yourself, "Am I guilty of doing the same?" You'll be amazed by the clarity of self-awareness.

Today's the day! Yank the plank of hypocrisy and see with 20/20 faith!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Please open my eyes to see Your holiness. I confess that I have been quick to judge others for ____ while doing these same things myself. I confess my hypocrisy and receive Your forgiveness. Thank You for Your love and acceptance. In Jesus' name, Amen.

October 2 – Son Exposure

READ

Mark 3:7-19

Luke 6:12-36

Matthew 5:1-6:4

Matthew 5:14-16, *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

THINK

There are three things to know about light: it can't exist without an energy source, its sole purpose is to dispel darkness, and it's of zero value when hidden. As Christ-followers, Jesus is our source who came to dispel the world's darkness for those who believe in Him. He defeated the grave and placed death on its heels. At that moment, the darkness of fear, failure, and rejection was overcome as He illuminated our way back to the Father of Heavenly Lights.

In today's verse, Jesus gives His followers a very clear command: Shine My light in this world ravaged by sin and darkness. Sadly, though, far too many Christians are placing their "lamps under a bowl." Like a house without windows, the lights may be on inside, but it looks like no one's home. Maybe you're thinking, "I don't know how to shine light before others." Here's the thing, you don't have to know how — you just need to be connected to the Source who directs our course. So, it's not just specific actions that draw people's curiosity, but the heart and attitude with which you approach life.

The brilliant blaze of God's glory is impenetrable! So, let your light shine before others so brightly that they, too, will be overwhelmed by their exposure to the Son!

PRAY

I praise You, Jesus! You are all I need, the source of all hope and joy. Please use me to make a difference by shining Your light in the lives of those still living in darkness. Amen!

October 1 – Shake Things Up!

READ

John 5:1-47

Mark 2:23-3:6

Matthew 12:1-21

Luke 6:1-11

Luke 6:9-11, *“Then Jesus said to them, ‘I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?’ He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He did so, and his hand was completely restored. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.”*

THINK

Have you ever disrupted the norm, shaken things up, and raised some eyebrows for a noble cause? If so, you’re in good company because that’s what Jesus did! The Pharisees considered *themselves* the lords of the sabbath. They created hundreds of rules and then wandered around looking to accuse those who did not conform. Jesus made it clear that they were NOT from God and declared that *He* was the Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus allowed his disciples to pluck wheat to eat when they were hungry and healed a crippled man’s hand, opposing what the Pharisees deemed appropriate Sabbath activities. Seeing their disapproval, He got to the heart of the matter by asking a question meant to guide them past the regulations to the greater picture of good versus evil, life versus death. The Pharisees were so caught up and concerned thinking Jesus was being heretical that their stubborn and prideful hearts couldn’t see that He was actually *holy*. Jesus had come as their long-awaited Savior, but they refused to humble themselves and surrender to His lordship.

Isn’t it true that many of us today get so sidetracked by religious rituals that we miss out on an authentic relationship with Christ? Living to please God, not man, is what matters. So, don’t let pride and comfort, or even rules and traditions, keep you from truly following the Lord. Maybe it’s time to shake things up!

PRAY

Help me, Lord, to lay down everything before You at this moment. What would my life look like if it was completely devoted to You? I entrust my heart, my life, my everything to You. Amen.