

Giving up the 'good' for the greater (Luke Ch 4-9)

- Luke 4:31 ¶ And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.
- 32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.
- 33 And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice...
- 35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.
- 36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word *is* this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.
- 37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.
- 38 And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.
- 39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.
- 40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

We read here that Jesus cast out demons, healed Simon's mother and many other sick people, and that people all over were talking about this man.

- 42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.
- 43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

The people want Jesus to stay and perform more miracles, but His answer is that the purpose He was sent for is to preach the Kingdom of God. A short time later, Jesus heals a man with leprosy. Again the crowds are excited. He feeds the 5000 from 5 loaves and 2 fish. He raises the dead, makes the lame walk, makes the deaf hear and the blind to see, lepers are cleansed.

- 5:15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

Soon even Herod is interested in Jesus (Luke 9:7-9). Everyone seems to want to know Jesus. But what is motivating them? Do they want Him for his miracles? Or do they want Him for who He is? Do they want relationship with God to be restored, or do they just want their life on earth to be better? Miracles are nice. God sometimes does miracles. Sometimes people even think that miracles are the way that God shows us His love, but the scriptures say that God demonstrated His love for us in this: that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). That means that even when our desire was not for Him, He died to bring us to Him.

So, Jesus is getting famous- people are following Him. They are excited and telling others about His miracles, but many are missing the greater part. They are missing the truth of who He is. And soon, the same crowds are ready to crucify Him!!! How can that be?

Jesus tells the parable of the sower. Do you know the story? A sower sows seed and some falls on by the wayside and is trampled and birds eat it; some falls on rocks, shoots up then dies from lack of water; some falls on thorns and grows but then is choked out; and some falls on good ground and grows and produces a great harvest. There are many people following Jesus, but some just want to see the miracles and are not at all interested in the Gospel. Some think they are interested in the Gospel, but soon let other things take their interest away, maybe even “good” things like studying Jesus and being interested in the things He can do- like miracles. But only a few let His words sink deep and continue in knowing Him and bring forth fruit. Jesus says to the crowds, “Be careful how you hear,” (Lk 8:18).

How do we hear? Do we hear how Jesus makes our life better- or do we hear how He is greater than all?

Luke 9:23 And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

To know Jesus, we follow Him even when it is the loss of everything. If we follow Him to save our self- to find money, miracles, happiness- then we lose. But if we lose all of those things- let go of them and trust Him- then we find Him and He is so much bigger and greater and more wonderful than those things anyway.

Do you remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? They were going to be thrown into a fire because they worshiped God. They could escape the fire if they would just bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar. But they were willing to lose their life. They said to the king, “God is able to deliver us from this fire (do a miracle) but even if He doesn’t, we still will not bow down to that idol!” Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him (Job 13:15).” These men were willing to have none of God’s earthly blessings and miracles- their hearts were steadfast for God. Like we read earlier, what good is it to gain the whole world- all the “good” stuff on earth, but still lose the thing that our soul was created for- the knowing of Him?

Activity:

Before class: Have a balloon for each child with a “treasure” inside (rolled up \$\$ bill, cross sticker, etc). Blow up the balloon and tie it.

In class: Using a permanent marker, label each balloon with a reason people might follow Jesus other than knowing Him (miracles, prosperity, peace, happiness, etc). Pass them out.

Tell them: a balloon is good, right? But there is a treat inside the balloon. Are you willing to give up a balloon for the treat inside? With the Lord, He may be showing us that we have been holding on to something that is only “good” (His miracles, peace, etc) and missing the thing that is greater? What is the greater? Knowing Him. If they are willing- let them pop the balloon to get the ‘greater’ treasure.