

Holiness Is Meant to Be Shared

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[0 : 00] Let's move in to God's Word together. We are in the middle of a series called The Healing Love of Jesus, that where Jesus is, healing happens in the world. And my conviction is that we as the body of Jesus, that's what the church is called in the New Testament, we as the body of Christ have the opportunity, have the responsibility to continue that healing love in the world today.

So we're looking at the life of Jesus as shown to us in the Gospel of Luke as to how he brought healing into the world. Now, a couple things to set us up. Number one, I don't know about you, but there are people in my life that I wish were not in my life.

There are people in my life that I wish were not in my life. There are difficult people, people who are hard to love, people who are hard to like, people who are hard to serve, to work with, to call friends or family or neighbors.

There are people in my life that are just difficult. Don't go too busy in the chat, you know, telling us who those people are, but I know we all have them.

And it's not as always as easy as simply walking away because these people are integrated in our life in some, you know, really enmeshed way. And you can't always just say like, peace, be gone.

[1 : 21] These people who are in our lives, they need to stay in our lives for one reason or another. So what do we do? Now, point number two to kind of open us up today is that I often, I don't know about you, I'll speak for myself, I often can weaponize my own personal growth as a way to not love difficult people.

I feel sometimes that I am so enlightened and cultured and have such a great set of boundaries and have been to therapy and all those things that I will be like, you know what?

You are too difficult for me to love, so please go away. I'm not going to love you anymore. And there are absolutely times, I don't want to caveat this to death, but there are absolutely times where we do need to set big, thick, firm boundaries on the people that we let into our lives.

But when we use our own growth as a weapon against people of no, I am not going to love you, I'm not going to show affection to you, I am not going to let you into my life because I am too far enlightened for that.

Well, then we're just furthering the disintegration of the world into all of our separate little silos. So, I'm going to look at the life of Jesus and how he shows us what to do with that.

[2 : 40] There's this biblical concept called holiness that can be defined a lot of different ways. And I think one of the primary definitions that I hear passed around is the idea of being separate.

That holiness is all about being set apart, distinct, different, either physically, geographically, spiritually, emotionally, like some version of there are the non-holy people and there are the holy people and never the two shall meet.

And I wonder, and I'm going to make the case that I don't think that's actually how scripture talks about holiness and it's definitely not how Jesus showed us how to live in holiness.

So, if you have a Bible, I encourage you to open it up, turn it on, flip it open to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 7, or in verse 1. Words will also be on the screen.

But if you have a Bible, you know, dust it off, see if you can find the book of Luke, page 1170 of my Bible, I don't know about yours. And here's, here, we're just going to go through this verse by verse, see what Jesus has to show us.

[3 : 48] So, verse 1 says, When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. So, let's give some context. What did Jesus just get done saying?

Luke has just got finished telling us about the Luke version of the Sermon on the Mount, which we find in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7. And Luke gives us many of the same teachings of Jesus, slightly different context, slightly different wording, here in the Gospel of Luke.

And Jesus, you know, just verses before this, says things like, Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other. If someone takes your coat, don't withhold your shirt from them. Give to who asks. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to only those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. Love your enemies. Do good to them. And that way you will be like God, who is kind to both the ungrateful and the wicked.

[4 : 54] So, that's Luke 6. Jesus gets done saying all that. Luke 7, Jesus now turns his attention to the city of Capernaum. Verse 2. Now, there's a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly and was sick and about to die.

So, we're introduced to this character of a centurion and the sick servant. Now, a centurion would be a non-Jew. So, we're in Jewish territory here in Galilee.

A centurion would be a Roman soldier. So, this is the invading army, the enforcer in the city who has soldiers under him to make sure that the rabble-rousing Jews don't cause any trouble.

He's a slave owner. We're told it's the slave who is sick. The Greek word *doulos*, oftentimes translated servant, but it's a form of slavery. And so, he's a centurion, soldier, Roman, non-Jew, slave owner.

Twitter would happily call this person problematic. Okay? Verse 3. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant.

[6 : 06] When the elders came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, this man deserves for you to do this because he loves our nation and he's built our synagogue. So, Jesus goes with him.

Now, notice the worldview stuff that's going on here. He's a Roman soldier who is in some way maintaining the empire's control over the Jewish people.

He's a slave owner. But, these elders in the city of Capernaum are willing to overlook all of those things because he paid for their place of worship and is kind to them.

The elders' values are, we are going to love those who love us. But, remember, just the chapter before, Jesus reveals that he's working with a completely different set of values.

Look at what Jesus says the chapter before. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? And then these elders come along and say, oh, but he loves our nation.

[7 : 06] He deserves for you to do this. So, you can just see Jesus being the embodiment of like the forehead slap emoji, just being like, no, no, no, no. Jesus' ministry isn't about who does and doesn't deserve God's love, who does and doesn't deserve the healing touch and love of Jesus.

God is Christ-like, and therefore God's healing power is available to all. If Jesus loves enemies, God does as well.

So, Jesus goes with them. We know, based off of Jesus' own values, that there is no one who can separate themselves from God's love, God's healing power.

Continues. He was not far from the house of the centurion when the centurion has now sent friends. So, the centurion sent the elders. The elders say, hey, he deserves this. Now the centurion is sending friends who I think are probably speaking more accurately what the centurion has to say for himself.

And the friends say to Jesus on behalf of the centurion, Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you, but say the word and my servant will be healed.

[8 : 20] For I myself, he's a soldier, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell a soldier, go and he goes and that one come and he comes and I say to my servant, do this and he does it.

And this is the centurion's logic of if I can do that, certainly whoever you are, Jesus, you can do that with your healing power. So when Jesus heard this, he was amazed.

He turned to the crowd following him and he says, I tell you, I have not found such great faith in Israel. And the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant, the slave, well.

Now, the key thing to know about this is that Jesus is on his way to the centurion's house. This is why the centurion has to send friends and say, don't come.

Now, this is like not a thing that a good, holy, first century Jew is supposed to do. Years later, Peter is going to end up, one of Jesus' disciples, Peter, is going to end up in a centurion named Cornelius' house.

[9 : 25] And say something like, Cornelius, you know that Jews do not enter Gentiles' homes and yet here I am. We see that Jesus is on his way to do something that would make him unclean, unpure, unholy.

And being unclean meant that you were contaminated with the forces of death. This is why the culture took purity and cleanliness so seriously because it wasn't just like who was ostracized or not.

It was about whether or not you're letting the forces of death into your community. This is why they sent the sick outside of the town walls or outside of the village into the fields or outside of the city gates.

It made you unable to go to synagogue or go to temple, unable to partake in the feast or to make sacrifices. You would get kicked out and be told to go live out in a tent somewhere because you were unclean, unpure.

Jesus is on his way, on his way to the centurion's house to do the thing you're not supposed to do. So the centurion sends friends and says, whoa, whoa, whoa, no, you don't need to do that.

[10 : 31] I am not worthy of you making yourself ritually, unclean, impure for my sake. To this, Jesus responds affirmatively. It's not the doing good and paying for stuff that Jesus is moved by.

And remember, Jesus is on his way to heal this slave regardless. He didn't need the centurion to make some show of his faith. He didn't need the centurion to say he wasn't worthy or not.

Jesus was going to do this regardless. Through touch, through presence, through the things that Jesus usually does. But when the centurion states faith that Jesus' very word can heal, Jesus says, yes, be like that.

Don't tout a whole bunch of accolades about how great you are at me. Simply state that you believe in my power. Jesus, by doing this, ignores the usual standards and values of deserving.

Jesus is working with a whole other set of values, not about like who deserves love and healing and affection and who doesn't. Rather, a whole different set of values that says love everyone always.

[11 : 42] Jesus is willing to enter forbidden places. we're shown that he's got a crowd following him, he's got Jewish elders surrounding him and Jesus, regardless of the hit it's going to take on his reputation, is willing to go into places that he's been told he isn't supposed to go.

And Jesus, we're shown, is contagious with life that Jesus' very presence and very word brings healing into the world, brings healing into sickness and darkness and contamination.

Now, I want to keep going because the next story actually further illustrates the first. It's typical for the writer of Luke to pair a story about a man with a story about a woman.

And Luke does this for very cool, subversive ways because Luke is communicating a lot about those who are considered less than in his society. So, we're going to see exactly that in the very next verse.

Soon afterward, verse 11, Jesus goes to a town called Nain and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. And as Jesus approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out, the only son of his mother.

[13 : 00] And she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. So, here, we're being shown the exact opposite of the story before. Luke is a master storyteller here.

Instead of a wealthy, male, Gentile, Roman soldier centurion, instead we have a Jewish, widowed, and now childless woman. Jewish funerals tended to happen the day of the person's death.

And they would be carried out on a wooden plank. So, not like a casket where they'd be closed or covered. Just a simple wooden plank with a sheet covering the deceased face.

names a small village to the entire town as present. Without husband or son, this woman's livelihood is now solely dependent on the compassion of others.

Verse 13, when the Lord saw her, he was deeply moved within him. This one translation says, his heart went out to her.

[14 : 01] Jesus says, don't cry. Which, by the way, there's a very, very bad sermon tradition about this verse of like, people shouldn't be allowed to grieve.

Don't do that. It's very, very bad exegesis. Jesus is saying don't cry because of what he's about to do. Verse 14, he went up and touched the stretcher that they were carrying this boy on.

And the bearer stood still. Jesus says, young man, I say to you, get up. The dead man sat up, began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

So we know from the previous story that Jesus doesn't even have to be in the same room as someone to bring healing. And yet here Jesus is once again forgoing all cultural politeness. He speaks to a woman in public. You're not actually supposed to do that as a first century Jew. Male. He's touching the plank where the dead body is, which now renders Jesus ritually unclean again.

[15:08] He speaks to the dead, which would have been considered superstitious necromancy. And he performs a work of resurrection, resuscitation, of this beautiful image of Jesus picking up the once dead boy and handing it back to the once grieving mother.

father. If holiness is about separateness, somebody needs to tell Jesus. Jesus, the embodiment of God, holy of holies, has entered into the world.

John chapter 1, Jesus made his, pitched his tent among us, tabernacled among us. Jesus has entered into the world and goes around and starts touching dead people.

And just about to enter a centurion's home and touches lepers and speaks to women. And all of the cultural mores are being blown apart because Jesus believes that holiness is contagious.

Holiness is meant for others. Holiness is meant to be shared. Holiness is not about separation. It's not about holding yourself back. It's not about being so holy and so pure that you only get together with those who think and act and believe just like you do and you wish death upon the rest of the world who's not nearly as holy as you.

[16:27] No, holiness is meant to bring healing. Holiness pushes you into the world, pushes you into the dark and deep and despairing places and brings light and hope and healing and resurrection power.

Holiness is meant to be shared. Our own personal growth, spiritual holiness cannot, cannot become an excuse to build higher walls around ourselves and those who think and believe just like we do. This is the eternal temptation of the church and every split of denomination or non-denominational church who thinks they've got it right, the eternal temptation is to say our holiness is better than your holiness.

We've got it wrong and you've, we've got it right and you've got it wrong and never the two of us shall meet again. We cannot weaponize wherever we are in our current spiritual journey holding ourselves over and above those that we think are further behind.

We know that we are growing in Christ-likeness. And remember Christ-likeness is not about like being a man or a carpenter or a Jew. Christ-likeness is about pursuing Christ's character, Jesus' character.

[17:54] What would Jesus do if Jesus were me? We know that we're growing in Christ-likeness when we can treat ourselves with kindness, when we can offer our healing presence to the hurting, and when we can offer love to anybody, even somebody that a set of values would say they don't deserve it, when we can offer our love to anybody because they're human, not because they deserve it or not, because they're a person.

That's when we know we're growing in Christ-likeness. Christ-likeness is not about holding ourselves back. Christ-likeness is not about keeping ourselves separate. It is about pushing in, about going into the places that we're told we're not supposed to go, and offering hope and healing to the world.

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