

January 23, 2022 7 Words of Jesus Pt. 3 Matthew 4:1-11

The first word that we looked at in this series was Jesus pronouncement to Nicodemus that one must be “born again” in order to see the Kingdom of God. Jesus was not talking about a physical birth but a spiritual one. The words imply a life changing, 180* life changing experience. It involves an experience that roots our lives in a personal relationship with God, with Jesus, by means of the Holy Spirit. Like the disciples of Jesus time, we find ourselves walking new paths with new friends. Worship and service to others become major portions of our life’s work.

The second word we looked at was Jesus announcement that the Kingdom of God is at hand. In the simplest of language, Jesus was saying you and I can reach out and touch it. It is here. From the beginning, on the very day of Jesus resurrection, the followers gathered together. They did so for mutual support. They prayed and sang the Psalms. It is easy to say the church suddenly simply was. When I say that, I am not talking about a powerful institution that nations and governments must pay attention to. I am describing an assembly dedicated to focusing its faith on Jesus, and living a lifestyle such as HE has called us to live, caring about faith, and serving the needs of others.

This third word is spoken in a situation we should understand...perhaps especially in a time of Pandemic. We are tempted to start to think we do not need, the association with

the church. We are tempted to think the fellowship was nice, but that we can live without it, if we must. We have broken the routine of gathering together, for the safety of ourselves and loved ones, and for the safety of society at large. All of us have felt the touch of tempter's hand, to just have another cup of tea.

Jesus had been in the wilderness, fasting and praying for 40 days. When you fast, you must drink quantities of water, or health is permanently damaged. Jesus was about to begin the most vigorous part of HIS ministry. HE would walk everywhere HE went. HE would teach as long as the crowds gathered and remained with HIM to hear. When HE encountered the sick, or when people brought their loved ones to HIM for healing, HE healed them. It is obvious from the Gospel accounts Jesus days were long and wearying. But at this point (Matthew 4:1-11, HE is weakened by HIS fasting. And HE is hungry.

Satan points out the rocks in the desert that are about the size of a loaf of bread and he urges Jesus to use HIS power to turn them into bread. He urges Jesus to break the bread and eat it, to satisfy HIS hunger. Jesus response, is that, "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

It needs to be remembered that Satan's invitation was actually a challenge. What Satan said to Jesus was, "If you are the Son of God...tell these stones to become bread." If you

are the Son of God, don't spend time in idle talk. Show me! It was a command that Jesus should obey, and respond to Satan's demand. Jesus refuses to do so. In fact Jesus does not just cook up an answer out of HIS own human mind. HE quotes the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament. Chapter 8 verse 3. It is a commentary on the manna provided by God to the Hebrews when they were in the wilderness, led there by Moses. God provides the manna so that the people would understand...they do not live because they eat bread...but because they depend on the word God has given.

We are on a journey. And it is not an easy trip to make. We are not flying first class in a Jet, and served food and drink, as though we were the movers and shakers of the world. To be the principled people of God, people who exercise faith, and are led by the Spirit of God we do not bread. We need...must have...the singular resource of the Biblical message...the whole of the Biblical message.

Jesus was not saying food and nutrition are irrelevant. HE was claiming that to be the children of God, in HIS case God's Son, bread is not the important thing. The word of the Lord is! And it is a matter of history. Every significant movement of the Spirit of God has involved a rediscovery of the Biblical message. Again, I am not talking about the Church as a powerful institution or a center of wealth. I am speaking about its ability to stir the hearts of people who wind up making the world a better place to live.

That all of the 12 disciples, the exception being John, paid with their lives to tell people about Jesus dying to save us from sin, makes the point. There was no sacrifice they thought of as too much to offer in the service of the Lord God, and the people whom they met. It was not just the churches that emerged from those efforts. Orphanages were created to save abandoned and unwanted children. A fact of history. Women over time ceased to be property and have become the partners they were supposed to be according to the word. Martin Luther did not set out to create a Protestant Reformation, but it occurred and the Bible was rediscovered as the spiritual resource it was intended to be.

I have told the story of a truck driver named Dave, who reading the Book of Proverbs said to me, “Man you could build your life on this stuff!” He was a member of a Bible study group I led when I served St. Andrew’s, New Liskeard in northeastern Ontario. We remained friends until he died, shortly after I retired due to health issues in 2006. His words still echo in the hallways of my mind. The Church gets in trouble every time that she strays away from the Biblical roots of the faith.

Mankind still needs, not just food for the body, but food for the soul, the spirit, and the mind. Our strength is not in being able to point to a denominational or local label. Our strength lies in the fact that people, our neighbours may get to know us, as folk who stand with Jesus in being fed by a continued and continual diet of the words God has given

us...proven to nurture our spiritual nature, grooming us to love our fellows, and changing our values so that we support one another regardless of race, class, or ethnic background.

It is intriguing that the only times Jesus did not perform a miracle, was when someone demanded HE do so to validate HIS claim to be the Son of God, and the saviour of mankind. He refused to free HIMSELF of the cross. HE refused to demonstrate HIS divinity for Herod. When HE was being beaten, HE refused to act the part defined by people who had no understanding of who HE is, or what HE had come to accomplish. At the end of the conversation that began with the words, "Man does not live by bread alone," Jesus said, "Away from me Satan...and Matthew tells us....Satan obeyed, could not do anything else but obey, and "angels came and attended HIM." (Matthew 4:10&11)

Jesus prayed in the desert. If you wonder what HE prayed for the proof is in the pudding. Jesus said, "It is written, 'worship the Lord your God and serve HIM only.'" At that point Jesus saw and understood as a man, what roads to walk, what words to say, and whom it was HE should heal. You and I are blessed that HE was willing to walk the miles, and suffer the cross for us. "Man does not live by bread alone; but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Let us pray.

Lord we thank you that we may indeed worship expecting that the focus of the service will be the reading of

your word, and an attempt to expose the meaning of “the words” that our spirits might be nourished, our minds put to use, and that our faith might grow. You call us to work. You define the terms. Lead us and guide us, that your will might be accomplished in our midst we ask. In Jesus name we pray.
Amen