

Dining With Jesus

Feeding the 5,000

“There’s no sound louder than a captive set free.

So let the Redeemed of the Lord say so, sing of His promises ever more.

Pour out your thankfulness. Let it overflow. Let the Redeemed of the Lord say so.”

What a powerful song by Josh Baldwin and the message is absolutely true for every one of us.

Scripture describes all of us as captives, primarily to sin. And Jesus died on the cross to set us free from that. But it’s not just the stain of sin that Jesus died for. He also died to free us from the effects of sin on each of our lives. For sin has a powerful way of binding us up with various chains.

- It might be the chains of addiction to drugs or alcohol, which we heard a powerful testimony from Theo last week about how God miraculously set him free.
- It might be the chains of bitterness and unforgiveness
- Or the chains of an attitude of discouragement and disappointment that your life hasn’t turned out the way you’d planned for. That’s largely what Jesus freed the Samaritan woman at the well from. She had repeatedly attempted to find fulfillment for her life in relationships with various men and it hadn’t worked out. Because other human beings will always let us down in one way or another. Her deepest need was for the love of God in her life and she didn’t realize that until Jesus came along.
- Maybe your chains are more that of boredom and resignation that life is likely not going to get any better than what you have right now. The same boring routine day after day and you’re just going through the motions of living.

What we’re attempting to learn in this series of Dining With Jesus is that God has a better plan for your life. He’s inviting you to sit down with Him on a daily basis and look into Jesus’ eyes of love and hear His heart of compassion for you. God has called you to live a life of impact. Impacting the lives of others around you as you share God’s exciting love for you and how you’ve experienced it.

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So let the Redeemed of the Lord say so, sing of His promises ever more.

Pour out your thankfulness. Let it overflow. Let the Redeemed of the Lord say so.”

The lyrics of this song after stating the truth that Jesus came to set the captive free, then calls us to personalize that truth. How has God set you free? How has God showed you His love and faithfulness in very individual ways? Put your own story together of how God has set you free so that you can tell others and amaze others with the goodness and faithfulness of God.

This past week our family has been celebrating the goodness and faithfulness of God shown to our daughter, Sara recently. And I want to share that with you this morning.

About 6 months ago, Sara was diagnosed with an auto immune disease called Myasthenia Gravis which has been very difficult on her body. She hasn’t been able to work since the diagnosis and almost every day goes in for infusions to try to get this disease under control. Right now all of the infusions are covered by insurance but occasionally she needs to get extra treatment which isn’t covered by insurance and can be a bit pricey. On two previous occasions, Sara needed this special treatment but we didn’t have the money to pay for it. However we prayed and God miraculously showed his goodness and love and provided the money to pay for it.

This past week the doctor told Sara that they’re getting close to solving another crisis in her body but it would be really helpful to get this extra treatment, but it wouldn’t be covered by insurance and would cost \$95. Sara told the doctor that she didn’t have the money for that but that she would pray about it. And this doctor is a Christian and Sara’s been able to recently share the goodness of God with Him. Well, after her appointment with the doctor, Sara decided to stop by the Holiday gas station she used to work at to say hi. While there she ran into a regular customer who she had visited with many times in the past. And he regularly comes in and buys scratch off tickets. Sara got talking to him and caught up on each others lives. Sara never told him that she needed this treatment but didn’t have the money for it. But at the close of their conversation, he gave Sara \$6 dollars and told her to go buy some scratch off tickets. Sara said thank you, but after he left was looking at the \$6 and thinking, *“I could buy 3 gallons of milk with this money”*. But since he’d given her the money to specifically buy scratch off tickets

she stepped to the counter and purchased them. When she got home she scratched them off and one of them she won \$100 and hence called her doctor and went down and got the much needed treatment!!! Now, I'm not suggesting that you go buy a bunch of lottery tickets in the hopes of changing your life. God's not going to do this for everyone, He's way to creative to limit His display of love to just one way. But I guarantee that God wants to show His love and goodness to you and from that develop your own story of how God transformed your life.

In the past two weeks, we've dined with Jesus in the house of two Pharisees and we've seen Jesus heal a man from dropsy and last week we witnessed a woman who's only known as "a sinful woman" show her love and gratitude to Jesus by anointing his feet with oil and her tears and wiping them clean with her hair. There's no record of her ever saying a word, but her actions were her testimony of a changed life. What's your testimony of how God's changed your life?

This week in Dining with Jesus, we're not in a Pharisees house but out in the open. We're several miles away from the nearest town. I'm going to be reading the account from [Mark 6:30-44](#) – please turn to it in your Bibles or on your phones.

While you're turning to it I want to set our passage up. Two things have recently happened.

- Jesus sent the disciples out to preach the message of the coming of the kingdom of God. And as Jesus sent them out he instructed them to trust in God to provide their daily provisions as they traveled around from town to town. He specifically told them not to take bread or money to purchase bread with and no extra clothes. Trust that God will provide for you – and he did. They saw God do tremendous things and set many free from their chains of bondage (either physical or spiritual or mental) and they had just returned to excitedly tell Jesus about what God had done.
- While they are telling Jesus all the exciting details, some of John the Baptists' followers show up to inform Jesus that John, his cousin, has been executed by King Herod. This had to have been a difficult blow to Jesus. With that exhaustion Jesus decides they all need some rest and down time so they get in a boat to travel to a more secluded place and get some rest. But as they sail across the lake, many of his followers figure out where they are headed and are there waiting when they arrive at shore. So, much for getting any rest. Jesus had every right to get irritated – but notice what happens instead.

Read [Mark 6:34](#)

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

Jesus and his disciples are tired on many levels. They just want to get some rest. But when Jesus sees these people clamoring to spend time with Him he can't resist. His heart is not filled with irritation or anger but rather it's filled with compassion, because of how He saw them. How do you see people who interrupt your schedule? Are they an irritation or a source of frustration? Or is your heart filled with compassion for them, because that's Jesus' default response to people wanting to spend time with Him. Isn't that amazing. You're never an interruption to God's schedule. Spending time with you is always on the top of His list of priorities.

Read [Mark 6:35-37](#)

By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. 36 Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

37 But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

John's account of this exchange gives us deeper insight into Jesus' motives here.

John 6:5-6 (NIV) When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" 6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

God will often allow or intentionally put challenging circumstances in our lives in order to “test” us. This *testing* allows us a window into our lives. It can reveal strengths or weaknesses in our responses. And from that you have the opportunity to correct some things or appreciate more certain areas of your life that you can look back in the future and remember how you responded to life’s tests this time around.

- Perhaps your patience is tested and you can look back and see how your patience has improved over time as the Holy Spirit’s been working in your life. Then thank God for His transformation.
- Or your response might be a red flag to areas that need to be improved upon. And if your response is not exactly God honoring, God isn’t mad at you. He’s ready, with a heart of compassion, to do an amazing work inside of you as He grows you.

In this instance Jesus was preparing to teach them that God can take our challenging circumstances and do amazing things that will blow you away. Jesus could have just prayed to God and created enough food to feed this whole crowd out of nothing. He’s completely capable of producing food out of thin air. After all, He created this entire universe we live in by merely speaking it into existence. But Jesus often will bring us to a point where we realize we can’t get ourselves out of this mess with our very limited resources. And once we come to that realization and depend upon God, then He can do what He does best – blow us away by producing the exact amount of money Sara needed for her treatment through the purchase of a lottery ticket, made possible by a man who she hasn’t seen in over 6 months. And as Sara’s been sharing God’s miracles, her doctors’ faith is being deepened as well.

Jesus knew very well that his group of disciples didn’t have the resources to feed a crowd of 5,000 men (and if you were to add in women and children who were probably there as well – you’d probably be near 15,000 people). But he needed them to realize that and He wants us to realize it also.

Read Mark 6:38- “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five loaves—and two fish.”

So, if Jesus could have produced enough food by merely speaking it into existence why did he ask them to figure out how much food they had (5 loaves and 2 fish)? Because I think Jesus wants to teach them and us what He can do with the meager resources we have to offer to Him. If Jesus can use 5 loaves and 2 fish to feed several thousands of people – don’t you think He can use your meager resources to impact someone else’s life? Ask God to reveal to you ways He wants to use your resources to bless someone else’s life and display His goodness and glory.

Mark 6:39-44 (NIV) Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44 The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Notice that before God did the miraculous Jesus thanked God for what He’s about to do. Jesus prayed, believing that God was going to do this miraculous thing. When you pray for something, do you actually believe God is going to respond? Way too often our prayers are not filled with confident gratitude. When you encounter a challenging circumstance in your life begin by thanking God in advance for what He’s about to do in and through you. Give yourself fully to the Lord and thank Him that in the midst of this difficult circumstance He’s going to take you deeper in your relationship with Him. Sadly, I see far too many people who totally waste their trying circumstances. They ask God to remove it. But what if God wants to use your present circumstances to take you deeper in your relationship with Him? Then wouldn’t it be better to stay in your circumstance while that deepening occurs? And many of you are living testimonies to how God used a trial in your life to set you free from various chains that were keeping you bound up and brought you deeper in your relationship with Him.

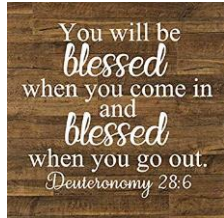
I can think of a couple of you who have continued to live with constant pain (physical or emotional) in your lives, just like the Apostle Paul who lived with a thorn in his flesh. He asked God three times to

remove it and each time God said, *“No. My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”* God was leaving that thorn in the flesh in place to continually teach Paul greater dependence upon God’s strength to get through every day. And some of you are the same way. You continually struggle with some form of pain – either physical or emotional (caused by a difficult circumstance in your present or past). And God might not take it away. But He wants to use it to bring you to a deeper place with Him. He wants to teach you that even though you might live with emotional or physical pain, God can use that for His glory. But it likely will mean you have to change your perspective and attitude about your predicament. After God told Paul three times, *“NO”*. Paul’s attitude changed and he now approached every day with a transformed attitude.

“I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

That’s Paul’s story of God transforming His circumstances. What’s your story? How is God using, or desiring to use your current circumstances for His honor and glory and your transformation into Christ likeness? What would God say to you right now if you were sitting across the table from Him enjoying a meal together concerning His plans for your pain? Ask Him and then take the time to listen.

Friday I was down at the former campus of Crossroads College in Rochester, where me and many other graduated. And above one of the exit doors was this sign:



And I want to leave you with that. I hope through the worship and sharing of God’s Word you were blessed by being here this morning. This should be a place of God’s blessing – both **to** you and **through** you. In just a minute we’re going to close the service and after that it’s an opportunity for God to use you to be a blessing to others. But it shouldn’t stop there. When you leave this place, God’s intent is to continue to bless you and use you to be a blessing to others. Why not live with that awareness and begin each day thanking God for how He’s going to show you His goodness and love throughout that day and thank Him for the privilege of being a vessel by which He shows His goodness and love to others through you.

Let’s close this time in God’s Word by reading together this truth of God and His work in your life.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV)

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What has God set you free from?

What's your testimony of how God has changed your life? (take time to compose that on a separate piece of paper so you'll be prepared to tell it to others when the opportunity arrives).

What two things had occurred shortly before our passage?

How did Jesus respond to not getting rest because of all of the people wanting to see Him? (Mark 6:34)

How do you see people who interrupt your schedule?

Remember: you're never an _____ to God's schedule.

How can God use difficult circumstances in our lives:

1. Reveal _____
2. Reveal areas we need to _____

Why did God ask his disciples to feed the crowd?

Did Jesus need the 5 loaves and 2 fish to perform a miracle?
What's the purpose in Jesus asking for them?

What do you need to start thanking God for?

Why did God not take away Paul's thorn in the flesh?

How is God using, or wanting to use, your current circumstances for His glory and your transformation?

Meditate on what God wants to say to you through Ephesians 3:20-21. What's God telling you?

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