

Bi132 The Gospels

Lesson Bi132-16 Galilean Ministry

One sure way to draw a crowd in a rural area is to have a flat tire and start looking for someone to help change it—especially if you are a stranger or a foreigner or your car looks new. In an urban area, crowds usually gather when someone starts giving away free candy or free samples of a new product, or most anything that is free! Sometimes even a small crowd seems to attract a bigger crowd, just out of curiosity. People often run to see what is happening, what the commotion is about. No doubt some of those who crowded around Jesus also had no idea what they were about to see and hear.

Jesus began his public ministry in Cana, in the province of Galilee, where he had grown up and worked as a carpenter. In the last lesson, his hometown Jewish crowd at Nazareth rejected Jesus and wanted to kill him. But Galilee had many other non-Jewish people, or Gentiles, whom Jesus wanted to reach. He settled in the town of Capernaum, which was still in Galilee and closer to the sea. All this was part of God’s plan as foretold by the prophet Isaiah: “Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light; and for those living in the region and shadow of death, light has dawned” (Isa 9:1-2).

From that time on Jesus began to preach, saying, “The time has come; the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. Wherever Christ was present, God’s power to heal and deliver was present too.

One Sabbath day Jesus and his disciples entered the synagogue in Capernaum and he taught the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the scribes. Christ did not quote human authorities, as the teachers of the law did. His authority came directly from God. In that synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit. The demon cried out in a loud voice, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, saying, “Be silent and come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What words these are! With authority and power he commands even impure spirits and they obey him!” And reports of him went out into every place in the surrounding region of Galilee (Luke 4:31-36).

Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon Peter. He and his disciples probably went there to eat, since the main Sabbath meal was served just after the synagogue service. Now Peter’s mother-in-law lay sick with a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she got up and began to serve them. The Sabbath was over at sundown. Until then, according to the tradition of

the elders, Jews could not travel more than a kilometer or carry a burden. So as the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness. Laying his hands on each one, he healed them (Luke 4:38-40).

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went into a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" But Jesus explained to them that he had come to preach to nearby villages too. So they traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Jesus again visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain official in the service of Herod Antipas, whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee, he sought him out. He begged Christ to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

Jesus tested him by saying, "Unless you see miraculous signs and wonders, you refuse to believe." Some of the Galileans seemed interested only in what Jesus could do for them or in following the crowd, not in welcoming the Messiah who could save them.

The royal official pleaded, "Sir, please come before my child dies."

"Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live." Jesus spoke words of healing, not just prophecy.

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he asked about when his son had gotten better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him." Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had told him his son would live. He and his entire household believed in Jesus as Messiah (John 4:46-53).

Again, while Jesus was in one of the towns, a man with leprosy came to him. The leper begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Lepers were untouchable, according to Moses' teaching, and would bring defilement on whoever came near them.

But Jesus' compassion far exceeded ceremonial concerns and God's power is greater than any disease. Christ reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus sent him away with a strong warning: "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest. Offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." Jesus respected the Jewish law and urged the man to follow it. The Jews believed that only God could cure leprosy, so this was a testimony to Christ's authority. But instead of obeying him, the cured leper went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere (Mark 1:40-45).

This lesson recounts several short stories shared by the gospel writers. They represent the kind of ministry Jesus had on a daily basis. Wherever he went Jesus was delivering people from the power of sickness and death—the result of Satan’s activity. Though the religious leaders did not know who Jesus was, the demons that afflicted people did. They spoke, out of the fear of their coming judgment. They identified Jesus as the Holy One of God. Not all sickness is a direct result of demonic influence, but Jesus demonstrated that he has power and authority over all sickness and all demons. Jesus delivered people in the synagogues—the church of the day—and out in the open country. He healed them, whether male or female, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, slave or free. As more people were healed, more people heard the news and came to receive what God had for them.

In these actions he demonstrated the power of this new kingdom, but his message was how to enter into it. Jesus called people to repent and believe the good news. Jesus is not just the source of blessings from God; he is the door to a relationship with God that lasts forever. When Jesus met the father with the dying son, he challenged the man to look beyond the miracle he wanted and place his faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah. When the man realized that his son had been healed at the exact time Jesus spoke the word, the father did believe. This true faith is the response Jesus was seeking from each person he encountered. Jesus called people through his words and activities to choose God’s way.

The most important thing Jesus did was not the healing of diseases or deliverance from demons. His most important work was to call people to repent and to invite them to become a part of God’s kingdom by believing in the Messiah. Jesus’ mission was to call people to a point of decision about who would rule their lives—themselves or God.

This story is **important** because it shows us the compassion Jesus demonstrated to all people as he preached to them the message of the kingdom of God. A godly compassion for the lost and their situations will enable us to introduce them to Jesus and his power.

The **main truth** of this story is that though Jesus met human needs, his work centered on the spiritual needs of people. He did this by calling them to repent and believe, rather than trying to save themselves.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What was the message that Jesus preached in Galilee?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said that Jesus preached, “Repent and believe the good news,” you are correct.
2. What was the result after a father asked Jesus to heal his dying son?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "The son was healed and the father and his whole household believed in Jesus as Messiah," you are correct.
3. What was significant about Jesus touching the man with leprosy?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, “The compassion of Jesus was greater than concern about the law not to touch lepers; and God’s power is greater than disease,” you are correct.

4. What was the most important work Jesus did in Galilee?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "The most important work Jesus did was not the healing or deliverance miracles, but announcing the coming of God's kingdom and calling people to repent," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn what Jesus did and preached in Galilee so you can tell these stories to someone else. Then ask this question, "What was the most important thing Jesus did in Galilee? Why do you say that?" The most important thing Jesus did was to preach the message of kingdom of God concerning repentance. This message can change people for eternity. Healing of their bodies was only a temporary help.