

SPENDING A DAY WITH JESUS

A sermon delivered by Batsell Barrett Baxter on February 16, 1969 at the Hillsboro Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, and heard over radio station WLAC at 8:05 P.M.

Although I never had the privilege of living on a farm, I have heard those who were reared on farms tell of some of their meaningful childhood experiences. Back in the days before radio and television, and even before the automobile had come into general use, it was quite common for one farm family in a community to “spend the day” with another family of the community. When the crops were laid by or before time for plowing and planting in the spring there were days when a family could visit for an entire day with another family. In our day sometimes our children “spend the day” with each other. I suggest this idea in order to say, “Wouldn’t it have been a wonderful thing if we could have spent a day with Jesus?” Think of what it would have meant if we could have been with him all day long, gone where he went, and listened as he talked.

When a husband comes home from a day’s work, his wife often asks, “What did you do today?” He tells her some of the highlights of the day’s activities. Later, he says, “Tell me about your day.” Of our children we often ask, “What happened at school today?” Incidentally, I might observe that these questions are usually wasted, for not much information is imparted. Our children are too concerned with what comes next to have much time to talk about what has already been. But again, wouldn’t it be interesting to know just what happened in a typical day in the life of our Lord?

Christ affected the world more than any person who ever lived. Yet, he lived only thirty-three years. What did he do to have such a great impact? How did he spend his life? How did he spend a typical day? We do not know specifically because the inspired record does not tell us of complete days in his life. We can calculate that in his thirty-three years he lived a few more than 12,000 days. Some 1200 of these were in his active ministry, yet the events in all four of our gospel narratives occurred on less than fifty different days of his life.

The apostle John reflects his own feelings in regard to the severe limitations on the events of Christ’s life that he was permitted to tell in his narrative. In John 20:30-31 he says, “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.” The final sentence of the gospel of John reads, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.” (John 21:25). We can know what Christ did on various days, and it is possible to piece together some of these to see what might have been a typical day in the life of our Lord.

Jesus Took Time For Private Devotion

A careful reading of the events in Christ’s life indicate clearly that he often slipped away from the crowd that followed him and even from his own disciples in order to spend some quiet time in prayer and communion with God. For example, we read in Mark 1:35-38, “And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him; and they found him, and say unto him, All are seeking thee. And he saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next town that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth.”

Surely this is a suggestion for all of us. If Christ needed quiet times in which to meditate and pray surely all of us need those quiet devotional times even more. Several times it is mentioned that he spent a part of the night, or even sometimes the entire night, in prayer. It appears in Luke 6:12-14 that he spent the night in prayer before naming his twelve apostles to their great work. One of the tragedies of our modern world is that we are so rushed that we have little time for devotional periods, little time for meditation on spiritual matters and prayer to God.

Jesus Worshipped

It is also clear that if our visit had been made to the Lord on a sabbath day, he would have led us to the synagogue. Luke 4:16 tells us, “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read.” Undoubtedly it was his regular practice to participate in the synagogue worship. He seems to have been well known in the synagogue of his own home town and to have been given regular responsibilities in the services.

It is difficult to understand how that millions of people who are essentially believers in Christ and who feel that his teachings are the best guide for the way that men ought to live do not regularly worship him. A typical Sunday finds them working in the yard, making little repairs around the house, driving into the country, making a fishing trip, or just resting at home. There are values in public worship which many people overlook. It is for these reasons that we believe the Lord requires his children to meet on the first day of the week and worship him. (Heb. 10:25).

Jesus Helped People

Perhaps the most obvious thing we would learn from spending a day with Jesus would be his deep concern for the needs of people. In Mark 1:29-31, we read, "And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and straightway they tell him of her: and he came and took her by the hand and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." Another example reads, "And there cometh to him a leper, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And being moved with compassion, he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean." (Mark 1:40-42).

In the second chapter of Mark we read about Christ healing the palsied man whose friends lowered his couch through the ceiling into a house where Jesus was surrounded by people to such an extent that it was not possible for them to enter through the door. Christ healed this man so that he was able to walk and take up his bed and carry it away. Over and over again Christ healed people who were deaf, or blind, or lame. He even raised the dead on at least three occasions.

Here is another incident which shows his concern for people. "And they were bringing unto him little children, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them." (Mark 10: 13-16).

Surely this suggests to us that in our busy schedules of today we ought also to find time to help those who are in need. We need to be concerned about widows, orphans, the sick, and the aged. There are emergencies that arise in people's lives which should not go unnoticed or untended by those of us who would follow Christ. The Christian is one who cares and he shows that care and concern by helping those who are in need.

Jesus Taught

In following Jesus throughout a typical day we would undoubtedly find him talking with many people under many different kinds of conditions. We might, for instance, hear him deliver what we would call something of a sermon, as he did on a mountain near Capernaum in the long ago. This "Sermon on the Mount" can be found in Matt. 5, 6, and 7, and constitutes the heart of the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus. Almost the entire twelfth chapter of Mark is also devoted to Christ's teachings. It is there that he answers the difficult question, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" His answer, after asking for a denarius that he might examine this commonly used coin, was a question, "Whose is this image and superscription?" When they answered that it was Caesar's he continued, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." (Mark 12, 13-17).

He also was faced with the question of which one would be the husband in the life to come of a woman who had been married seven times. His answer was, "Is it not for this cause that ye err, that ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as angels in heaven." (Mark 12:24-25).

In this same remarkable chapter he also answered the question, "What commandment is the first of all?" His answer was, "The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." (Mark 12:28-30). His whole life was spent in teaching and preaching. The thirteenth chapter of Matthew contains the several parables concerning the kingdom which he was to establish. The center of his purpose was in revealing a new way of life to men and in making it possible for him to live that life through his redemption.

Jesus Challenged Men

In the sixth chapter of Luke we find the account of Jesus calling twelve men to be his apostles. We do not have all of the details, but in each case it appears that Jesus challenged those men to leave whatever they were doing and to follow him in his spiritually centered work. Matthew 9:9 tells of his calling of Matthew Levi who was sitting at the place of toll collecting taxes, Matthew accepted the challenge and followed. Luke 5:1-11 tells the story of the calling of Peter, Andrew, James and John. Christ performed a miracle in supplying an abundant catch of fish, after which Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Christ replied, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." The story ends with the words, "And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed him." (Luke 5:8-11).

When we associate with Jesus through the pages of the scriptures we also will be challenged, and let us hope that we will accept the challenge to center our lives in Christ and his Cause, as did these early disciples. Let us also hope that as we mature in our Christian understandings that we also may challenge others to live on the same exalted plane which Jesus lived and about which he taught. Christianity is a life of challenge--accepting challenges and passing them along to others,

Jesus Lived An Exemplary Life

In Mark 7:37 we read the verdict of some of the people who heard Jesus, "He doeth all things well." In John 7:46 we read the explanation of the soldiers who were sent to arrest Jesus but came back empty-handed, "never man so spake." In Heb. 4:15 we are reminded, "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Our Lord lived a sinless life. While we may not reach that level of perfection, let us strive to live in such a way that our lives also are not subject to Satan and to unrighteousness. Let us be as clean and pure as we can be in thought, word and deed. As we follow Christ may our lives be models for others to see, and may they be the means of causing others to want to follow Christ. May it be possible for us to say with Paul, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." (I Cor. 11:1).

Conclusion

Jesus did not do many of the things that we do. He did not fly in an airplane. He did not talk by long distance telephone. He did not dictate letters. He did not own property. He owned no stocks and bonds. He wrote no books. He never finished college. But, he left the greatest influence on mankind for good of any person that has ever lived. Greatness lies in simple things. Let us fashion our days in such a way that our influence will be felt upon others and in the right direction. Our hope is that as we have tried to visualize what it would be like to spend a typical day with Jesus, we have seen something of the pattern of life that our days should follow.