

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 71.2%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Mark 1:21 – 28, Luke 4:31 – 37

Monday: Mark 1:29 – 34, Luke 4:38 – 41 & Matthew 8:14 – 17

Tuesday: Mark 1:35 – 39, Luke 4:42 – 44 & Matthew 4:23 – 25

Wednesday: Luke 5:1 – 11, Mark 1:16 – 20, Matthew 4:18 – 22

Thursday: Luke 5:12 – 16, Mark 1:40 – 45 & Matthew 8:1 – 4

Friday: Luke 5:17 – 26, Mark 2:1 – 12 & Matthew 9:1 – 8

Saturday: Luke 5:27 – 32, Mark 2:13 – 17 & Matthew 9:9 – 13

Current # of email addresses in the group: 725

I hope you enjoyed getting back to this reading program. I have certainly been enjoying getting back into this study and I hope you enjoy this next week's study.

Current and archive of this reading program is available at:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/announcements/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep>

The audio archive information is also available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

[https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA\\_tacLBfv1XR3jH](https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH)

You may actually prefer accessing it directly from this Playlist tab:

<https://www.youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792/playlists>

### **3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 113**

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 764 – SUNDAY: May 3<sup>rd</sup>

Mark 1:21 – 28, Luke 4:31 – 37

Daily Deep Dive:

Mark 1:21 – Having just been hauled out of the Nazareth synagogue and escaping with His life, and without taking any Sabbaths off to lie low or let things simmer down, Mark records that Jesus immediately goes to the synagogue in Capernaum when the Sabbath comes and teaches.

Mark 1:22 – The people who heard Jesus speak were astonished/amazed. It then tells us why. He spoke as one having authority. The Greek word here translated “authority” “exousian” (ἐξουσίαν), doesn’t just mean “with confidence” or “eloquence”, it carries the idea of the “delegated right to act”, “the right to command”, and “power, backed by position”. It wasn’t that He was just a good teacher --- but He spoke as if He had the right to say those things (which, of course, He did).

The scribes, who were highly trained experts of the law, typically taught by quoting earlier rabbis, appealing to the known traditions and interpreted law through chains of precedent. Jesus stood out because He clarified God’s intent, not just application. He didn’t quote other rabbi’s --- but said “but I say to you...”. He spoke as the Lawgiver, not just an interpreter. He issued commands. His words carried authority, and that’s about to be shown through the upcoming miracle here in the synagogue. Additionally, Jesus didn’t fit into their known and recognized authority structures --- and yet He spoke with authority. That clearly showed He stood above them in many ways. This becomes a major theme that runs throughout the Gospels: WHERE does this AUTHORITY come from?

Mark 1:23 – And now we are immediately launched into a visible demonstration of the authority of Jesus Christ.

The synagogue was the center of community religious life, a place of instruction in God’s law, but also a perceived place of spiritual safety. Therefore, Mark’s account of the man with an unclean spirit (demon) being in what was supposed to be a spiritually clean and safe place was inspired to make us feel a sort of tension (that it doesn’t make sense that in a place that is meant to be focused on the Holy God you also have a demon of rebellion).

I find it interesting that in verse 21 it’s described as “the synagogue”, but here in verse 23, as Mark begins to setup the lesson, it’s described

as “their synagogue”. It’s subtle, but it seems intentional. In the greater context of Christ’s authority, this seems to contrast their “religious ownership” versus true “spiritual authority”. The system looks right, but lacks true power.

This story setup also seems to expose that evil can exist comfortably in religious environments. This can be true today as well. There is no indication in this particular story that anyone knew in advance that this man was demon possessed. It’s only when He comes into conflict here with Jesus that His demon possession is exposed.

Another striking layer to this story is that it’s the demon that clearly understands and identifies Jesus’ true identity. It seems that the lack of awareness of the religious leaders as to Jesus’ identity is intentional. All of this is consistent with themes throughout the Gospels that Jesus enters expected religious spaces, exposes what really lies beneath the surface, and demonstrates authority over spiritual matters and the spirit world.

Mark 1:24 – What did this demon-possessed man say?

“Let us alone!” The word “us” may be in “italics” in your Bible, but it really is an appropriate addition, because the Greek here is “plural”. This seems to be a statement uttered by this demon, but speaking for both him and other demons (unclean spirits). The demon then says, “What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth?” The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown (JFB) commentary states: “an expression of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament (1Kings 17:18; 2Kings 3:13; 2Chronicles 35:21, etc.). It denotes *entire separation of interests*: - that is, “Thou and we have nothing in common; we want not Thee; what wouldst Thou with us?” [END QUOTE] The NLT translates this as: “Why are You interfering with us”? Next the demon states: “Did You come to destroy us?” We see in the next statement that this demon understood exactly who Jesus was (The Holy One of God). The demon understood that Jesus had authority over them, and through God the power to end/ruin/destroy them. Embedded in this is an important

understanding that the demons understand their ultimate fate and they have a fear of that being carried out (compare with Matthew 8:29). This whole section is clearly about emphasizing Jesus authority. And the demon clearly understands His authority, even if the religious leaders and people here do not.

I should also talk for a moment here about how Mark consistently prefers “unclean spirit” over “demon”. In the first century Jewish context, the term “unclean” was primarily thought of through the lens of ritual and spiritual defilement. God is clean, pure and Holy and therefore throughout the Bible anything having to do with God had to be “clean” (or through a God-ordained process become “clean”). By using the term “unclean spirit”, Mark is emphasizing a spiritual angelic being that is in opposition and incompatible with the Great God due to defilement. But also, here, the demon recognizes that Jesus is the “Holy One of God”. The Greek for “Holy One” again is meant to convey that even this demon is able to recognize that Jesus is pure and completely aligned with God. And all of this is meant to create this really interesting moment in the synagogue. Here in the synagogue, a place that is concerned with God’s Law, clean and unclean distinctions and proper worship --- there is an unclean spirit that is defiling and dominating within the life of this person. But it’s Christ, not this polluted synagogue system, that has both the insight and authority to deal with the “unclean spirit” and its terrible impact on this person.

Mark 1:25 – We are told that Christ “rebuked” the demon. In Greek word *epetimēsen* (ἐπετίμησεν) carried a strong authoritative tone. It was used when someone in authority reprimanded wrongdoing, silenced or restrained behavior, and issued a forceful command expecting immediate compliance. It often implied both disapproval and power – not just saying something was wrong but actively stopping it. We will see this used by Mark in showing Jesus’ authority over demons (in this recorded event), over physical creation (wind and sea in Mark

4:39) and over His followers (Peter in Mark 8:33). Here Christ issues two commands that the demon must follow. First, to “Be quiet”. I like the visual picture of the Greek meaning to “close the mouth with a muzzle” --- as if by Christ’s very command the demon was “muzzled”. Second, Jesus commanded this demon to “come out”. Now at the climax of this biblical example, we are brought to see if Jesus really does have authority and would the demon obey Him.

Mark 1:26 – Mark then records the visible reaction that everyone witnesses of the demon coming out of this man. The Greek translated “convulsed” (NKJV) or “torn” (KJV) is found in medical and literary contexts describing severe bodily convulsions (similar to seizures), tearing, mangling and violent intense agitation. It implies external visible force, where one loses bodily control.

Next we are told that the demon “cried out with a loud voice”. Strong’s dictionary says, “properly to “croak” (as a raven) or scream. Thayer’s primary definition is similar: 1) to croak, 1a) of the cry of a raven. This makes me imagine that a throaty screeching sound came out of this man as he is physically mangled and almost torn apart by this demon coming out of him. I imagine this was an awful and frightening site to behold.

Mark 1:27 – We see Mark say that everyone there was “amazed”. In the Greek this contains both the sense of “astonishment” and “amazement” --- but Thayer’s also brings out that it can mean to “terrify” and “frighten”. I would have to imagine if I witnessed this scene, I would feel all of that. And while they begin to ask each other questions about what they were witnessing, the true point is expressed and realized, that this Jesus had authority, not just in how He taught (verse 22), but in how He demonstrated authority over the evil unclean spirit world.

Mark 1:28 – We can only imagine how quickly the news of this was passed from person-to-person as what they just witnessed spread throughout the whole region and beyond (including by travelers of the “Via Maris” international highway trading route of that day).

It’s important to understand this Via Maris highway and it’s great impact in spreading the Gospel at this time.

The **Via Maris**—literally “Way of the Sea”—was one of the most important international highways of the ancient Near East, stretching from Egypt through the coastal plain of Israel, then northward past the Sea of Galilee and into Syria and beyond to Mesopotamia. In Jesus’ day, this well-traveled trade route funneled merchants, soldiers, officials, and pilgrims from across the Roman world directly through Galilee, placing towns like Capernaum in a constant stream of diverse traffic and cultural exchange, which made it uniquely advantageous for His ministry—allowing His teachings, miracles, and reputation to spread rapidly far beyond the local region. This way (we should think “road”) ensured that His message encountered not only Jews but a broad cross-section of the nations passing along this strategic corridor.

We’ll now go through Luke and call out what was unique in His recording of this same event.

Luke 4:31 – While Mark brings out the immediacy of Christ getting right back to teaching after escaping death in Nazareth, Luke focuses on the fact that on the “Sabbaths” Jesus was teaching. Sabbath after Sabbath after Sabbath, Jesus was in the synagogue of Capernaum teaching. Luke’s audience is a Gentile group, and Luke clearly is showing them the day of the week that Jesus was teaching.

Luke 4:33 – In the NKJV it translates a Greek word “demon” and the KJV says “devil”. Since Luke is writing to a Gentile audience in the first century, we must ask what this word *daimoniou*

(δαίμονιου) would have meant to the average person of the Greek world. In classical and Hellenistic Greek thought daimoniou referred broadly to a spirit being associated with the divine realm. These beings weren't necessarily evil. It was simply a "supernatural spirit". They understood these spirits beings to be able to influence health and behavior, and that they could be associated with possession or madness, but not in the sense of an evil rebellious being that opposed the true God.

When the Old Testament was translated into Greek (Septuagint), they used this word to apply to Hebrew terms for "false gods" or harmful spirits (such as in Deuteronomy 32:17). Luke uses a word from their Greek language that they would already understand as a "real spiritual being", but then he defines this spirit with the Greek word akathartou (ἀκαθάρτου) which they understood meaning "polluted, contaminated or unfit". So, Luke is leading even the average Greek to see this spirit as something that is defiled, impure and undesirable. And now Luke is going to show, like Mark did, Jesus' ultimate authority over this "unclean" spirit being that we now call and understand as a "demon".

Luke 4:35 – Luke brings out that this demon "flung" or "tossed" this man into the middle (NKJV says midst, but it's meaning is middle) of everyone --- bringing this whole situation to center stage in the synagogue. Luke brings, especially in light of just telling us that the demon flung him into the middle of everyone, that the demon did not actually "injure" the man either in "flinging" him or through the process of coming out of him. The man would be physically fine.

Day 765 – MONDAY: May 4<sup>th</sup>

Mark 1:29–34, Luke 4:38–41 & Matthew 8:14–17

Daily Deep Dive:

We will read Mark's account first, then Luke as both of those Gospel accounts pick right up in chronological order from the proceeding events in the synagogue.

Mark 1:29 – We learned in verse 21 that it's the Sabbath that Jesus was teaching and showed His authority over the demon world. Now He and His disciples walk out the door of the synagogue and immediately go and enter the house of Simon (Peter) and Andrew. And James and John are there too. The language indicates that their house was very near the synagogue. There is a location in Capernaum where they believe Peter's house was, and it's only about a "block" away from the synagogue. It's also very close to the shore of the Sea of Galilee (both of which makes sense). Not all of these locations believed to be "something" are in fact authentic locations, but this one appears to be authentic. In excavation of this particular site, they found that the walls were plastered repeatedly (which is unusual for ordinary homes). They say this is evidence that the home was intentionally preserved and cared for in a special way. It also had a shift that occurred possibly in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century from a private dwelling to a communal meeting space. In the plaster there are fragments of references to Jesus as Lord or Messiah, as well as written prayers. These are dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries --- indicating that this particular house remained special to believers throughout that time period. By the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century, a large octagonal church was constructed directly over this house. I first wondered whether the octagonal churches included something pagan blended into Christianity, but it seems more tied to the early Christian focus on EIGHT representing something BEYOND the 7-day cycle. Certainly, in the Bible there is a focus on eight being associated with "new beginnings", but the Romans certainly incorporated "octagonal" forms in their baths, villas and temples. So I'm not completely sure if there is a pagan influence that the church of that time (which is now Roman Catholic Church) was incorporating.

Mark 1:30 – Here we learn that Peter has a wife, because Peter has a mother-in-law who is down sick with a fever (a high/great fever according to Luke 4:38) and they waste no time and tell Jesus about it. This seems to indicate it's serious, and they are greatly concerned about it. Luke's account in Luke 4:38 says "they made request of Him concerning her". It's very clear that they asked Him to intervene for her and their family.

Before I continue the story, I said here that Peter "has" a wife. We don't see her here in the story, but there is an interesting verse in 1 Corinthians 9:5 where Paul states: "Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" Paul is showing that he and Barnabas had the same right as the other apostles to not only dedicate themselves to the full-time ministry, and be provided for in that work, but they also had the right to be married and have their wives provided for as well. The background is about the right to be provided for by members while doing the work of Jesus Christ, but it's interesting that Paul uses specific examples of other apostles who were already being provided for, but not only them but also their wives. Other apostles, being Cephas (aka Simon Peter renamed "Cephas" by Jesus in John 1:42) and the brothers of Jesus who were apostles. Jesus had four brothers named in the Gospels (James, Joseph (Joses), Simon & Judas). None of them were of the original 12 apostles. In fact we will eventually see in John 7:5 that His brothers at first didn't believe in Him. Yet later in Acts 1:14 we see "His brothers" are found praying alongside other believers in the early New Testament church. Clearly James is called an apostle in Galatians 1:19 ("I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother."). So, while James is not one of the original 12, we find that he is also an apostle by this point. But Paul used the plural "brothers". So, who else of Jesus' half-brothers were apostles? We don't know. Jude who clearly identifies Himself as a brother of James (Jude 1:1), has a letter recorded but is never in scripture referred to as an apostle. We

don't know about Jesus' other half-brothers Joseph (Joses) or Simon. Some later traditions refer to leadership of these men, but never mentioned specifically as apostles. The term "apostle" meaning "one sent" could be used more broadly possibly.

All of this indicates that it appears that Peter and James (brother of Christ) and at least one more of the brothers of Jesus, had wives that came along with them on their work and they were provided for by the church so they could serve fully as a team.

So, while we don't see Peter's wife clearly present here in the story, we can assume she is there and simply not mentioned specifically. I have to say this is speculation, since she is not specifically mentioned here, but I believe plausible.

Mark 1:31 – It doesn't say He lifted her up in His arms. It appears per the consensus of Bible commentators that the meaning is that he takes her hand and helps her to sit up. She is immediately healed. While not explicitly called out, it appears that this is another example of Christ healing on what was still the Sabbath. Luke's account in Luke 4:39 has Jesus still over her, after having helped her sit up, and He "rebuked the fever". Like we mentioned before, Jesus has authority over demons and His followers --- but He also demonstrates His power and authority over nature (wind & waves), and here over disease and illness. He gives a command and everyone or everything must obey by His authority. I always thought it was interesting that she got up and served them. I always thought. "Let the poor woman rest". But I think this is important, because it shows the completeness of the miracle. The fever is not just gone, but she's no longer exhausted. She's been fully healed and now has normal strength and energy, and everyone visibly sees all of this as she is able to work and go about normally. It's also possible we are to see the natural response when God blesses us or does a miracle in our life. We get back to serving and doing what we

can. And in doing so we show our gratitude and dedication in action to our Gracious Healer.

Mark 1:32 – Now the sun sets. The Sabbath is over. The first day of the week begins at evening, and the Jews believe and practice that it's not lawful to heal on the Sabbath. So with it being ended, they don't wait for the next daytime portion, but they are immediately and into the evening bringing to Jesus ALL who are either sick or who are people clearly understood to be under the active influence of a spirit being which was producing visible and known disturbances and afflictions.

Mark 1:33 – This isn't just a small group of people. It says "the whole city" was gathered at the door of the house.

Mark 1:34 – Here it says He healed "many". The uses of the word "many" in Mark's account, might lead us to believe some were healed and some were not. However, in Luke 4:40 it tells us "He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them."

It's amazing to see the complete authority Jesus had over the demons, including the fact that He didn't allow them to speak because they knew Him. This immediately reminds us of the previous story where in the Greek Jesus essentially "muzzled" the demon because He revealed His identity. Luke's account in Luke 4:41 has many of the demons saying similar things to the previous story --- things like "You are Christ, the Son of God!" So He had to command and prevent them from speaking. I picture a bunch of muzzled demons forced to be quiet. What authority!

Matthew's account in Matthew 8:14 through 17 is lighter on most details that were included in Mark & Luke, but it still fits within the other accounts. But it does add something at the end in verse 17 that the others do not. Matthew writing to a Jewish audience familiar with

the Old Testament scriptures is reminded that this fulfilled the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53:4. The words that He “bore” our sicknesses is beautiful imagery in both the Hebrew and Greek. . It’s the idea that we have some weight and burden, and He picked it up and carried it Himself. Freeing us of the hardship, He instead placed it on His own shoulders. Certainly, we are to see the clear connection between physical healing and spiritual healing. Not only did Christ remove these burdens (diseases and demons) from all these people’s lives, but freely laid down His life to take from them (and our) burdens of sin, and carried it Himself in giving His life freely by choosing to lay down His life for us. We read this at Passover but Isaiah 53:4–7 is a beautiful reminder of what Jesus did for us and how He did it!

Day 766 – TUESDAY: May 5<sup>th</sup>

Mark 1:35 – 39, Luke 4:42 – 44 & Matthew 4:23 – 25

Daily Deep Dive:

We’ll again start first with Mark, then Luke and finish with Matthew. Mark 1:35 – In my personal opinion, the KJV and NKJV doesn’t do a very good job with this first sentence. What the NKJV translates “in the morning” --- but in Greek a good translation would be “very early – while it was still night”. It carries the idea that it’s still night, but morning will be approaching soon. Many other translations do a better job translating this section. I guess it depends on your definition of morning, but it’s still clearly dark out, and Jesus gets up and goes off to pray by Himself. We can glean some important lessons from this. One - -- Jesus started His day with a relationship with His Father before His day takes off and gets filled up. Even the very Son of God, full of the Holy Spirit, is sure to pray and maintain a close relationship with God. And He follows His own instructions that He will later give to the disciples about praying in private (compare Matthew 6:5).

Mark 1:38 – It appears Peter and others wake up and realize Jesus is gone, and everyone appears to start a frantic search for Him. Peter and

the others that find Him, and maybe I'm reading into it, but they appear exasperated by the search and perhaps fielding the concerns of everyone else too. All the people of Capernaum have been impacted by the healings and miracles of Jesus, but now Jesus is ready to take the Gospel message to other cities. Luke's account in Luke 4:42 shows that the people tried to keep Him from leaving their city (Capernaum). I think it's important that we not miss the exhausting nature of Christ's work. The day before He's preaching in the synagogue and all the energy and emotion that takes, and then He encounters the demon-possessed man in the synagogue, and then He leaves and goes to Peter's house where his mother-in-law is sick, then after the sun sets, the whole town comes out with their sick and demon-possessed --- and Christ works into the evening healing. THEN he gets up very early and tries to get a moment to Himself to pray, but people are quickly looking for Him and wanting from Him. Jesus gave His life in service to mankind --- and this is just one day in that life.

Mark 1:39 – While we don't get the details, Jesus continues from city to city in Galilee, synagogue to synagogue, to teach and do miracles that would be deeply impactful at each place.

Matthew 4:24-25 – As He moves from city to city and synagogue to synagogue, the knowledge and hearing about Jesus spreads more and more. "All of Syria" to the first-century ear would mean a wide, international region beyond Jewish territory. Jesus' reputation was spreading not only among the Jews --- but also the Greeks, Romans and Arameans are all coming to hear of Him. "All of Syria" functioned as a sort of "umbrella" term for the broader Northern world beyond Israel. All these areas that hear of Him, begin traveling and bringing to Him those that need healing. Matthew lists in a number of interesting sickness categories --- (it doesn't just say "the sick"). Matthew is inspired to record suffering in a number of ways that intentionally touch the realms of physical, spiritual, mental & emotional afflictions.

And He shows therefore that all of these afflictions have come under the authority and power of Jesus Christ (through His Father).

1. We have those who are possessed by “unclean” spirits (which we’ve already covered previously). We have another broad category of “those who have it badly” (in a literal sense in Greek). This applies to all those who are unwell, miserable, or in poor condition. It could include everything from chronic weakness to serious disease. A Jewish ear would hear “all those whose lives are physically distressed or broken”. This appears to be intentionally general to show that ALL who are suffering are included.
2. The next category of suffering is for various (diverse) illnesses. This can include fevers, skin conditions, infections, internal problems, some of which carried ritual impurity implications.
3. Next, we have a stronger category. This includes the idea of being gripped by something torturous --- something intense and agonizing.
4. Next was something that is literally translated as “moon-struck”. Culturally they believed that certain diseases were effected by the lunar cycle. This seems to be a seizure disorder like what we would call epilepsy and other similar conditions. In the first century this could refer to things that they considered rather mysterious and that they didn’t understand what was happening. For them, it sat in the middle space between something physical and something spiritual.
5. Lastly, Matthew lists a word that comes from a root “to loosen” or “to disable”. It referred to loss of bodily function and could include full or partial paralysis.

I wanted to go through each of above categories to show how God inspired Matthew to go out of His way to be very inclusive of the many people who were coming far and wide to Jesus at this time.

So many of you fall somewhere in this list. Some are bothered by nagging pains and aches, others have chronic ongoing conditions, others still go through awful, life-changing, debilitating suffering. Some impact us mentally, physically, emotionally, and even spiritually (and likely many of those at the same time). God the Father and our Brother Jesus Christ see you and know what you are facing. To be called now, and given the incredible opportunity to be a firstfruit, means going through many proving/refining events (see Acts 14:22 – “We must through many tribulations (pressures/oppressions/afflictions/distresses) enter the kingdom of God.”) This understanding doesn’t make any of that easy, but the comfort comes in knowing that God is right there with us in the fires of life (compare Daniel 3:25). Matthew clearly shows Christ’s power over any and every possible ailment (“And He healed them”).

Matthew 4:25 – The Decapolis means “ten cities” and it was a group of 10 Hellenistic (Greek) cities. These cities were founded or re-shaped by the conquests of Alexander the Great --- and later flourished under Roman rule. The culture of these ten cities is very different from the culture of Judea (Jerusalem) and Galilee. Alexander the Great not only was interested in military conquest, but in spreading the Greek way of life throughout the world. This spreading and adopting of Greek culture is known as “Hellenism”. When we talk about this idea, we are talking about cities, cultures, people who adopted Greek ideas (including philosophy and sometimes religion), and Greek focus on the body (through the establishment of gymnasiums). A lot of this focus and education involved nudity (either full or lightly clothed). “Gymnos” in Greek meaning “naked or nude”. The root idea wasn’t just no clothes, but being “exposed” and vulnerable. They also were very focused on competition and athletics, building sporting arenas and race tracks. They would build theaters for entertainment which would push their culture. They would also build temples to their many pagan gods and goddesses for worship. Through all of this they would push their

Greek ideas within education, sports, entertainment and religion --- and it largely transformed much of the world and still has had a huge impact down to today. The Roman empire largely adopted the Greek culture as their own. And that's why we often group the two together into what is known as the "Greco-Roman" culture.

To a Jewish audience, Decapolis signaled an area that largely was non-Jewish, had a Greek and pagan influenced culture, that was spreading throughout the world and having a huge impact.

The term "beyond the Jordan" dealt with the area east of the Jordan River, commonly called Perea in Roman times. This area was ruled by Herod Antipas and did not have large Greek cities like the Decapolis --- but instead had rural towns and settlements. This area still had a large Jewish influence.

All of this is meant to show the range of Christ's fame. His reputation crossed cultural and religious boundaries. Christ is having an impact even on Gentile areas --- even before the more formal Gentile mission phase of God's plan that we see Paul later focused on.

Day 767 – WEDNESDAY: May 6<sup>th</sup>

Luke 5:1 – 11, Mark 1:16 – 20, Matthew 4:18 – 22

Daily Deep Dive:

We'll cover Luke, then Mark and finally Matthew today.

Luke 5:1 – The Sea of Galilee (which is what Matthew and Mark's accounts call this body of water), was also known as the Lake of Gennesaret (meaning "harp" due to its shape). It's also called the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1). According to Thayer's, the lake is 12 miles by 7 miles (20 by 11 kilometers) and about 700 feet below sea level. So it's fed by rivers and streams (such as the Jordan River). It's a freshwater lake.

So many people are coming out and they are wanting to hear Him teach. There's obviously no speakers or electronic amplification, so people at that time knew of the locations where the natural world created natural amplification. Sound carries across water well, and so Jesus understood how to use the water and then be able to speak so the large group could hear Him.

Luke 5:2 – Fishing was a major industry, often organized into family businesses or partnerships. There were a number of fishing towns around this lake such as Capernaum, Bethsaida and Magdala. Archeology has allowed us to know what boats were like at this time. A fishing boat typically was approximately 27 feet long, by 8 feet wide, with a crew of about 4 or 5 men. They were wood plank boats, with oars as the primary propulsion (although they had a single square sail that could be used when wind allowed). These boats needed to be stable enough to haul fish, but light enough to beach along the shores. They were designed for night fishing when the fish would come closer to the surface of the water.

The Gospel accounts talk specifically about three types of nets used. One was a cast net, which was a net thrown by hand out over the water, which then would sink quickly due to weights. This was used in shallow water. A second was a dragnet. This was a large net that was stretched between boats or from shore, and was swept through the water, gathering everything in its path. The last type was a trammel net. This was a multi-layered net system, where fish would swim through the outer layer and get trapped in the inner mesh. This was an effective system, but required coordination.

Here Luke 5 provides us a typical cycle for these fishermen. It was easier to catch fish at night than during the day. The fish could not see the nets as well, the top water was cooler at night and the fish would come closer to the surface. Crews would work long night hours, with

minimal light, dropping or casting nets strategically. They had to know the lake and the fish behavior. It was heavy labor and it took multiple men pulling in unison to pull in their catch. They would take their haul to shore and immediately sort the good fish from the bad (this imagery is used in Christ's Matthew 13:47-50 parable). Nets had to be washed, dried and repaired daily, otherwise they would rot more quickly. To dry the nets, they would stretch them out on the shore line to dry in the sun. Fishing was hard, humble work. They were skilled laborers, who were dependent on unpredictable conditions, and might work all night for uncertain results.

So here in Luke 5:2, Jesus sees two of these boats, and the men are off from the boats washing their nets. He gets in one and asks Peter to launch the boat out a bit, so the sound of His teaching can bounce off the water --- as He sits in the boat and teaches the people.

Luke 5:4 – After teaching, Christ gives instructions to the professional fisherman Peter, to put out to sea to deeper water in the middle of daytime and to let out his nets to catch fish.

Luke 5:5 – Peter seems to verbalize the struggle that is likely going on in his mind. He's a professional fisherman, and drawing from not only his experience, but also the experience of all the other fishermen on this lake, he knows when, where and how to fish this lake. In addition, he's exhausted from the grueling work of being up all night, working hard and coming up with nothing. And he is likely thinking, "This isn't going to do anything, I'm just going to waste more energy and have to do more work before I can go home and try to get some sleep --- before doing this again tomorrow night". But he yields, and obeys the instructions of his Master.

Luke 5:6 – So God the Father, through Jesus, does an amazing miracle of having them catch an incredible haul of fish right in the middle of the

day in deep water --- so many, that the net is literally starting to break. They end up filling two boats worth of fish so full that these boats are about to sink from the weight. A reasonable guess as to the weight of this catch would be that to nearly sink one of these Galilean fishing boats would require approximately 3,000 to 6,000 pounds of fish (1.5 to 3 tons) ---considering crew, nets, gear, water coming over the sides, etc. If we estimate that a normal “good catch” commercial fishing night was something like 100 to 300 pounds of fish (50 to 200 marketable larger fish), I think it’s safe to say this is somewhere between 2 weeks to a month worth of having daily “good catches”. Even for this two-boat team, this is probably one to two weeks’ worth of “good catches”. It was an incredible haul!

God is in the details. I think we would have to assume, that God had specifically caused them to have a terrible night fishing to set up this tremendous teaching moment. There are no accidents with God. This is an important lesson for all of us to remember. God is not contained by what we think is humanly possible. He can do anything. He takes down giants. He causes walls of impenetrable cities to fall; He parts waters and then destroys powerful armies; He brings life out of barren wombs; He provides bread from heaven and water from a rock; He causes fire not to burn; He shuts the mouths of lions; and He raises the dead! And that’s not even mentioning what He is doing in each of our lives --- taking all of us who were bound in sin, and through Jesus Christ, freeing us and making us new. God can do anything He chooses!

Luke 5:8 – And in this moment Peter is brought to his very knees in worship and honor to his Lord --- as he considers how unworthy he is for such a blessing, and for Jesus to be allowing him (Peter) to be in a relationship with Him. Peter knows who he is inside. He’s a sinner. So how can Jesus be near him? This reminds me of the Faithfulness of our God (NLT of Psalm 34:18 – “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed”).

Luke 5:10 – Peter is in a fishing partnership with James and John, who were in the other boat helping get these fish to shore. Christ did not want Peter to be afraid. He wanted him to be in awe, to give his life over to following Him, and He wanted him to be about his new life work.

Luke 5:11 – The way this reads would indicate that they left the fish, their boats, their nets, and they began “following” Jesus. It seems up until now, while they had been part-time followers of John the Baptizer, and even part-time followers of Jesus, still working, but learning from Him when they could, this is the life-changing moment when they stop being “part-time” and become “all-in”!

Mark 1:17 – The phrase “Follow Me” is important to understand. In the 1<sup>st</sup>-century Jewish culture. The phrase “follow me” (Greek: *ἀκολουθεῖ μοι*) carried the meaning of a formal call to discipleship. In Jewish culture, becoming a disciple of a rabbi meant attaching your entire life to him. Learning how to live exactly like him. There was even a well-known phrase: “To be covered in the dust of your rabbi” --- meaning that you walked so closely behind him that his life shaped yours. Now, how this normally worked was that a young man who was already a standout from his peers in memorizing and understanding the Old Testament Bible would apply to rabbis and be evaluated. The most promising would be selected by a rabbi who would come and say “follow me” (Greek: *ἀκολουθεῖ μοι*). This was a call to live with the rabbi, learn from and imitate the rabbi in all aspects of their life. Jesus and God work differently. They are the Ones who initiate the call. They selected not the elite of this world, but those who appeared “ordinary”. Peter, Andrew, James and John would have understood this meaning exactly. This was a call to total allegiance, relocation, daily proximity, adoption of His teachings and a future role to carry forward those teachings. I need to be clear that here in Mark 1:17 that exact

Greek phrase “follow me” is not what’s recorded. However, it clearly and directly occurs in Matthew 8:22, 9:9, 19:21, Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27, 9:59, John 1:43, 21:19 & 21:22). The phrase is typically in the “present active imperative” form meaning not just “start following”, but “keep following Me and make this your ongoing active way of life.”

Peter and Andrew (verse 18) would immediately follow Him, and so would James and John (verse 19-20). The call of discipleship was not extended to Zebedee their father. There is no indication in scripture that Zebedee ever became a follower of Jesus, traveled with Him, or is counted among the broader followers. However, we do see his wife Salome appears among the women who followed and supported Jesus (see Mark 15:40 & Matthew 27:56). This seems to indicate that Zebedee’s household was a supporter of Jesus, even if Zebedee himself continued working and stayed behind.

Matthew’s account is very similar to Mark’s and I don’t see anything else for me to call out.

#### Day 768 – THURSDAY: May 7<sup>th</sup>

Luke 5:12–16, Mark 1:40–45 & Matthew 8:1–4

#### Daily Deep Dive:

Luke 5:12 – Matthew 8:1 tells us that Jesus came down from the mountain, that a great multitude is following Him. He now enters some unnamed city in Galilee and a man who is “full of leprosy” saw Jesus. I believe this is the first time we’ve come across someone who has leprosy, so I would like to cover this terrible disease.

I’m going to paste a rather long section here transcribed from Scott Ashley where he talks through this. He covers this section very well and helps us to understand what it would have been like to be a leper living at this time:

“What is leprosy? In the Bible, the word translated “leprosy” is a more general term than the one specific disease known as leprosy, as we

refer to it today. It could have been any kind of skin disease --- ranging from a rash, to something like cirrhosis or full-blown leprosy. And there are several different kinds of leprosy. And, this is evident when we read the instructions regarding leprosy in Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 --- which talk about a lot of these different kinds of diseases under the general heading or name of "leprosy". So, I'm not going to read those two chapters --- just want to hit a few verses here to see the biblical instructions regarding leprosy. So, this entire chapter is about that subject. But we'll just get some flavor and the instructions that are given to prevent the spread of an infectious skin disease. So, Leviticus 13 and verse one, ***The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "When anyone has a swelling or a rash, or a bright spot on his skin that may become an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest.*** So, let's notice here the context of what this instruction is regarding. It's regarding an infectious skin disease. So that's the overall subject matter here. So, this chapter is dealing with this type of disease that can spread if it is not placed in check here. It's interesting --- I did some research at the World Health Organization website. And to this day, scientists are not exactly sure how leprosy spreads. [...] --- whether it's through the air, through skin-to-skin contact, or through contact with contaminated clothing. They (scientists) to this day do not know for sure, but what is clear is that being in close contact with someone who has leprosy --- like a family member living in the same household --- greatly increases the likelihood of being infected with leprosy. So, what we see here in Leviticus is that God set in place quarantine procedures thousands of years before mankind discovered that bacteria causes leprosy. So continuing verse 3, ***The priest is to examine the sore on his skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious skin disease. When the priest examines him, he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean.*** Now we won't read all of this, but what we see from these few verses here is the priesthood served another important function in Israel --- and that

was essentially as a kind of national health service, where part of their job was at times to quarantine people to prevent the spread of diseases such as leprosy --- or other things. And if someone was diagnosed by the priest as having a communicable disease, there was a strict protocol to be followed. And we find that near the end of this chapter. So, skipping down to verses 45 and 46, we see how a leper was to be quarantined. ***“The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ As long as he has the infection, he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.*** So, several things to pick up on here. First. The person --- man, woman, child --- had to live outside the camp --- had to live physically separated from other people so they would not spread the disease. They also had to visually signify that they had the disease by wearing torn clothing (as it says here), unkempt hair, the person had to cover the lower part of his face, and when they came near any other person they had to shout out, “Unclean! Unclean!” if another person approached. So, this sounds quite harsh --- but there was a purpose for all of this. And that was to prevent the spread of disease in a time when the causes and cures of diseases wouldn't be known for another 3,000 years. And there were no cures. There were no medicines to take for situations like this. But it was brutal on the man, or the woman, or the child who was afflicted in this way. And this is what life was like for a leper in first-century Galilee or Judea.

So, what did leprosy do to the body? And this is a bit of a gory subject, but if we're to understand leprosy, we need to understand how it worked and what we're being told here in the Gospels. Leprosy is a hideous disease caused by a particular type of bacteria. There are three different kinds of leprosy (I won't go into that.) They differ, but they all have the same general effect. And that is that first nodules or bumps would form on the person's skin. And those nodules and bumps would develop into open oozing sores from the bacterial infection. The stench

would be pretty bad from these oozing sores. The person would have difficulty talking, because a lot of times the bacteria would cause the vocal cords to develop ulcers on them. So, it's hard for the person to talk. They would "have to talk like this. So it would be hard for them to communicate". [Mr. Ashley speaking very softly.] So that was a real problem. And the person's fingers and feet and toes and hands would also develop these open oozing sores. [NOTE: Mr. Ashley then showed his class actual photos of lepers from seventy to a hundred years ago. In one photo, he showed a man whose fingers were just nubs because of the bacteria attacking the nerves in his extremities (hands, feet, toes).] And the person loses feeling in those extremities --- so they can burn their fingers on say a cooking pot and not even know that they were burned. They could literally stick their hand in a fire or walk on hot coals and not feel it --- because the nerves are dead by the bacteria. So eventually the fingers and toes kind of rot and fall off. And also, another aspect of this is the tendons in the hands and fingers would contract --- so that the hands become more like claws than useful fingers. So just a horrifying disease. And as a result of that, as far as other people were concerned lepers were viewed as essentially "the living dead". And this led to a common view that people with leprosy were being cursed by God --- that they had done something so evil that God had cursed them with leprosy as punishment for their sins. And many diseases at that time were viewed as trials --- as we understand today, as trials by which a person could and should grow closer to God through --- but not leprosy. Leprosy was an exception. Leprosy was viewed as a curse because you were an enemy of God. And it was so bad, that in the time of Christ it's recorded that some rabbis carried rocks in the pockets of their robes to throw at lepers. Any leper who would get close --- they would throw rocks at them --- the rabbis would --- to drive the person away. Some of the other rules that they had in place at the time were no one was allowed to come within 6 feet of a leper lest they become contaminated. If the wind was blowing from the direction of a leper toward you, you had to stay at least 150-feet (or a

hundred cubits) away from the leper. Now those were not God's rules -- - those were man-made rules, added on to what God said regarding disease. And lepers were so detested and so despised by others that it wasn't long before a leper would naturally come to despise and detest himself or herself. So, they weren't just physically tormented by this awful disease --- they were mentally tormented as well --- being again the living dead. Many lepers likely would have killed themselves --- but that would have been violating God's commandment against murder --- so they couldn't find escape even in killing themselves. So, put yourself in the sandals of the leper in the first century. You have to wear torn clothes. Your hair is unkempt. You have to cover your mouth with a rag, or something like that. And you have to shout out, "Unclean! Unclean!" whenever another person comes near you. And you have to live away from other normal human beings. You can only live around other lepers, and your skin is covered with these open, foul smelling sores. And on top of that, no one can ever touch you. If you're a parent, your children can never touch you. If you're a husband or wife, your spouse can never touch you --- your friends, your relatives, your parents if you're a child, or your brothers, your sisters. No one can ever touch you. No one can give you a hug. No one can ever shake your hand. No one can ever pat you on the back. No one can kiss you. No one can give you any sign of physical affection. You are literally an untouchable person. And you know that no one will ever touch you --- ever for the rest of your life --- until they bury you in the ground. And that is what being a leper was like in the first century. And because you are cut off from contact with other human beings, that also meant you can never go to the Tabernacle (or to the temple in the first century) to offer atonement for your sins. So, what did that mean? If you couldn't go to the temple to offer an offering to atone for your sins, that means you are not only cut off from every other human being, you are also still cut off from God --- because you have no way of atoning for your sins by offering a sacrifice for that atonement. So again, you are basically one of the living dead. You have no contact with other human beings.

You're cut off from them. But you are also cut off from God. And you will be this way until the day you die. You are abandoned. You are anonymous. No one cares. No one can touch you. No one can do anything for you. And you have absolutely no hope --- because that is the way you will be until they lay you in the ground. And that is the situation of the man that we read about here who comes to Jesus.”  
[END QUOTE FROM SCOTT ASHLEY]

Not to belabor the point, but because leprosy is such a specific focal point within the Gospels, I also want to include John Gill’s commentary on this: “The symptoms of the ancient "lepra", as laid down by Galen, Aretaeus, Pontanus, Aegineta, Cardan, Varanda, Gordon, Pharaeus, and others, are as follow. The patient's voice is hoarse, and comes rather through the nose than the mouth; the blood full of little white shining bodies, like groins of millet, which upon filtration, separate themselves from it; the serum is scabious, and destitute of its natural humidity, insomuch that salt applied to it, does not dissolve; it is so dry, that vinegar poured on it boils; and is so strongly bound together by little imperceptible threads, that calcined lead thrown into it swims. The face resembles a coal half extinct, unctuous, shining, and bloated, with frequent hard knobs, green at bottom, and white at top. The hair is short, stiff, and brinded; and not to be torn off, without bringing away, some of the rotten flesh, to which it adheres; if it grows again, either on the head or chin, it is always white: athwart the forehead, run large wrinkles or furrows, from one temple to the other; the eyes red and inflamed, and shine like those of a cat; the ears swollen and red, eaten with ulcers towards the bottom, and encompassed with little glands; the nose sunk, because of the rotting of the cartilage; the tongue dry and black, swollen, ulcerated, divided with furrows, and spotted with grains of white; the skin covered with ulcers, that die and revive on each other, or with white spots, or scales like a fish; it is rough and insensible, and when cut, instead of blood, yields a sanious liquor: it arrives in time to such a degree of insensibility, that the wrist, feet, or

even the large tendon, may be pierced with a needle, without the patient's feeling any pain; at last the nose, fingers, toes, and even privy members, fall off entire; and by a death peculiar to each of them, anticipate that of the patient: it is added, that the body is so hot, that a fresh apple held in the hand an hour, will be dried and wrinkled, as if exposed to the sun for a week. Think now what a miserable deplorable object this man was, said to be full of it. Between this disease and sin, there is a very great likeness. This disease is a very filthy one, and of a defiling nature, by the ceremonial law; under which it was considered rather as an uncleanness, than as a disease; the person attended with it was pronounced unclean by the priest, and was put out of the camp, and out of the cities and walled towns, that he might not defile others; and was obliged to put a covering on his upper lip, and cry "Unclean, Unclean" to acknowledge his pollution, and that others might shun him: all mankind, by reason of sin, are by the Lord pronounced filthy; and by their evil actions, not only defile themselves, but others; evil communications corrupt good manners; and when they are made sensible, freely own that their righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and they themselves as an unclean thing: it is a very nauseous and loathsome disease, as is sin; it is abominable to God, and renders men abominable in his sight; it causes the sinner himself, when convinced of it, to loath and abhor himself: David calls his sin a loathsome disease (Psalm 38:7) it is of a spreading nature: this was a sign of it, if it did not spread, it was only a scab; if it spread, it was a leprosy (Leviticus 13:5). Sin has spread itself over all mankind, and over all the powers and faculties of the soul, and members of the body; there is no place free of it: and as the leprosy is of consuming nature, it eats and wastes the flesh, see Numbers 12:10 & 2 Kings 5:10 so sin eats like a canker, and brings ruin and destruction upon men, both soul and body. This disease was incurable by medicine; persons that had it were never sent to a physician, but to a priest; and what he did was only this, he looked upon it, and if it was a clear case, he declared the person unclean; and if it was doubtful, shut him up for seven days, and then inspected him

again; and after all he could not cure him; this was the work of God (2Kings 5:7). All which shows the nature and use of the law, which shuts men up, concludes them under sin, and by which they have knowledge of it, but no healing: the law heals none, it is the killing letter, the ministration of condemnation and death; Christ only, by his blood and stripes, heals the disease of sin, and cleanses from it." [END QUOTE FROM JOHN GILL'S COMMENTARY]

Luke 5:12 continued - This man in this condition, and with all this background to what his life has likely been like that we just read through above, sees Jesus in his city and goes and falls down before Him (Matthew 8:2 tells us the man worshiped Him, so he seems to be bowing down before Christ here) and begs Him saying "if you are willing, You can make me clean". It's interesting to me that he didn't just beg to be healed, but understood that Jesus had to be willing. This seems to be a statement that is rather profound. To not only have the complete faith in Jesus that He CAN heal, but also that it must be according to His WILL (and of course the will of the Father).

Luke 5:13 – And in a very dramatic act of love, compassion and power, Jesus reaches out and touches the man. Let's look at this from three angles.

- One, if you are the leper, this is incredible. No one touches you. Not your family, your spouse if you have one, no one. And Jesus, the Messiah, reaches out and touches you!!! I honestly can't imagine what that would have felt like to this man. Incredible!
- Then, we have everyone watching. They know you don't touch a leper! You can get leprosy! They are also thinking, "Oh no, now Jesus is unclean!". Everyone knew you don't do this. But Jesus just did!

- This brings us to the third angle that we must understand. Jesus, like God the Father, can't be unclean. Uncleaness never passes to Them. Just like Sin can't spread and infect Them.

Then as quickly as all of these thoughts are going through everyone's minds, they see something unbelievable. He is immediately cured and whole. Obviously, this is life changing for the man, but also imagine the impact on everyone watching and witnessing this!

Luke 5:14 – It's important to remember why the Pharisees have become the local religious leaders of a town. They are not the priests. Where are the priests? At the temple in Jerusalem. So, this man now has a long journey ahead of him (something like 80 to 90 miles, if you could travel straight there, but more like 100 to 120 miles or so as the roads go). Why if Jesus already healed the man, does He command the leper to go to a priest in Jerusalem? God's Law must be followed! If you go back and read Leviticus 14, we see even if someone is healed of leprosy, that person must go to a priest and be examined and then submit the offering required under this cleansing. All of this pointed to Jesus Christ.

I covered this back in week 23 of our reading program, but to make it easy to review, I will copy a section of that weeks' reading:  
"Leviticus 14:4 – Here we see the instructions and symbols of this cleansing sacrifice that was done after the priest determined someone to be clean. First, we see two birds. We are not told whether these are also turtledoves/young pigeons, as seen used in the various offerings earlier in Leviticus, or not. What we know for sure, is these would have been "clean" birds as it would be unacceptable to offer an unclean bird before God. It seems clear again that through these clean birds, we have a type pointing to our Savior Jesus Christ. One bird dead, whose blood brings about cleansing, and one bird alive, dipped in the cleansing blood (compare Revelation 19:13, 7:14 & 1:5). To have

eternal life, we needed both the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit to be given to us. His death brought about justification and reconciliation and we were saved by His life (see Romans 5:9-10).

One who had leprosy was considered “like one dead”. Each of us as sinners, without Jesus Christ, were also “like one dead”. Through His perfect sacrifice and His resurrection, we went from being “like one dead” to one alive and clean.

Regarding the cedar, scarlet, and hyssop, John Gill’s commentary includes: “a stick of cedar, as Jarchi; it was proper it should be of such a size, as to be known to be cedar wood, but was not to be too heavy for the priest to sprinkle with it, as Ben Gersom; and the same writer observes, it ought to have a leaf on the top of it, that it might appear to be cedar: according to the Misnah, it was to be a cubit long, and the fourth part of a bed's foot thick: "scarlet" was either wool dyed of that colour, or crimson, so Jarchi; or a scarlet thread or line with which the hyssop was bound and fastened to the cedar wood; and, according to the above tradition, the "hyssop" was to be neither counterfeit nor wild, nor Greek, nor Roman, nor any that had any epithet to it, but common simple hyssop; and, as Gersom says, there was not to be less than an handful of it. The signification of these is variously conjectured” [END]

It's interesting to me, that we have one of the birds (which collectively seem to represent the slain and resurrected Jesus Christ) “fastened” to this small 18-inch long piece of wood (and about 3 inches wide). Is this meant to signify the crucified Jesus Christ which makes our healing possible?

**1Pe 2:24** who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. (Quoting from Isaiah 53:5).

One of the words used here in verse 4 translated as “scarlet” (which is the most common translation of that word) is translated as “worm” in Psalm 22:6. In this prophetic Psalm of Jesus Christ it states:

But I *am* a worm (this is the same word translated as “scarlet”), and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people.

Here you have this bird fastened by a scarlet thread to this piece of wood.

Lastly, why might hyssop be required? According to the BDB dictionary, hyssop was a plant used for medicinal purposes. Barnes notes states: “whose cleansing virtues as a medicine, and use in the treatment of ulcers and diseases of the skin allied to leprosy, were known to the ancients.”

Leviticus 14:5 – In this verse the NKJV translates “running water”. The literal translation of “running” is “living or alive (BDB)”. This brought to mind John 4:10: "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

A symbol of God’s Holy Spirit, again made possible and available to us only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Leviticus 14:8 – John Gill’s commentary states: “Gersom observes, in a quantity of water sufficient to cover the whole body”. The Greek word for baptism means to “submerge or immerse”. We continue to see these types and we understand their profound meaning for us as Christians.

After being outside the camp due to uncleanness, imagine the joy and emotions of being allowed to return within the gates. Still, great care was taken for the next 7 days to ensure the individual did not become unclean in any way that would prevent him from being restored as “clean”.

Verses 10-19: Now clean, on the eighth day, the individual brought the necessary animals, grain, and oil for a trespass offering, a sin offering, a burnt offering, and a grain offering. The Burnt offering and grain offering were sacrificed on the bronze altar (verse 20) as we've covered in the early chapters of Leviticus." [END OF SECTION FROM WEEK 23 OF OUR READING PROGRAM]

So now back in Luke 5:14, we see Christ tell this man to follow the laws that Moses gave them, but also that it should be a "testimony" to them. The healing of this man before the priests should have been undeniable evidence of Jesus Christ' healing power through God the Father, but the fact that Jesus gave the man a command to go follow the commands of Moses should also have served as evidence/testimony that Jesus submitted under God's Law and instructed others to do so.

Luke 5:15 – Even though he was told not to tell anyone what Jesus had done, the man doesn't listen and spreads the matter (compare Mark 1:45) and the fame of Jesus Christ spread more and more, and the multitude grew more and more. As this man travels to Jerusalem to the priest and back, he would pass a lot of people in his travels.

Luke 5:16 – This verse seems to want us to see the exhausting nature of Jesus' work. We've mentioned that before, but trailing a verse about how great the multitude is becoming and how so many are coming to Him for healing, it shares with us this moment of insight that because of all of this, He often withdrew to a place where He could be alone and pray. Please note that while "often" is not in the Greek, the verb's present imperfect tense indicates an ongoing repeated action in the Greek that occurred in the past. There is no explicit Greek word for "often", so that is taken by the tense of the word. This is meant to show us that Jesus would regularly withdraw to the desolate places and pray. The Greek here just means a "place where no one lives". So, it's

not meant to mean He's out in the desert, but somewhere where there isn't anyone. This could include the woods, vineyards, fields, etc.

Mark 1:41 – Mark's account adds that Jesus was moved with compassion. This is a great insight into our Savior. He created us as The Word (John 1:3). And I can only imagine, to look at one of His precious ones and see him literally falling apart from disease, and knowing all that came along with that from society, must have been incredibly moving to Him. He put His compassion into action through both touching and healing this man.

Mark 1:45 – The fame of Jesus grew here so much that He couldn't get a moment's peace in the city if He would just openly come in, but instead He had to withdraw. And still they came to Him from everywhere.

Day 769 – FRIDAY: May 8<sup>th</sup>

Luke 5:17-26, Mark 2:1–12 & Matthew 9:1-8

Daily Deep Dive:

We will again read Luke, then Mark & last Matthew.

Luke 5:17 – Luke's account doesn't tell us where He was. Matthew 9:1 tells us that He got in a boat and crossed over to "His own city", and Mark 2:1 tells us that this city was "Capernaum" and that He was in "THE house". This is no doubt the house of Peter that we've already seen Him stay at in Capernaum. Peter's house here seems to operate as a home base for Jesus and as I shared before, archeological evidence points through expansions, etc., that this home seems to be used in a greater-and-greater capacity for the Church through time.

Luke's account tells us that while Jesus is teaching here from this house, that from all over Galilee and Judea (including Jerusalem) have come from these towns local religious leaders (Pharisees) and also the Greek nomodidaskalos (νομοδιδάσκαλος). This is a compound word of

“teacher” or “instructor” and “law”. So, it means “teacher of the law”. However, this carried more weight than someone who simply knew the law, but a trained expert of the Torah, someone who could interpret, explain and apply the Law. This was a recognized authority in legal-religious matters. There is overlap between these “teachers of the law” and “scribes” (a different Greek word). Typically, when “teachers of the law” is used in Greek it’s meant to emphasize their role in teaching, expounding and instructing others, --- while when “scribe” is used, it tends to emphasize their role in being experts of the “written text” (copy and study of the Law). Again, these religious leaders are coming from all over --- some are from 60 to 80 miles south (and even further as the roads turn).

Through the Holy Spirit residing in Jesus, the power of the Lord always made healing possible, but here it’s evident that in this moment, it was being put into action for the work of healing as many people pressed in and tried to get access to Jesus. This last line of verse 17 is directing our attention.

God is setting the stage for a great climatic moment of this story. Is Jesus just an amazing healing agent for God, or is something much more important available through Him?

Luke 5:18 – A group of guys show up with a man who is paralyzed and they can’t get him before Jesus.

Luke 5:19 – The houses of the Jews had flat roofs. Their roofs were used for a number of purposes (rest, prayer, drying food), so they had ways to get up on their roofs (stairs/ladders). Roofs were formed during this time and location by first laying large wooden beams that spanned the walls of the house. Next, smaller branches or reeds were laid across the beams to form a type of lattice. Next, an earth, mud, clay mixture was thickly layered on top and compacted hard (often

mixed with straw for strength). Finally, a plaster or clay sealant was used to help it shed water.

Here they remove some of this roof and lower the paralyzed man down to Jesus in a great interruptive moment, which brings all attention to how Jesus will respond. Jesus isn't upset --- it's not His roof (ha-ha) but Peter is livid (just kidding). Jesus see's their faith --- not just of the man, but also of those carrying him. They believe and trust that if they can just get him to Jesus, Jesus will heal him. And they put that faith into action for the man. Nothing was going to stop them. It's a profound lesson of real faith.

Luke 5:20 -- But then the story does something surprising. Instead of Jesus seeing their faith and immediately healing the man, He uses this as an opportunity to teach and reveal something amazing.

He says, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." (Mark & Matthew says "son" instead). He does this out loud in front of this packed crowd and religious leaders! These religious leaders/experts took God's law seriously, and so it makes sense that this would be a moment that would cause them to be alarmed. And if anyone else but Jesus would have said this, it would be blasphemous (meaning speech or behavior that shows dishonor, slander or contempt toward God).

One of the interesting points is that Jesus doesn't say "I forgive" or even that "God forgives", simply that his sins are forgiven. This is the passive form in the Greek, and its construction is similar to a number of Old Testament passages where it simply says "and it shall be forgiven him." --- for example, Leviticus 4:26 and many others in Leviticus. What's the point of this construction? In all of the similar passive uses in the Old Testament, who is the one, even without being named, who clearly forgives those sins? God!

Luke 5:21-22 -- That's why the religious leaders here ask themselves: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Well, that's true! So, one of two

things have to be true here. Either Jesus is God and therefore can forgive sins; or Jesus is not God and just committed blasphemy! They had already determined it was blasphemy. Jesus fully understood what they were thinking and warring with. He asks them, "**Why are you reasoning in your hearts?**"

Luke 5:23 - Jesus then asks a really interesting question: **Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'?** What Jesus is really asking is, "Which is easier to claim to have the power and authority to do without others challenging your claim? For someone to say, "Your sins are forgiven" is invisible and unverifiable. There is no immediate way to prove or disprove it. In fact, anyone could actually say it, so in that way it's super easy. To say "Rise up and walk", it's visible and testable, and people will expect immediate evidence to confirm your authority over such matters. You're exposed if nothing happens. So, from a human standpoint, saying "Your sins are forgiven you." is far easier.

Luke 5:24 – To prove His claim that He has the authority and power on earth to forgive sins, Jesus says to the paralyzed man: "**I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.**" So, the clear thought process is:

- You doubt My authority to forgive sins which is invisible.
- I'll now perform a visible miracle which proves I have the power and authority from God to do that.
- Therefore, this visible proof should validate my claim about the invisible.

Jesus forces a moment here where their denial of His claim to be able to forgive sins now would be irrational and illogical. Therefore, faith should be the only rational response.

Luke 5:25 – After the man is immediately healed, he leaves and does a very reasonable thing. He glorifies God (praises, extols & celebrates).

Luke 5:26 – They say, “We have seen strange things today!” (NKJV). The Greek that is translated here “strange things” is where we get our English word “paradox” (Greek paradoxos – παράδοξος). It literally means in the Greek “*contrary to expectation*” or “*beyond what is commonly believed*”. What they just witnessed blew everyone’s minds and challenged them to look at Jesus in a new way. He can forgive sins! No one expected that. This caused them to praise God, but also brought about a combination of fear and wonderment. Mark’s account says in Mark 2:12 that they said “We never saw anything like this!”

Matthew 9:2 – Matthew’s account adds “**Son, be of good cheer;**” before immediately sayings “**your sins are forgiven you.**” This phrase “be of good cheer” in Greek meant “take courage” or “be comforted”. Some wonder, based on this, whether the man had done something sinful that brought about his paralysis. Scripture does not say that he had sinned. It’s possible that Jesus simply took this opportunity to comfort the man who has just come through the ceiling. He might be nervous and afraid at this moment. He might struggle --- as most do --- with wondering about his worthiness to be healed by Christ. We know that in that culture there was widespread belief that serious suffering was tied to sin (compare John 9:2). So it’s very possible that the crowd would assume that his condition is due to sin. Maybe the man himself believed that must be the case. Why does Jesus forgive his sins first? First, as we have already seen, Jesus is clearly wanting to show that He has power not only to heal but to forgive sin. I think Jesus is also taking this moment to show that spiritual restoration is GREATER than physical restoration --- and that first and foremost --- that is what we should all be focused on. No matter what it was, Jesus’ gracious and kind words would have brought tremendous comfort to this man in that moment.

Day 770 – SATURDAY: May 9<sup>th</sup>

Luke 5:27-32, Mark 2:13-17 & Matthew 9:9-13

Daily Deep Dive:

I've talked some about tax-collectors, and thought Scott Ashley did a great job describing the tax collecting system that the Roman government used, so I'm going to post the following section from Mr. Ashley:

“But what was it about tax collectors in that day that made them so despised and looked down on? Well probably first and foremost --- they were viewed as thieves --- and with good reason --- because many tax collectors were thieves. And to understand why I say that, we need to understand how the tax system worked in this part of the Roman Empire in that period. And the way the Romans did it, through the local governing entities like Herod Antipas and Herod Philip, and others --- is the Romans would basically say something like, “I want you to collect a million dollars out of the region of Galilee here for this given year.” And they actually bid out the tax collecting. They did not have a permanent tax collecting system like the IRS --- like we did with enforcement agencies. They just bid it out. And the way it worked is people then would bid on it --- say somebody bids a hundred thousand dollars on the concession for collecting that million dollars' worth of taxes. So, the individual would work into that price, his profit, whatever assistance he needed --- a couple of strong-arm guys whose specialty was breaking kneecaps, and things like that --- and would come up with a bid and submit it to the local authorities. And they would select the highest bid to collect that money. So, the person who wins the bid has to collect that million dollars --- plus enough to cover his expenses, and his associates, and that kind of thing. And typically, there would be a number of others helping him in this. But the benefit for them was whatever they could collect over and above that was gravy. So, there was a built-in incentive there to charge more than they had to turn into the government --- and to pocket the rest. So this encouraged a lot of overcharging there. So therefore, a lot of the tax collectors were

viewed as thieves --- and a lot of them were by overcharging and collecting the taxes. So, it's no wonder that people detested and despised tax collectors. To give us some examples of what some of the taxes were --- and again, they did not have a system today where's a set amount to be taxed on every single business transaction, and property item, and so on. It was kind of whatever the market would bear. So, some that we do know about, first of all, people had to pay a tax of 10 to 20% of whatever crops they grew (10 to 20% on crops). They had to pay a 1% income tax. Now I know what some of you are thinking about now --- those are cheap. They're a lot cheaper than what we pay. Well, that's true. They also had to pay import and export taxes of two-and-a-half to twelve-and-a-half percent. People were taxed to travel on main roads like the Via Maris. They would pay taxes to cross bridges or to cross borders from one region to another, or province to another. They would pay taxes to enter towns and harbors like Capernaum (where there's a town and a harbor). So people would pay taxes both entering by land or by sea. In some areas they would pay taxes to enter a marketplace, again, like Capernaum. There were taxes on pack animals carrying burdens --- like donkeys or camels. There were taxes on the number of wheels and axles on carts, a four-wheel/two-axle cart would be charged a lot more in taxes than a two-wheel/one-axle cart. There were sales taxes on what is bought and sold. So, they pretty much taxed anything and everything --- much like today. And Matthew, being at a harbor town there --- with a major road running nearby --- and with marketplace and the harbor and all of this. He could collect taxes on the traffic on the road, on people entering the town whether by sea or by land. He could collect taxes on the crops --- could collect taxes on the fish caught there. So, he was in a very lucrative position as a tax collector --- much more so than most tax collectors. So, tax collectors were also hated for their association with the rich --- because some tax collectors would work out a private arrangement with the wealthy who wanted to avoid paying taxes --- so they would work out side deals between the wealthy and the tax collectors --- that worked to the

benefit of both of them --- while they're both essentially stealing from the government. And finally, and perhaps most important of all when it comes to Matthew, is tax collectors were viewed as collaborators with the Romans. And the average Jew viewed the Roman Empire as a satanic system that oppressed and abused. So, tax collectors were viewed as siding with these pagan Gentile Romans over their own Jewish people. And many tax collectors did get rich by oppressing their own countrymen --- and turning the people's hard-earned money over to the Romans. And also, tax collectors were especially hated by the Zealots who would murder tax collectors if the opportunity arose to do so. So, with that background, we then come to the story of Matthew.

And this is a description of Matthew. He is a hopeless case in the eyes of most of the people there in Capernaum. In the views of most rabbis, tax collectors were banned from the synagogues. They weren't even allowed to enter the local synagogue. They were viewed as unclean --- like an unclean animal, or like a dead person even. And thus, they were not to be touched in any way. They were viewed ..... as a criminal class like robbers and murderers --- and having no moral values --- like prostitutes. So, in Matthew, we have someone who is in a very bad place. He's an outcast. He is someone who is ostracized and cut off from normal society --- someone whom other people had rejected and considered to be cut off from God forever. Some rabbis actually talked that there was hope for --- there might be hope that God could forgive a normal tax collector --- but a port tax collector (that was a special category, those who collected taxes at ports like Capernaum) --- many of them thought there was no way a port tax collector could ever be forgiven --- and was thus cut off from God forever. So, this is the background of the story of the calling of Matthew Levi.” [END QUOTE FROM SCOTT ASHLEY]

Mark 2:13 – Jesus again teaches down at the Sea of Galilee near Peter’s home --- likely for more room for the multitude and better sound.

Luke 5:27 – In week 108 in the introduction to Matthew, we talked about Levi being Matthew’s Hebrew name and Matthew was his Greco-Roman name. He’s also called the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). Here Matthew is called by Jesus to become a disciple. Matthew, as a tax-collector, would have been aware of everything going on in this area so he could tax it. He would be very aware of all the miracles Christ had been doing.

Luke 5:28 – It’s pretty remarkable, considering the wealth involved, that Matthew would “leave all” (including his job and its profits). Matthew doesn’t include this in his account because it would have seemed like boasting to do so.

Luke 5:29 – Matthew throws a great Feast in honor of Jesus at his house. Who would come to a great Feast at a tax-collector’s house who is despised by Jewish society? Well, other tax-collectors and others who are similarly outsiders. Mark 2:15 says it more plainly “tax-collectors and SINNERS”. Matthew’s own account only calls it “the house” (Matthew 9:10), likely due to his humility of not wanting to call attention to the fact it was his house or that he himself threw a feast for Jesus.

Luke 5:30 – Since Luke was writing this account to a non-Jewish audience (Gentiles), he says “their scribes” --- meaning Jewish scribes. They want to know why if He (Jesus) is a righteous man, that He would spend time with despicable people.

Luke 5:31 – This probably doesn’t need to be explained, but here Jesus is clearly paralleling physical sickness and the need for a doctor, to spiritual sickness and the need for someone who can help them become well.

Luke 5:32 – If someone was perfectly righteous, never sinned, they wouldn't need repentance. Of course, no one beside Jesus Himself has ever fallen into that category (compare Romans 3:23).

However, many of the religious leaders THOUGHT they were righteous. The reality was that all of them needed the Physician! Some of them just didn't know it. And the ones that did, Christ was willing to work with.

Matthew 9:13 – Matthew's account includes that Jesus told the religious leaders **“But go and learn what *this* means: 'I DESIRE MERCY AND NOT SACRIFICE.'”**

Regarding the phrase “go and learn”, Adam Clarke's commentary states: “a form of speech in frequent use among the rabbins, when they referred to any fact or example in the Sacred Writings. Nothing tends more to humble pretenders to devotion than to show them that they understand neither Scripture nor religion, when, relying on external performances, they neglect love to God and man, which is the very soul and substance of true religion. True holiness has ever consisted in faith working by love.” [END QUOTE]

The rest is a quote from Hosea 6:6. The greater context of the verses preceding this quote show how Israel claimed to love God, but they didn't really. Similar to how the Pharisees claimed to love God, but they were more concerned with appearing righteous than truly becoming the people like God. Much of their religion was a façade.

God desires an act of extending mercy to someone who needs it over any act of religious worship. Both are good of course, but seizing an opportunity to extend true mercy is better because it makes us like God.