

03/04/12

Comfortable in Your Own Skin

- Most of us have watched with horror the events unfolding in the country of Syria...
 - **[pic #1 – “Free our Syria”]**
- regardless of what you think of all the political issues involved in the so-called Arab Spring...the humanitarian crisis is undeniable...
 - **[pic #2 – 3 tanks – “Syrian forces recently...”]**
- whenever a government trains its guns on its own people, something is seriously wrong...
 - several activist groups are saying that the death toll for the last 11 months has now surpassed 8,000 people...
 - imagine if 8000 citizens of Lafayette were killed by the governor who had called out the Indiana National Guard...
 - **[pic #3 – rubble with workers, crane – “Syrian rescue teams...”]**
 - **[pic #4 – bombed out pipeline...]**
 - this is what happens when you bomb an oil pipeline...
 - by the way, did you know we have a high pressure petroleum pipeline on our eastern boundary?...what would it be like to see that on the way out of the church house this am?
- what saddest is the innocent people caught in the crossfire...
 - **[pic #5- “civilians flee...”]**
- here’s people being hustled into a van hoping not to get caught in the crossfire...
 - that didn’t happen in a movie or back during WW II...that happened within the last couple of weeks...
 - **[pic #6...residents attend a burial service...]**
 - I’m sparing us the most graphic pictures...but the brutality of these events is beyond sobering...
 - here’s a couple of brief excerpts from recent media reports...
- **The diplomatic pressure on Syria comes as the humanitarian and security situation on the ground is collapsing. The Local Coordination Committees said 64 of the 144 reported dead on Monday were fleeing shelling in the Baba Amr neighborhood of Homs when security forces stopped them at a checkpoint in the city's Abil area and killed them.**
- **The activist, Abu Mohammed Ibrahim, said the group left the neighborhood Sunday evening and were stopped at a checkpoint, where security forces loaded them onto four busses. A while later, the buses stopped and the soldiers started killing passengers. Locals found the bodies dumped in two places outside of town on Monday, the activist said.**
- **A second activist group, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said 68 bodies were brought to the hospital in Homs and that they were found between the villages of Ram al-Anz and al-Ajriyeh.**
- think for a moment about the impact of all of this...on children...
 - **[pic #7 – “a girl waves...]**
- that’s somebody’s daughter...
 - **[pic #8 – “A Syrian boy...]**

- you wonder what must be going on in their young minds?...
- and you can't help but think – something needs to be done...no question about that...
- **Representatives of more than 60 countries met in Tunisia last week to forge a unified strategy to push Assad from power and began planning a civilian peacekeeping mission to deploy after the regime falls. On Monday, the European Union imposed new sanctions.**

- so what's the problem?...
 - read entire caption...[pic #9 – Speaking outside...]
- and maybe military intervention isn't the answer – I'm certainly not suggesting that the Bible provides an absolute framework to answer every geo-political question in black and white terms...
- but caring deeply about those in need is one of the hallmarks of a person who is truly strong...

- with that in mind, please open your Bible to Luke 4 [page 47 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...]

- our theme this year is... **Building Core Strength**...how do we become the kind of individuals and the kind of church where we're learning to make the main things the main things?...to be sure that we have the fundamentals in place?...
 - and as the stretching process of greater ministry opportunities all around us reveal weaknesses in the core – how do we shore all of that up so we're not a mile wide and an inch deep?
- this morning we're going to read about what Luke emphasizes about Jesus' public ministry...
 - as we compare this with the other gospels, we learn that there's approximately a year that Luke doesn't take the time to include...
 - remember, the gospels aren't intended to be a comprehensive play-by-play report of everything Jesus said or done...
 - in fact, John even ended his story with words like these:
 - **John 20:30-31 - Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.**
 - **John 21:25 - And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.**
- that's why studying the life of Christ in the book I recommended last week – A Harmony of the Gospels (many different versions on the market) is so valuable and important...
- for our purposes this morning, we're going to pick the story up right after Luke's retelling of the temptation of Christ...let's start reading at Luke 4:14...
 - **read 4:14...**
- let's stop there for a moment – you can tell that Luke is assuming that Theophilus was either aware of what had happened in the intervening period of time or that he didn't consider that crucial to the emphasis he was making...
- but just so we have this straight – the events recorded in John chapters 1-4 fit into this time period...
 - that's why Luke says that Jesus returned to Galilee...

- and also that by now, news about him had spread through the entire surrounding district...
- we're not going to do it this morning – but if we went back and look at John 1-4, we'd see that this is where Christ had especially been emphasizing two principles...

1. the necessity of a new birth...

- if you know your Bible, you know that Jesus met with a man named Nicodemus in John 3...this was the Pharisee, the religious leader who came to see Jesus by night...
- and this is where Jesus said... **John 3:3 - Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."**
- that emphasis had to be made then, just like it has to be made today – for people who believe their birthright secures them a place in heaven, along with their good works...
- this is the same passage where we get one of the best known verses in all of Scripture... **John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**
- that emphasis was made early in Jesus' ministry – before what we're reading about here in Luke – to emphasize that a decision has to be made at a point in time...by people who are humble enough to recognize their need...and then place their faith, their belief in the Person and work of Christ...

2. the second emphasis in this early portion of the ministry of Christ according to John was the insistence that the gospel was for everyone...

- because John 4 is the famous story of Jesus' meeting with the woman at the well...
 - here's an immoral Samaritan woman...and the text even said that Jesus had to go through that area – because a point needed to be made...
 - and the short version was – just like with the emphasis to Nehemiah – the gospel would only be accepted by those who realized they needed it...and secondly, that a person from any background or ethnic group could repent and believe...
 - if the woman at the well could become a follower of Christ...anyone could...

- so now, after about a year of that kind of ministry, emphasizing those kinds of truths...Jesus comes home...

- and here's what we're going to see – these next events show that Jesus had a very settled, clear picture of who He was and what His ministry involved...
- there's a kind of quiet strength here about the way He served the heavenly Father...
- for people like you and me, we might say its **Building Core Strength by Being Comfortable in Your Own Skin**
 - having some settled convictions about who you are and why you're here...

- let's see if we can pick up on these themes as we read...

- read **Luke 4:14-5:15**

- so we're talking about Building Core Strength by Being Comfortable in Your Own Skin...and with the time we have remaining let's think about **3 characteristics of a person comfortable in the life and ministry Christ has given.**

I. Focuses on Those in Need

A. He cared about the people in His home town.

- **Luke 4:16 - And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.**
- anyone knows that it's often hardest to minister in the place where you grew up...
- the expert is always the person who's from out of town...
- yet these are the same people that Jesus would have attended the synagogue with as a boy and then a young man...
- the memories associated with this building would have been rich and intense...
- then one of the officers of the synagogue, a man called the "chazzan" handed him a scroll from the book of Isaiah...
- and Jesus found His place in Isaiah 61 and read what Luke recorded for us...
- and you have to put yourself in Theophilus' place...the man to whom this was written, because the point was obvious...

B. He had compassion on those who were weak.

a. The poor

- **v. 18a – He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor...**
 - that's from the word **ptochos** – **“to cringe, to shrink back , to cower”**
 - there was a different word in that day to describe the working poor...
 - this is talking about someone reduced to begging...
 - and the point is that was true of such persons spiritually...
- just like Jesus would say in the Sermon on the Mount...
 - **Matthew 5:3 – Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
 - frequently spiritual poverty is accompanied by physical and Jesus cared about that as well...
 - but just as he had communicated to Nicodemus – anyone who thinks his birthright or his good works is enough to earn heaven won't recognize his need for a Savior...

b. Those ensnared by sinful habits.

- **v. 18b – He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives.**
 - Isaiah spoke about a Messiah who some day would come to free men and women from the penalty of power of sin...
 - It reminds you of Charles Wesley's great hymn – Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing...
 - do you remember the lines...He breaks the power of canceled sin...He sets the prisoner free?...that's what is being emphasized here...
 - instead of separating Himself from those who were struggling, or judging them, or despising them...He had compassion on them...

c. Those blinded by false beliefs.

- **v. 18 - ...recovery of sight to the blind**
 - Scripture often uses this metaphor to describe what it is like to live apart from a relationship with the Holy Spirit of truth...
 - **Psalm 82:5 - They do not know nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness...**
 - **Jeremiah 5:21 - ...people, who have eyes but do not see...**
 - this passage speaks about the Messiah coming to cure this condition...imagine that kind of care and that kind of power...

d. Those oppressed by the consequences of living apart from God.

- **v. 18 – to set free those who are oppressed**

- now, as soon as Jesus finished reading this section, He sat down...and the passage said that every eye was fixed on Him...
- because now the person would normally give some sort of discourse or sermon about what he had just read...and in this case it would have been a futuristic discussion about what the Messiah ministry would be like some day when he came...
- but that's not what Jesus said, was it?... **Luke 4:21 - And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."**
- in other words, He was making a clear claim to deity...and interestingly...that's not what infuriated them...
- because the text says -- **Luke 4:22 - And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"**
- but that's not where the story ended...because Jesus went on to demonstrate that...
 - C. He was willing to include all even if that upset some.**
 - Jesus reminded them of two important OT events, both of which would have been very irritating to a Jewish audience...
 - Elijah and the widow at Zarephath...and Elisha and the healing of Naaman...
 - because in both cases...those people were Gentiles...from nations the Jewish people believed were below them...or worthy of their hatred and scorn...similar to the Samaritans like the woman at the well...
 - **Luke 4:28-29 - And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.**
 - that's called – you're probably not going to get much of a love offering that day...
 - now, do you think that any of that surprised Jesus?...of course not, but He still wanted to demonstrate love to the people in His home town, and He still wanted to stand up for the downtrodden, and He was even willing to deal with a little venom if that's what it took...because He was perfectly comfortable with the ministry assignment God had given Him...
- one of the things I love about being part of our church is that many men and women get the fact that the gospel is for men and women who are willing to humble themselves enough to accept it...
- and many times that does mean going through some of the hard knocks of life...and experiencing some of the hardness that comes with the way of the transgressor...or having to eat with the pigs like the prodigal's son...
- but when such a person is willing to repent – there has to be a person whose comfortable in his or her own skin...who has learned to love the downtrodden...and minister to the hurting...and do that even if folks back home don't always understand...
- I am so glad that we have directors and board members of some of the most important non-profit groups in our town are part of our church family...many times that kind of compassion leads to spiritual conversations and interactions that can make an eternal difference...
- I'm glad for people who volunteer to work at the skate park...or our food pantry/clothing closet...
- I appreciate those who work with children and youth...who serve in our community leagues...

- people who are receiving biblical counseling training...or giving sacrificially so we can offer a similar cluster of ministries at Faith West...
- and you may have some family members who don't understand that...and even in our town – we'll have a few detractors – no good deed goes unpunished...
- but if that didn't detract Christ...it shouldn't detract us...

II. Possesses Confidence that Comes from Heaven

- Luke explains to Theophilus that Jesus responded to the rejection of people in His hometown by continuing to look for places to minister for His Father...
- and that ministry was fearless...so we find Him...

A. Confronting the adversary head-on.

- it's amazing that the demons had no trouble acknowledging what the people in Jesus' hometown would not admit...
- **Luke 4:34 - "Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"**
- and Jesus' response was fascinating...
- **Luke 4:35 - But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!"**
- Jesus didn't need the approval of the people back home to know who He was and what He had to do.

B. Healing disease to relieve suffering and prove He was the Messiah.

- **4:38-39 - Then He got up and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her.**
- it wasn't just authority over the demonic host...but this part must have especially intrigued Luke the doctor...
- **4:39 - And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them.**
- isn't that amazing – thanks for healing me – can I get you a sandwich?...

C. Teaching with authority.

- that is emphasized all over this text...
- **Luke 4:32 - and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority.**
- are you seeing the clear theme here?
 - sure He was serving people that many had written off...
 - and He was facing incredible, and in some cases, supernatural opposition...
 - and even the people He grew up around rejected His ministry and message...
 - but our Lord's response to all of that was the picture of core strength...
 - He didn't need to approval of others to validate the choices He was making...
 - all He needed to know was what He had heard a year ago at His baptism from the mouth of the Father - **Luke 3:22 - "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."**

- you know, that's true for the ministry to which God has called us...

- there is a level of confidence – I hope not, arrogance, but confidence as we seek to preach the gospel to the poor, and proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to those who are oppressed...
 - because we believe the foundation of our ministry is the true and authoritative Word of God...
- one of the interesting dynamics occurring in our contemporary culture is that those who would rely on a secular explanation for the troubles of human beings are finding their system in rather significant disarray...
- An article was recently published entitled...

**The DSM Debate:
Potential Harms Related to Psychiatric Diagnosis
Melissa Piasecki, M.D. and
David Antonuccio, Ph.D.
University of Nevada School of Medicine
Introduction**

- **Dr. Allen Frances, by raising questions about the DSM-5, has stirred up a vigorous discussion about the weaknesses of psychiatric diagnostic classification as well as troubling elements related to the DSM in general. Dr. Szasz's critical voice has added richness and value to the discussion. Both Dr. Frances and Dr. Szasz agree on three points: first, our diagnostic system has not led to the identification of any biomarkers or biological causes for mental disorders; second, the diagnostic categories are heterogeneous within categories and often overlap with each other as well as with normalcy; third, diagnoses can cause real harm, not just to a few people, but to millions (Frances, 2010).**
- **Many commentators express relief that the limits of our current diagnostic system have become the topic of an open conversation. Clearly, the reliability of psychiatric diagnosis has been oversold (Beutler & Malik, 2002). Moreover, the gap between research and clinical settings has not always been bridged successfully. Criteria sets that seemed to work in research settings have not provided reliable diagnostic tools for clinicians who struggle with the highly variable interpretations of patient data under the pressures of reimbursement procedures and the vested interests of the pharmaceutical industry. Our "Decade of the Brain" has yet to produce any biomarkers of psychiatric diagnoses, despite the claims of advertising websites for pharmaceutical companies that provide colorful animations of neurotransmitters and the brain in marketing directly targeting consumers.**
- now, we're not suggesting that we know everything about the brain...and we will always promote good science...
- but this is just another volley in the nature/nurture debate...
 - fundamentally...do we do what we do because our environment, the people around us, our pasts, shaping influences – that's the nurture part of the equation...
 - or is it our physical bodies, our hard-wiring, our genes, chemicals in the brain – something that has to do with the body...that's the nature part of the equation...
- the pendulum has really swung in the last 20 years...
 - the nurture people used to be in charge of the discussion – the need to investigate our pasts, or relearn behaviors, or embrace self-love and esteem...20 years ago those were the dominant themes – the nature people – you are who you are because of what someone did, or didn't do to you...

- that has entirely changed...bio-psychology is in charge of the discussion...and has been for nearly a decade...
 - but here's a medical doctor and a psychologist taking an axe to their entire diagnostic system...
 - to suggest that there's a level of uncertainty here is the understatement of the morning...
- and what ties both systems together is that either way – you're fundamentally a passive victim...you're either the product of your upbringing or a product of your body (nature or nurture, take your pick)...
 - and we've always said that while both can have an undeniably powerful influence in a person's life...
 - the most important and determinative element is the condition of your heart...
 - you're an active worshipper...
 - and the way you respond to both the challenges in your environment and the challenges with your body reveal the fundamental identity of your functional god...
 - **Proverbs 4:23 - Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it *flow* the springs of life.**
- and the reason we take that position is because of the authoritative Word of God...and we want to try to help people with the certainty of "thus saith the Lord..."
- and because God doesn't change – we want the answers we give people today to be the same as the answers we give people tomorrow...
 - **1 Peter 1:24-25 – The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.**
- the point is – Jesus possessed confident strength because He was convinced that His message and ministry came from heaven...thus saith the Lord...

III. Values the Redemption of Others

- Luke also explained to Theophilus that this wasn't just Jesus' work, but the work of every person called to follow Him...
- A. Jesus loves including ordinary people in His work.**
 - **Luke 5:2-3 - and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and *began* teaching the people from the boat.**
 - it doesn't get much more ordinary than a couple of common fishermen at the end of their work day...
- B. Jesus was give you indications that when you're serving Him, you're involved in something miraculous.**

Luke 5:6 - When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets *began* to break;
- C. Jesus will call you to a ministry that can make a difference for eternity.**

Luke 5:10 - and so also *were* James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."