

LIFE OVEN WITH JESUS: Live as Designed

We're visiting scenes in Jesus' life and ministry with an eye toward allowing those scenes to shape and influence our own lives. Today we turn our attention, not to a particular moment, but to a series of moments, something of a small sweep of history out of his life, a sweep that fortunately allows me to give yet another promo for our Tuesday evening Bible study on the teachings of Jesus. In that study we're spending three full sessions talking about the Sermon on the Mount, the seminal collection of Jesus' teachings.... so join us.... End of promo. Now for today's message.

I don't want us to talk about the content of the Sermon on the Mount. I just want us to notice that he gave it. Among the things that Jesus was, were a preacher and a teacher. Remember the moment in Luke 4 when he returned to Nazareth, his hometown. He went to the temple, read the day's Scripture, which happened to be from the prophet Isaiah, but he didn't stop when the prophet's words ended. To the end of the Scripture he added, (Luke 4.21).... the Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day.

In John 7, Jesus is laying low during a religious festival called the Festival of Shelters, trying not to be noticed, because he knew the religious mucky mucks were after him. But at some point, he couldn't contain his passion anymore, so he went to the temple and taught... because he was a preacher.

Jesus was a teacher and a preacher. You know that about Jesus, so why do I remind you? For the same reason I remind you of what happened BEFORE he preached the Sermon on the Mount. That sermon begins in Matthew 5. At the end of Matthew 4 we read this (23-25).... And then immediately AFTER the Sermon on the Mount, which ends in Matthew 7, we see these verses at the beginning of chapter 8 (1-3)....What's the takeaway I propose from those verses? Simply that Jesus was a healer. And more important, he actually healed.

He was a preacher, and he preached. He was a teacher, and he taught. He was a healer, and he healed. The point? He was what God called him to be, what God created him to be. Are you?

Take a moment to survey the current arc of your life. Can you say that you're fulfilling God's purpose for you right now? Can you say you're walking along the path God has in mind for you at this stage of your life? Lots of us are retired, advanced in age. Great. God still has a use for us. Are you living out that use in your life? Are you making the difference God wants you to make, given your circumstances? Are you sharing with others the good news God wants you to share? Is your life the example God wants it to be?

I'm not asking whether you're Superman or Superwoman. I'm not asking whether you're winning marathons or serving as a missionary in a developing nation. I'm asking whether you're living the life, being the person, sharing the Christ in you, in the way God intends at this stage of your life.

You might have heard the story of the brand new and sparkling carburetor which, when sitting on the shelf in the office of an auto parts company's CEO looked nice, but did little more than take up space. Had you been able to talk to the car part, it would have told you that it was wasting its life away on the shelf. After many years, the carburetor was tossed by the CEO, and after lots of shuffling, ended up in a junk yard as a spare part. Lo and behold, when that clean, sparkling carburetor was installed in the dirty, grimy confines of some old junker, it came to life, because it was finally doing what it was supposed to do.

Jesus lived his life doing what he was called to do - teach, preach, and heal. At this stage of your life, what is God calling you to do? How is God calling you to make a difference for the kingdom?

We ask people to fill out ministry claim forms every year. 15 people did this year, so far. Thanks to you who did. Those forms help us plan ministries - we know who's willing to do what - but there are other purposes for the form including as a collection of inspirations. So that as you read through those lists of the things we do, God might just spark an interest or two or three in you. And you'll decide there's a way God wants you to make a difference, and there's a way, and there's a way.

Jesus spent his life doing what he was called to do, living the life God designed him to live. What about you and me? There are lots of ways to assess the character and quality of a church. How about this as one of them: The more people in a church who are living the life God wants them to live, the better a church that church is.

- The Bible says we were born to worship. The more we do that, the better we are.
- The Bible lifts high the word of God - for us, that means the Bible - for study and encouragement. The more each of us does that, the better we are.
- Jesus said the world will know we are his followers by the way we treat each other. The more we love each other, the better church we are.
- The New Testament makes clear that we're all gifted, we're all wired by God for certain works. The more we align our lives with that wiring, the better we are, and our church is.

One word I have for you today is live as God designed you to live. Live to fulfill your purpose, your mission, to be your piece in the puzzle. But there's one other word I have for you today. In Luke 8, Jesus heals a demon-possessed man. You might recall the story - Jesus sends the demons into a herd of pigs, and the pigs drown in a lake, having fallen down the steep hillside that led to it. At the end of the story, the healed man wants to tag along with Jesus. But Jesus tells him this (LK 8.39).... You go tell people what God has done for you. And he did.

The work that God designed you to do is a gift from God. Tell somebody. The difference you were designed to make with your life, with your knowledge, with your experience, with your compassion, with your love, is a gift from God. Tell somebody. The life you have - the life you have lived and the life you will live from now on - are gifts from God. Tell somebody.

My goodness, even Jesus himself followed the tell somebody rule. John 7. Jesus teaches in the temple. People can't believe how much he knows when he hasn't had any training. What they don't know is Jesus is living the life God planned for him, he's using the gifts God poured into his life. But what they do know about Jesus is this (John 7.16-18)....

Do your work for the kingdom! Live the life God has you here for, whatever your age or mobility. Make the difference God wants you to make. Then tell the world that God is the source of and the reason for the difference you make. This week, live the life God has for you, then come back next Sunday and praise God for it.