

You are not the Star! You are the Co-star in your story! Play your role well!

Everybody has a story....we have been in the Book of James and today we conclude our study...with this point...we all have a story...the people James wrote too, had a collective story...and in that there is each individuals story...we do not have them all...but we had glimpses into them...they experienced trials...long term trials, they struggled in faith and prayer and temptation to fall away or go back...they experienced interpersonal troubles, sickness, fear, favoritism, anger, prejudice, their language revealed troubled hearts.....they had to also figure out what they were going to do with their lives work wise and culture wise ...all the while James encourages them to keep trusting God...He has a plan...

and that where we pick up today...of we learn anything from these people it's this...life is a journey and not an outpost...life evolves and there is always an aspect of transitioning going on....it is not stagnant and often not comfortable...and all of us have a Testimony!

you are a living epistle of God working in your life...through it all..

You are a story being written!

***Psalm 139:16** Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

From the time we are born again into the family of God...until the time we enter into heaven...we under go a series of new beginnings...changes and transformations...You are not who you were twenty years ago...you will change in the next 10 years...also and after that...

We all have in common the knowledge that we are on going story-formed people—

1 Cor 2: 9 **However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen,☒ what no ear has heard,☒and what no human mind has conceived” the things God has prepared for those who love him —**

- All that God has prepared for us ...will be new to us... and progressively new.....our eyes have not seen it before, our ears have not heard it before, and our mind has not conceived it before. There is a whole bunch of unknown future ...which only God knows for each of us..

We make our plans and then God moves our feet as he will....and know this his plan is way better than yours...

Pro 16:9 **In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.**

You have a story and James has a story...even though he left here to heaven two thousand years ago...his story is still having effect today.... And it was not his plan, and whatever his plan was it was way to small...it was so much better and bigger....

James has a story...

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...

... First of all the author of this book, James is understood to be the half brother of Jesus....he did not know that the messiah was his half brother, until much later in life ...he thought he his brother Jesus was kooky!

As shared in these accounts about his brothers .. in Mark I think they were coming to do an intervention! They were worried about Him!

Mark 3:20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

- and in John 7...later go be a celebrity ...but they did not believe him to be one!

John 7: 5 For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

- We also know they were not at the cross. At least we have no record of them being present in any part of His ministry in those three years at all.

His conversion took place after the Resurrection... *1 Cor 15:4 he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he **appeared to James, then to all the apostles...***

- The risen Christ appeared to him and he became a believer. His whole world changes...his story took a dramatic change...
- He quickly became a leader, it is generally understood that he was probably one of the main pastors or leaders of the Jerusalem church.
- Pretty prestigious position until it was not! Yet God had a plan...

This is the way Jesus works...you have your story and you think you are writing the chapters... and sometimes our plans do seem to go according to ...well our plans...and then they are not!

That is why we are so often astonished, disappointed, ...upset sometimes amazed at what is NOW happening in our lives and to our lives!

At some point we begin to realize...life is out of my control...

- **We all suffer under the illusions which are really fantasies about how things, life ,relationships will or should work out...**

Then God dis –illusions us...how by popping our balloons of illusion (make believe) ...bringing us to reality...

- **an illusion is a false impression of reality and disillusionment is the revealing of that false impression..... disillusionment comes when that false belief is popped By reality!**

Some Common Illusions we hold

1. Life should be Fair....
2. Certain bad things should not happen to me...
3. he / she should know how I feel
4. If I raise my children right they won't stray
5. It's the parents fault if children turn out wrong
6. Time heals all
7. Ignore it and it will go away...the truth, ignore it and it's sure to stay
8. People should act a certain way...by that I mean the way I think they should act!
9. My emergency is everyone's emergency!
10. God should act a certain way...means...The way I think he should
11. How could God allow that! Illusion...God would never allow that to happen
12. God let me down...means, I begged Him to do it my way and He didn't
13. The illusion that sin just falls away by deliverance...
14. Maturity is a gift not a process
15. If only I had (fill in the blank) I would be happy...
16. God's main goal is to keep me happy rather than fulfill His will...his plan...

But here is the great thing...most of our opportunities for growth, come to us disguised as troubling opportunities...he places our feet in trouble to as the step before progress....the problem is presented as the step in a new direction...a new beginning!

We witness his giving someone new beginnings after allowing them to contract a horrible disease... this person at one point had a life they were living...filled with plans and a hope for an imagined good futureand then the nightmare happens... he contracts leprosy...plans

Let's pick up the narrative in Luke chapter 5:12-16

LK 5:12 **While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy.[b] When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."**¹³ **Jesus reached**

out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

14 Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

15 Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

- **What did Jesus choose? he choose to be caring; reaching out to touch the untouchable a individual sign of acceptance, non fear, and non judgment ...he responds with love.**
- **He doesn't choose how the person he cares for will respond.**
- **Jesus risks relationship, will that relationship will be easy or exhausting, good or difficult.**
- **He does what he knows he can do, even though he knows what the leper will do in return. Which is Make his life more difficult... and hurt Jesus for helping him...**
- **What he gets is a mess: the news spreading all over the place, and so many people clamoring for a piece of what the leper got that Jesus can't even go into town openly.**
- **But that is what Jesus does over and over again, he makes the same choice touch the untouchable...welcome the diseased... He still choose's to love the least, however messy it might become.**

So often the opposite of people!!.... **We tend to use labels to define people and situations.** Jesus did not except for the religious

- **In the worst case, labels can reduce an issue to its simplest form, causing its importance or uniqueness to be lost. Dehumanizing people...he's a leper!!!**
- **When labels are aimed at people, they can have the effect of dehumanizing a person by shrinking their entire being down to a single word.**
- **This is apparent in racism, sexism, and narrow-mindedness and legalism and ad-hominem attack...attacking character rather than answering a question...**
- **In Jesus day there was no worse name to bear than Leper...**

Leprosy was a dreaded disease.

1. It attacked the nerve ending in the victim so that he could feel no pain. He might be eating and bite off a chunk of finger without realizing it.
2. Systemic Infection and gangrene were natural by products...
3. It was also a disease which was considered to be highly contagious. Those who had contracted it were driven away from their homes and their families.
4. The untouchables they lived outside the cities especially if they were walled. **They were ostracized socially and religiously, forbidden any physical contact with another human being...**
5. Rabbinic law mandated lepers keep a certain distance from people. They made their presence known calling out "unclean"
6. their lives were ones of agony their expectation was enduring until the final release of death.

There are **Five things** that I want you to see about this man.

- First, There was an urgency and an accuracy to his calling upon Jesus. He was in desperate need and saw Jesus as One who had the power to help him.
 - He recognized Jesus as more than a mere man. He called Him...- Lord....Master, using a title which is usually used by disciples.
- **Secondly**, it was **ONLY** his need that drove him to Jesus.. That is one of the reasons that the Lord allows bad things to come into our lives. It is to draw us closer to Himself.
- However, There are two issues look to Jesus only as our problem solver..
 1. If we follow Jesus only because He helps us with our problems, then what do we do when things are going well?
 2. And if we follow Him for this reason only, what happens when I turn to Jesus and the problem doesn't immediately go away?
- **Third...** He made a decision to not play by the old rules...he did something different...in stead of staying away he came toward! He had faith! He believed if he did something different he might get a better result
 - He Was involved in his own healing...he had a role to play...if he did go to Jesus something would happen
 - So he fights through the crowd...and humbly asks for Jesus to help him...

Now Jesus heals him immediately...then gives him a couple of commands

- 1) Go show himself to the Priest in Jerusalem who will verify the healing...(which could only be done by God) Since there was no medical solutions in that day...to treat this disease.
- 2) And offer the Sacrifices prescribed by Moses (thank and sin offerings)... and the Priests will reinstate him back into the community socially and religiously.

Why? One of the duties of the priest was to act as the local health official. The priest was authorized to examine a person and to declare him either clean or unclean. This was a duty that had been given to the priesthood back in the book of Leviticus.

- **Leviticus 14 gives some very explicit instructions as to the sacrifices and rituals that were to be invoked in the case of a leper that had been healed. But this was not a common occurrence.**
- **Can you imagine the reaction of the priests? They have to go back to the Scriptures and look up Leviticus 14 to check and see what are the sacrifices and rituals to be used for a healed leper. This would not be a passage that they utilized on a regular basis. And the fact that they have to do so now is a powerful testimony of Jesus.**

*******Before the disease he lived a life we know not about...during the disease a lived a different life....Now this healing will cause another drastic change in the story of this mans life...**

To be healed includes the right to be reintegrated into one's own community, no longer an object of fear but a true neighbor.

- **No longer would he have to live on the outside. He could live again within the city walls.**
- **Religiously...what is he going to do with Jesus**
- **Where is he going to get a job...the old job of begging no longer fits...his way of doing life needs to change...**

He is given an opportunity to choose a new way to live...and God has a plan in that....

Following Jesus s about choices...choices we do not make and choices we do...our job is to make the right choices now...in living in the choices we do not have a say in... you do not get to choose the chapters of your life...but you do get to choose the actions you take in the chapters...

- **If you are in a change of the way you do life...then change the way you do life**

- **If God is calling you to something new...do the new thing**
- **If God is calling you to do something scary...then do that something scared!**