

Notes for “The Chosen” series (Season 3) small groups Pastor Barry Foster

The following notes offer some background information, brief explanations related to Scriptural content and context, and suggestions for things to look for when viewing the episode. One practical note: you may find that it is easier to understand what is being said if the captions are turned on when viewing the show.

Episode 5: “Clean, Part 2”

Please note: The opening of this episode includes a bloody scene involving a miscarriage, which could be emotionally disturbing for some women and scary for young children. Parents should use care when deciding if children should watch this scene.

After an opening flashback to a scene two weeks earlier, this episode continues the action and the theme of ritual uncleanness from the previous episode. Simon and Gaius continue with the repairs for the cistern (a stark picture of uncleanness). But the primary focus will rest on the linked healing miracles of the daughter of Jairus and the hemorrhaging woman (Veronica). (You can review the accounts in Mark 5:21-43; Matthew 9:18-26; Luke 8:41-56.)

This double healing passage is notable for several reasons. (1) The gospel narratives are arranged topically and thematically rather than purely chronologically. Matthew, for instance, follows his grouping of Jesus’ teaching in chapters 5-7 with a series of healing stories in chapters 8-9 without indicating a precise sequence of the events. Consequently, it is often difficult to determine when the individual stories happened in Jesus’ ministry. This double healing passage, however, does give a clear indication of sequence, at least for these two miracles. In each of the gospel accounts, the story of the healing of Jairus’ daughter is interrupted by the healing of the hemorrhaging woman, which clearly occurred when Jesus was on his way to Jairus’ home. (2) The passage is also unique in that it includes two specific healing miracles. Most miracle/healing stories depict a single act of Jesus. The gospel writers do include summary statements which recount Jesus healing many different people. But when a miracle or healing of an individual or a group of people is described, it will have a single focal point on Jesus’ act. The story of Jarius’ daughter and the hemorrhaging woman is the unique exception. (3) In each of the two situations, Jesus contravenes the Law about ritual uncleanness. According to Leviticus 15:19-25 and Numbers 19:11-13, 16, touching a corpse or a menstruating woman rendered a person unclean. Jesus ignores the requirement (though dancing around the accusations of the Pharisees with some deft moves that allow him to claim that he has not violated the Law): the divine power he demonstrates by healing these women proves that he cannot be rendered unclean by touching them. Instead, his touch brings wholeness to them and removes them from the state of being impure.

The scene in Jairus’ home following the death of his daughter demonstrates an interesting cultural value among Jews at the time. Mourning the death of a family member was not only a time of great emotional stress and personal pain, but a matter of social responsibility and personal and family honor. One must give evidence of one’s grief through a lavish display of public sorrow. “Professional” mourners would be hired: flute players who would play appropriate dirges and women who would wail over the dead person. Failure to properly grieve would mark a person or family as unworthy, causing them to lose honor in the community.

Some things to look for:

1. An important secondary theme in this episode is how the coming of the Messiah ushers in a new era in which old ways lose their place in order to allow new life to begin and flourish. Look for this in Jesus' parable of the wineskins (Matthew 9:14-17), in the two healing miracles, and in Zebedee's decision to try a new line of work.

2. On a lighter note, for any fans of the Three Stooges, don't miss a very "Stooge-like" moment between brothers James and John.

Some questions to consider:

1. Jairus asks Rabbi Yusuf to introduce him to Jesus. Why do you suppose he felt the need for an introduction? What was his hope in approaching Jesus in this way? Does that suggest anything to you about our role as followers of Jesus today?

2. What strikes you as you consider what Veronica did in order to be healed?

3. How does this episode accentuate Veronica's restoration? What symbols are used and what do they represent? What does Jesus' pronouncement signal?

4. Why does Jesus insist on keeping the news of the healing of Jairus' daughter quiet? What is he trying to accomplish or avoid?