

Narrabeen Baptist Church

**MAY
MISSION
MONTH**

A FIVE WEEK BIBLE STUDY

Narrabeen Baptist Church

MAY MISSION MONTH

INTRODUCTION

WHEN JESUS DEFEATED THE EMPIRES OF SIN AND DEATH, HIS KINGDOM TOPPLING DID NOT END THERE. HE COMMISSIONED HIS FOLLOWERS TO CONTINUE THE WORK THAT GOD INTENDED FOR HUMANITY TO DO FROM THE VERY BEING: TO BE FRUITFUL AND SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF GOD'S LOVE TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH. JESUS EMPOWERED HIS FRIENDS WITH HIS VERY SPIRIT TO BE THEIR GUIDE AND HELP AS THEY SHARED JESUS WITH THE WORLD.

THIS SAME WORK IS STILL HAPPENING TODAY. AND YOU ARE ARE I CALLED TO BE A PART OF IT....

WEEK ONE

The World Is Sick?

Read Luke 5:27-32

Levi, a tax collector, meets Jesus. He immediately leaves everything behind to follow him. The very next thing he does is invites all his "sinner" friends to meet Jesus. Jesus gets called out by the religious officials in his midst for associating with "those types of people".

How does Jesus respond? How can this verse be viewed as the basis for mission?

Do you agree with Jesus that there are people in this world who are "sick"? What do you think he means by that?

According to this passage, why did Jesus say he came?

If there are still "sick" people out there, what does that say about our role as Jesus' ambassadors?

Read Isaiah 25:6-8

The context of this passage is a song of praise that Isaiah is singing to the Lord. He's praising God because just in the chapter before, the Lord reveals to Isaiah that He is coming and going to make things right again. Isaiah, upon hearing this news, eagerly awaits a time where all people are going to come to the mountain of God.

According to Isaiah, what does he think will happen when people see and experience the presence of God?

What is the "shroud that enfolds all peoples" and the "sheet that covers all nations"? How does that relate to Jesus' words from Luke 5:32?

Can this really be true? Aren't we living in a time where things are getting better? Where people have grown and evolved and are moving toward utopia?

Where or in what ways have you seen a shroud enfolding all peoples and a sheet that covers all nations?

Jesus wants us to know that there is a problem in this world. In some cases it is visible; in others it can be entirely invisible. But regardless if we really pay attention, we know deep down things are not as they should be. In a world where there is still poverty, hunger, a huge divide between rich and poor, where a virus can change the dynamics of the entire planet, where people are doing whatever is right in their own eyes...we know this can't be all there is. There has to be more. And according to Isaiah and to Jesus there is more.

Which means the mission of God continues.

And you are a part of it.

Spend some time in prayer. In what ways do you long for God to transform the sickness of this world?

In what ways are YOU a part of the sickness that is prevalent on this planet? Where does God need to change your heart?

And who might God be putting in the forefront of your mind as someone in need of His love, invited to His banquet? Over the next month we challenge you to uphold this person (or people or people group) in prayer. Ask God how He might use YOU to reach the lost.

WEEK TWO

God Is Doing Something New

Read Isaiah 42:1-10 and 43:18-21

In context, the nation of Israel has failed. They've abandoned their primary responsibility to pursue Yahweh and live according to His design. At this point the people have been sent to exile in foreign lands; defeated and virtually wiped out. Only a few Hebrews remained.

According to these passages, however, has God abandoned His people?

What does God promise in these passages?

One of the main themes of these promises is God establishing His "justice" (see Isaiah 42:3-4). When you think of that word "justice" what comes to mind? Why is justice such an important theme in God's kingdom?

What does justice look like acted out?

Read Luke 5:33-6:11

After Jesus is invited to a party hosted by Levi, where he associates himself with Levi's "sinful" friends, a group of people begin eyeballing Jesus and questioning him and what he's up to. First, they accuse him and his disciples (essentially) of partying too much instead of spending time in prayer and fasting (as you know, all good people do).

What does Jesus say in response to this? How does the parable he tells them in Luke 5:36-39 relate to not only his response, but to the "new thing" God is doing (from Isaiah)? Why can't these folks grasp what is going on and accept it?

In this same group of passages, we then find Jesus and his disciples gleaning a field on a Sabbath; the day you are supposed to refrain from work. Apparently some Pharisees (super religious folks) were closely monitoring the situation. They are appalled that Jesus and crew were violating one of the most sacred Jewish rules.

How does Jesus respond? How does Jesus redefine what is acceptable on the Sabbath? What's Jesus talking about when he mentions David?

This section ends with yet another story of Jesus shaking things up. A man with a shriveled hand appears before Jesus and Jesus, despite knowing what the religious elite were thinking, heals the man in front of them...on the Sabbath.

How do you answer the questions Jesus asks the Pharisees? What is better – good or evil? To save or destroy?

How does what Jesus says flip everything upside down? How does this relate to the earlier passage we read from Isaiah about God doing a new thing?

From here onward in Jesus' ministry, those who feel most comfortable with their position in life start to actively oppose him (see Luke 6:11). Meanwhile, people who find themselves in flux or on the bottom or in chaos or in despair begin flocking to Jesus.

How do you explain this discrepancy in responses to Jesus?

This same tendency takes place today. Those who feel secure in life are often not interested in Jesus while those who are not will often be very receptive to the Good News. How have you seen this happen around your own life?

If God is doing a new thing and shaking everything up, inviting those who thought they had no chance in, how can this message resonate to those around us?

Who are some people who might need to hear God's message of welcoming and inviting in? What steps can you take THIS WEEK to demonstrate God's invitational love to those around you?

WEEK THREE

Agents, Not Just Converts

Read Isaiah 6:1-7

Isaiah decides today of all days, he is going to go worship in the Temple. But instead of seeing priests and all the Temple assistants, he sees the LORD in all His glory.

What sort of shock would this have given Isaiah? Was it a pleasant experience for him to see God?

What is it about seeing God in all His glory makes Isaiah shout out "Woe is me!"?

What is happening as the seraph (that word literally means "flaming one") touches Isaiah's mouth with the burning coal? Wouldn't that have hurt?!?

Read Isaiah 6:8

What is happening in this one verse? What would have been going through Isaiah's mind?

Why do you think Isaiah immediately jumped at the chance to be a spokesperson for God?

Read Mark 8:22-9:1

According to Jesus, what does it mean to follow him? Is this an easy task or not? Can we get away with kinda sorta following Jesus? Why or why not?

In that same Isaiah passage in chapter 6, God describes to Isaiah exactly how people are going to respond to Isaiah's ministry. God says to Isaiah, "They're going to hear you but never really understand. They'll see you but never really perceive what you're trying to do." Sounds like a fun job. And now Jesus says that following him requires giving up our lives.

If this is what it looks like to follow Jesus, why should any of us want to? Is there an upside of losing your life and sharing a message that people don't often want to hear?

Isaiah, as it turns out, took up the challenge to be God's agent to the world. History tells us that despite his admonition for the northern kingdom of Israel to turn away from idols and injustice back toward the Lord, they didn't listen to him, at least, most of them didn't. Similarly the disciples took Jesus' challenge to be his agents of Good News seriously. History tells us most of them did give up their lives for Jesus.

Why did these folks (and so many others throughout history) decide to give their all, to give up everything, to keep sharing and going and praying and giving even when it cost them their lives?

Do you think it's possible to be a follower of Jesus but not take his call for our lives to be his ambassadors seriously? Can we be both saved and lethargic in our faith all the time?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

According to Paul, what compels Christians to share the Jesus with the world?

In what ways do you currently serve as Christ's ambassador to the world?

What can you begin doing (or stop doing) to grow in this area? What would it take for you to see yourself as on mission for Jesus?

Again we'd like you to end this time thinking about a few people in your life that you can be an ambassador to. Pray for them each day. Think of ways you can reach out and share Jesus' love for them and then actually do it! Be ready to report back to others next week how you've seen God at work in and through you.

WEEK FOUR

The Great Reversal

"continuing the same things that are not bringing renewal is not going to bring renewal. Lack of commitment is not going to bring renewal. Business as usual will not bring renewal. Accumulating knowledge without putting it into practice will not bring renewal. We need our autopilot patterns interrupted."

-Mark Sayers from "Reappearing Church"

Read Luke 6:17-26

What is happening in this passage?

How is Jesus reversing the values of our world here?

According to Jesus, what does life look like in God's kingdom?

How does Jesus' words here make you feel? Happy? Excited? Nervous? Uneasy?

Why do you think Jesus in on about reversing the ways of the world? Why does God value the lowly and poor and powerless so much? What's so special about these types of people?

When you listen to the list of "woes" - do you think Jesus really meant what he said here? Why or why not? Or can we just explain this away ("He's not talking about me though").

What is it about people who are broken and needy that God uses to advance His kingdom?

Read Acts 4:32-5:11

What in the world is happening in this passage?

Why are Ananias and Sapphira treated so harshly?

In context of the whole passage, how are the actions of Ananias and Sapphira different from other believers? Where do their actions fit into the blessings/woes passage from Luke 6?

I (Travis) admit that there's a lot in this passage that I don't understand. However, one thing IS rather clear. Ananias and Sapphira were putting up a front: they wanted to be viewed in the same category as the other generous believers while at the same time make sure they had enough to pad their bank account. This is called "Comfortable Christianity". It's the type of Christianity that demands nothing from you; where nothing in your life really changes. It's what Dietrich Bonhoeffer termed cheap grace: "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

In Luke 1:46-55, Mary sings a song of praise after she discovers she is the one to give birth to the Son of God. In her song, which becomes a theme for all of Luke and Acts (and the whole Bible really), she shouts out that God has seen the state of His humble servant. He brings down rulers and those who cling to power. Meanwhile he feeds the hungry and lifts up the humble. This is the kind of thing God is into.

Again, why do you think God works this way?

If God's desire is to take the things that we hold as valuable and worthy and enviable and declare in his kingdom those things are detestable and worthless and valueless, how does that change things for us? How we spend our time? Our money? What we wish to attain? What we make our priority?

In Isaiah 44:6-20, God describes the things we fashion for ourselves as valuable, things that we create that we end up worshipping. The very last line God rebukes a person who places value in things that don't matter saying that we don't even realise the things in our hands are lies.

God is in the business of reversing the things we hold so valuable. To flip the ways of the world on its head so that we understand it's not wealth or status or possessions or pleasure or anything that will actually fill us up, but God alone. And when we are able to stop pursuing things that can't fill us up, that's when we are personally transformed. And that's when revival starts to happen.

What would it look like for your priorities to be reset?

What would it look like if the whole of Narrabeen Baptist Church had their autopilots turned off, their lives made less comfortable so they could engage in costly instead of cheap grace?

How can this reversal, revival start in you?

WEEK FIVE

The Basis of Renewal

Read Luke 6:27-36

How is an enemy described here?

Based on that description, do YOU have any enemies?

Why is it that so many Christians who live in the Western world believe they are surrounded by enemies?

This passage has been used to dramatically change the landscape of systemic evil. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights movement. The Confessing Church in Nazi Germany. The missionary work of Jim Elliot. The Underground Church in China and the Middle East.

And the Early Church.

Read Acts 7:57-8:4

What's going on in this passage?

A horrible thing happens here. Stephen, a believer who was not afraid to share the Gospel, is violently killed. And then a great persecution of all Christians in the area begins. To any regular person, this would likely end any faith they clung onto.

But what happens to the church after this violent act (see Acts 8:4)?

This "scattering" of the church is actually something Jesus called his followers to be doing all the way in Acts 1:8. They were called to be his witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. But so far to this point in the story, the Gospel hasn't spread beyond Jerusalem. Immediately after this persecution we are told in Acts 8:5 that Philip went down to Samaria.

From there we see believers going everywhere and sharing the good news about Jesus everywhere. Not silent in the face of enemies, but present, active, engaging, serving, loving, proclaiming.

Why do you think that was possible? How can opposition actually grow the church and embolden believers?

Read Romans 5:6-11

According to Paul, who is the "enemy" in this passage?

If God loved us while we were His enemies, how does this help us to love our enemies?

According to this passage, there are many living in enmity with God. Which biblically also means they are at enmity with themselves, with others and the world around them. Paul indicates we were once there.

How then can loving "enemies" (whether that means those actively harming you or those who are simply living in ignorance or hostility to God) be the basis of renewal for our community and our world?

I (Travis) don't have any real enemies; at least not in the "I'm going to kill you" variety. I haven't even met anyone who has tried to silence my love for Jesus. However, I realise that I live in a world where whether they know it or not, many are enemies of God. They are my next-door neighbours, the parents I talk to at school pickups, those I workout with in the gym. Whether they are actively out to get me or not does not matter. The Bible calls us to show radical love to those around us.

Which leaves us with a few questions to ask ourselves.

Are you actively loving anyone who is your enemy (or any enemy of God)?

What would it look like for you to radically love someone in a practical way? Who can you call, talk to, invite over, message and demonstrate God's love?

What other Christians can you get to help you love others? Who can you get on board to help you reach out to your friends and neighbours so you're not doing it all alone?

Additional Resources

REAPPEARING CHURCH BY MARK SAYERS

THIS BOOK IS ALL ABOUT HOW THE DECLINE OF CHRISTIANITY IS ACTUALLY A POSITIVE THING. WHEN THERE ARE LESS CHRISTIANS WHO LIVE BY CHEAP GRACE, IT MEANS THOSE LEFT CAN RELY ON GOD'S POWER AND SPIRIT TO SEE REVIVAL BEGIN TO HAPPEN.

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP BY DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

BASED AROUND JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT, THIS WAS WRITTEN DURING THE RISE OF NAZI GERMANY PRIOR TO WWII. EXAMINES COSTLY GRACE VS CHEAP GRACE.

FOLLOW ME BY DAVID PLATT

THE CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS IS NOT SIMPLY AN INVITATION TO PRAY A PRAYER; IT'S A SUMMONS TO LOSE YOUR LIFE—AND TO FIND NEW LIFE IN HIM. THIS BOOK WILL SHOW YOU WHAT SUCH LIFE ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE.

WWW.OPENDOORS.ORG.AU

OPEN DOORS IS A GROUP DEDICATED TO SERVING AND SUPPORTING THE PERSECUTED CHURCH AROUND THE WORLD. THEY HAVE GREAT RESOURCES, STUDIES, AND WAYS YOU CAN CONNECT WITH AND SERVE OUR PERSECUTED BROTHERS AND SISTERS AROUND THE WORLD.

SATURATE BY JEFF VANDERSTELT

A BOOK ABOUT EVERYDAY DISCIPLESHIP IN OUR COMMUNITY. SIMPLE. EASY TO READ. BUT HUGE IMPACT AS IT HELPS YOU TO TAKE JESUS' MISSION INTO YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD IN PRACTICAL WAYS.

An outdoor dining table is set up in a courtyard. The table is covered with a white tablecloth and a patterned runner. On the table, there are stacks of white plates, brown plates, and several black plastic cups. The background features a brick building with windows, lush green trees, and a string of white lights hanging across the scene. A bamboo privacy screen is visible behind the table.

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