

A Journey with Jesus

An Outdoor Worship Service

Note: This service was held outside at our congregation's annual outdoor service in August. We had set up five stations with a table and supplies at each one. The congregation was divided into five groups. One leader was at each station to read the story and help with the activity.

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Voice 1: When God appeared on earth in the person of Jesus,
most of the world did not recognize him
and therefore did not worship him.

Voice 2: Today we ask for faith that will
open our eyes to see Jesus for who he is,
that we might worship him in truth.
People of God, behold your God!

Voice 1: We open our eyes to see his glory.

Voice 2: We open our ears to hear his wisdom.

Voice 1: We open our hands to offer him gifts.

Voice 2: We open our mouths to sing his praise.

Voice 1: We open our hearts to offer him our love.

All: He is Lord!

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, be with us this day.

Renew our senses so that we might see, hear, smell, taste and feel your presence in all we experience.

Help us to respond as you would;

with patience, humbleness, joy, and love to all creation around us.

In Jesus name. Amen.

Hymn: *Sing the Journey* 31 He came down

Hymn: *Sing the Story* 37 First born of Mary

Offering

Man of Galilee by Linda Rich

A Journey with Jesus

Five stations, approximately 10 minutes each. See below.

- Wonderful Water
- Hey You, Come Work with Me
- Jesus Heals Us
- Please sir, I want some more
- Dead is Dead

Hymn: *Sing the Story* 39 Will you come and follow me

Sharing and Prayer

During our sharing time this morning we invite you to offer any thoughts or ideas you had as you heard the various stories about Jesus. Did you have any new insights? Do you have a prayer you would like to share? What other items should we pray for this morning?

Hymn: *Hymnal Worship Book* 229 Lord, you have come to the lakeshore

Benediction

Leader: The Lord who calls us to the water,

All: *give peace to you.*

Leader: The Lord who calls us to his service,

All: *give peace to you.*

Leader: The Lord who heals our minds and bodies,

All: *give peace to you.*

Leader: The Lord who feeds us with his body

All: *give peace to you.*

Leader: The Lord who lives in us forever

All: *give peace to you. Amen.*

Introduction to Stories/Activities

This morning we are going to take a journey through some important events in the life of Jesus and also in our journey as we follow him. What does it mean to follow him? What can we learn from the events of Jesus' life? How can we become more like him? These are some of the ideas we want to explore this morning. We have divided you into groups of 5 or 6. There are people of all ages in your group. We invite you to take your chairs and move through the five different stations. Help each other in your group as you journey together. No need to start at a particular station. Sometimes the journey starts in the middle, and sometimes it starts at the end. Each station will start with telling you a story and then a short activity to help you understand and respond to the story. Each station will take about 10 minutes. I will ring a bell when it is time to move on.

Wonderful Water

Supplies: Basin or large bowl, pitcher, cups, water, towel

Water! What a precious resource we have in this simple joining of hydrogen and oxygen. We cannot live without it, yet when there is too much of it, water is extremely powerful and dangerous. Jesus used water in many different ways during his teachings. He was baptized in it, he turned it into wine, he calmed it, he walked on it, and he gave it to those who were thirsty.

Scripture Texts:

Matthew 3:13-17, John 1:29-31

Drape the towel on your arm and take the bowl of water in both hands. Offer it to your neighbor to rinse his/her hands, to 'scrub' them as John the Baptist described baptism as scrubbing sins from our lives so that we might have a fresh start with God. Allow them time to dry their hands, then pass the items to them to continue around the circle.

Scripture Texts:

John 4:10, 13-14

Take the glass pitcher of water and pour a bit into your neighbor's cup, saying "May God give you living water". Allow them to drink, then pass the pitcher on to them so they may continue with their neighbor.

Hey You, Come and Work With Me

Supplies: Net, paper fish, markers, string

One day Jesus was walking along the shores of Lake Galilee. He was thinking about what he needed to do. He was thinking about what God wanted from him. He was thinking about lunch. He saw some fisherman working with their nets. He liked watching the boats and the men on the boats and the fish in the boats, especially the fish. Mmmm, fresh fish roasted over a fire.

"Okay, back to the fishermen," he thought. "Fishermen are dedicated workers," he thought. "I could use some good workers to help me with the task of sharing God's love." And before he could finish his thought, he called out to the two men, "Hey you two, Simon and Andrew. I can see you are fishing. I can see you are faithful workers. Come and work with me. I am going to teach you a thing or two about a new kind of fishing." And then Jesus just kept on walking on down the beach.

The two men were so surprised that this man knew their names and spoke so directly, they just dropped what they were doing and ran after him, leaving their nets and their boats and all those fish. Poor fish. I think they had lots of questions, but Jesus was moving so fast, they could hardly keep up.

A little way down the beach, Jesus came across two young brothers and their father sitting in their boat mending their nets. Jesus saw the young men and thought, "Ah ha, some more good workers. I could use more. And they work well together, and they know how to follow directions. They listen to their father. I could use some men like that." So he called out to them too, "Hey you two, James and John, sons of Zebedee, I can see you are mending your nets. I can see you are faithful workers. I can see you love your father. Come and work with me. I am going to teach you a thing or two about a new kind of mending." And then he just kept walking on down the beach.

And just like the first two followers, James and John jumped up out of their boat and ran after Jesus, leaving their boat rocking, and their father staring after them with his mouth hanging open. They all had questions, but keeping up with Jesus was hard work.

Further down the lake shore was a man sitting at a table. A long line of people were standing in front of the table handing their hard earned money to the man sitting on the other side, and nobody looked very happy. Jesus walked right up to the man sitting at the table and said, "Hey you, Levi. I can see you are collecting taxes. I can see you are a hard worker. I can see you are not very happy. Come and work with me. I am going to teach you a thing or two about a new kind of collecting." And then Jesus just kept on walking on down the beach.

And just like the rest of the men running after Jesus, Levi got up from his table and ran after Jesus too, leaving that long line of people staring after him, holding their hard earned money in their hands, wondering if they were going to be able to keep it after all.

Jesus kept walking around collecting more of those workers. He saw Philip and said, "Hey you, Philip, I can see you are a faithful worker. Come work with me. I am going to teach you a thing or two about a new kind of working." Philip got so excited that, instead of running after Jesus, he went and found his friend Nathaniel and told him too.

When Jesus met Nathaniel he looked him up and down and said, "Hey you, Nathaniel, I can see you are a good worker. I can see you are an honest man. Come work with me. I am going to teach you a thing or two about a new kind of honesty." Nathaniel took a moment to ask Jesus a question.

"Where did you get that idea? You don't even know me."

Jesus looked him up and down some more, and then he looked Nathaniel in the eye and said, "I know you well enough Nathaniel. I saw you sitting under the fig tree before Philip came and got you."

Nathaniel was so surprised, he said, "Wow, you are the Son of God."

Jesus raised one eyebrow and replied, "You haven't seen anything yet!" And then he turned and walked off, leaving the disciples to hurry on after him, questions buzzing in their heads.

Jesus kept collecting those faithful workers until he had twelve of them. He collected Simon, who he liked to call Peter. He collected Andrew, Simon's brother. He collected James and John, and Philip and Bartholomew. He collected Matthew and Thomas. He collected James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot. He collected Judas the son of James, and

Judas Iscariot. They were all faithful workers. Some were good and some were trying to be good and having a hard time at it. And he taught them all a thing or two about fishing, and mending, and collecting, and working, and honesty and a whole bunch of other stuff too.

Jesus is still going around collecting faithful workers and saying, "Hey you, I can see you are a faithful worker. I can see you trying to live. I can see you trying to love. Come and work with me. I am going to teach you a thing or two about a new kind of living and loving." And then he just keeps walking, leaving us to run after him with all our questions buzzing in our heads.

Cut out a fish. Write a question you would like to ask Jesus on the fish. Or write something you would like Jesus to teach you a thing or two about. Or write about what Jesus might be calling you to do as his follower. Hang your fish on the net as a prayer.

Jesus Heals Us

Supplies: Clothes line, clothes pins, strips of cloth, markers

Scripture Texts:

Luke 6:17-18, Luke 6:19, Luke 7:21-23

But was it all that simple? Was there more to each story? What was their frame of mind? The Leper, a Samaritan no less, pronounced unclean... unwelcome... alone!

The blind, the deaf, the mute... left begging for a living. No hope of a better life. Rejected ... ignored... lonely.

The paralyzed; unknown, unwanted, unloved, withered and atrophied as resentment twisted them further.

The woman crippled for 18 years, bent over and unable to stand up straight, likely experiencing chronic, debilitating pain. Day after day, seeing only the dirt at her feet... a constant reminder of her pain and shame, with no hope of change.

The woman with a constant blood flow for 12 long years... unclean, unloved, untouchable, isolated and lonely.

Jesus saw each one, called to them, laid hands on them, and gave them freedom.

When we can only see our pain, Jesus sees us, calls to us, reaches his hands out to us, and raises us into freedom and joy. When others, even those who are meant to care for us, turn us away, Jesus invites us in.

- How can we be like each of these whom Jesus healed, persistently seeking God's presence, receiving Jesus' call to freedom and healing?
- How are we like the synagogue leaders who were so focused on following the rules that they missed an opportunity for grace?
- How is God calling us to open our eyes to see things differently, to see the needs of those around us?
- Who are the lonely, the depressed, the addicted, the violent, the abusive, the violated and abused, the broken that we might walk with and pray for?
- Where might God want to heal blindness and pain and violence in our world?
- How can we choose to follow Jesus, to reach out and welcome those in darkness? What is Jesus calling to us?

Take 3 strips of cloth and markers. Write a word or a prayer for healing on each strip. One could be for yourself, one for family / friends, and one for the world. Clip your strips to the clothes line and braid them together.

Please Sir, I Want Some More

Supplies: Soap, water and towel to wash hands, variety of fruit, large stainless steel bowl, lemon water to retain color, cutting boards, knives, garbage bowl

Food is something we all need! It is essential for our bodies to develop and grow; to produce energy to keep warm, move and work; to protect against and fight infection and to recover from sickness. Food is the physical nutrition we need.

Please sir, I want some more.

Jesus knew what it was like to be hungry... he went without food for 40 days and was tempted by the devil. He was famished and tired. After this time, Jesus began his ministry of healing and teaching people.

Large crowds of people were gathered around, listening to Jesus' teachings, waiting for healing from their many illnesses and diseases – all the while forgetting about food. Jesus knew they would be hungry but no one wanted to leave when there was so much to hear and see. So Jesus took a few loaves and fish, looked up to heaven, gave thanks, blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to give to the crowd. All ate and were filled; and they gathered up the leftovers into baskets. Jesus filled their physical hunger.

Please sir, I want some more.

Jesus ate with tax collectors – Levi, Matthew and Zacchaeus, to name a few. Tax collectors were considered to be traitors of the nation and of God. They were considered enemies of the people and sinners... but Jesus ate with his enemies.

While Jesus was in Bethany, he sat at the table of Simon the Leper where a woman came and anointed his head with costly oil. Jesus ate with the outcast.

And while eating at the home of a Pharisee, a woman who was considered to be a sinner came and bathed his feet with oil. Her sins were forgiven. Jesus ate with the sinners.

Jesus ate in the home of Mary and Martha; he ate in the homes of the Pharisees. Jesus taught them many things; brought good news to many; and filled their mental and emotional hunger. Jesus ate with the righteous.

Please sir, I want some more.

Jesus ate the Passover meal with his friends. (*Read Matthew 26:26-28*) Jesus filled their spiritual hunger.

Please sir, I want some more.

Meals are a powerful expression of welcome and friendship. They are central to the ministry of Jesus because they embody and enact the grace of God. Jesus fills our physical, emotional, and spiritual hunger.

Food also reminds us of our dependence on other people. It connects us to a network of farmers, traders, storekeepers, cooks, families. Above all it reminds us of our dependence on God. We need nourishment to sustain us.

Please sir, I want some more.

Notice the different types, shapes, sizes and colors of the fruit. These represent our diversity and the diversity of people with whom Jesus ate. Together we will create a yummy and colorful fruit salad for all to enjoy. Take one item of fruit, core it, peel it, cut it up and add it to the large bowl. As you work, think about a neighbor, a friend, an enemy, and pray that Jesus might fill their hunger.

Dead Is Dead. Except When You Ain't

Supplies: Variety of materials for making crosses

Everythin' dies. That is the truth. We all are born, and then we die. Animals die, plants die, and people die. And when you die, you stay dead. Dead is dead ... except when you ain't.

Now God, he took Ezekiel up and down a big open plain, filled with bones. Dry bones. God told Ezekiel to preach to them bones. And them bones, they stood up and walked away. And God told Ezekiel, "I'll dig up your graves and bring you out alive."

Dead is dead. Except when you ain't.

Elijah, he was a great prophet. He was sent by God to this lonely woman, Zarephath. Elijah told the woman, who was running out of flour and oil, and almost starvin', that God would provide for her and her son. And God did. Them jars never run out of flour and oil. But then her son, he went and got sick and died. And Zarephath, she was a weepin' and wailin'. But God weren't done with that boy yet. So Elijah went up to the boy's room, and he laid himself over that boy's body three times and then prayed that God would allow the boy's soul to come back into him. And that boy, why he was raised from the dead.

Dead is dead. Except when you ain't.

Now Jesus, he was the greatest one of all, some said he was a prophet, but I am tellin' you, he was the Son of God. And children, he could do amazing things. One day a man named Jairus asked Jesus to come heal his daughter who was sufferin' something awful. But by the time Jesus go there, she had already died. So Jesus sent the mourners out, but he took the girls' parents and Peter, James and John into the room where the dead girl was just lying there, dead. And then Jesus said, "Little girl, get up." And she did.

Dead is dead. Except when you ain't.

Jesus had a really good friend, called Lazarus. Now his friend, well he got sick, and his sisters, they sent for Jesus to come and heal him. But Jesus, he were real busy, and he didn't

get there right away. So Lazarus, he just up and died. And everyone was weepin' and wailin', and carryin' on. Martha, she was really angry with Jesus. And she done told him so. But Mary, she done still believe that Jesus could raise up her brother, even if it was only at the end of all the days.

Jesus, he listened to all that sad weepin' and cryin', so that soon he was cryin' too. He went out to the place where they had buried his friend, and all the people came weepin' and cryin' behind him. Lazarus had been in the grave for four days when Jesus came. Jesus asked the people, "Roll away that stone." But them people were so worried about the horrible smell, they didn't want to. Jesus said again, "Roll away that stone, go on, roll it away." And this time, the people did what he said. Then Jesus, he called out, "Lazarus, come on out of there." And Lazarus came out, still wrapped up in the strips of cloth. And everyone was laughin' and cryin' at the same time, until Lazarus told them to help him out of those strips of cloth, before he done tripped and hurt himself.

Dead is dead. Except when you ain't.

But children, the biggest miracle of all is this. Jesus, who had brought all those people back from the dead, who could heal people and walk on water, well he up and died too. He died when they nailed him to a cross and left him there until it was just too hard to breathe. And they took down his body, wrapped it up tight in strips of cloth and put him in a tomb with a big ole stone in front of the door. And he stayed in that tomb until the morning of that third day. Some women, cryin' and carryin' on went to take care of his poor worn out body, but they found the stone rolled away, and the tomb was empty and others came and saw the same thing. Some of them saw angels, and one women, called Mary, well she saw Jesus himself in the garden. And later, others saw him too, and they touched him, and talked to him and sat down to eat with him. Because children, starting on that day, dead was not dead. No sir, it sure weren't.

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is living in you. (Romans 8:11)

What does it mean to you that Jesus died and rose from the dead? Create a cross from the supplied materials and as you make it, think about the difference his life, death and resurrection has made in your life. You could write this on a tag, or on the back of the cross, or just pray it quietly in your mind.

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