**I Love to Tell the Story**

Explore every story of Jesus in this year-long devotional guide. Go at your own pace using the online archive.

**Day 81: Jesus is accused**

**Matt 12:22-24; Mark 3:19b022; Luke 11:14-16**

Guided reflection:

Jesus sure knew how to create a stir! A man who was consider “dumb” meant he was not able to speak AND he was never able to see as well. Jesus healed the man. The man can now speak and to see! What a great miracle. The regular folks were amazed and began to say that maybe Jesus was the Messiah. But the churchy types had no concern for the man’s plight… they were ticked that the people thought too highly of Jesus! They really missed the point, didn’t they? Jesus is trying to heal someone and they want to concentrate on “who does he think he is to heal people!” Oh, my. We still do it today. We focus on the minor things and forget what we are called to do. This section of the Jesus stories is full of Jesus’ frustration in dealing with the Pharisees. Have you ever had a Pharisee-type after you… or have you ever been a Pharisee? Ouch!

Guided prayer:

*“O giving and loving God, we know that you want us to see the human condition around us. You want us to do what we can to ease human suffering. But we would rather fight over politics, and who is responsible, and who is going to pay for things... and somehow the people in need get lost in the debate. Father, forgive me for the times I have missed the point. Amen”*

**Day 82: A House Divided**

**Matt 12: 25-37; Mark 3:23-30, Luke 11:17-23**

Guided reflection:

Jesus has some common sense one liners for the Pharisees: “A house divided cannot stand.” “If you are not with me, you are against me.” “A tree is known by its fruit.” How can he be the devil and cast out the devil? Wouldn’t that be like a divided house? If Jesus does good deeds, then maybe he is good. Are you with me or not? Jesus might ask us today… what kind of fruit are you producing? Is your heart going Jesus’ direction? Either you are with him or you are not… we still get to choose.

Guider prayer:

*“I want to be on your side, dear God. I want to live a life that is producing evidence of goodness and right things. Show me the places where I say one thing and then do another… show me where my heart might be divided and thus in danger. Amen”*

**Day 83: They wanted “signs” from Jesus**

**Matt 12: 38-42; Luke 11: 29-32**

Guided reflections:

The Pharisees were intrigued with Jesus and they wanted some proof, so they asked for a sign to show that he is from God. Jesus knows that their hearts are not really open – they would not believe him if he did magic tricks. No, they were not seeking truth, instead they just wanted a show. Jesus sets a boundary with their unhealthiness, I think. He is not going to waste his time trying to convince the inconvincible! I wish I had the wisdom of Jesus, don’t you? I need to know when to defend myself and when to just let it go because others would not understand. I get hooked every time! Do you ever have trouble with that? Jesus knew his mission was not to please the Pharisees, but to be a savior of the world. Thank goodness He understood that one!

Guided prayer:

*“I need wisdom, O God. So many times I forget my purpose in life and instead try to please and satisfy people. That is a hard line to walk. I want to be loving and kind, but not side lined by people pleasing. Help me to know my purpose and to live for you and not for the opinion of others. Amen.”*

**Day 84: The return of the Evil Spirit**

**Matt 12: 43-45; Luke 11:24-26**

Guided reflection:

This problem is often seen in recovering alcoholics or those with other additions. They quit one addiction and replace it with another. Unless folks face the patterns behind addictions they will just replace one “filler” for another in their life. Our hearts were created with a God shaped vacuum… and trying to fill that hole with other things just keeps us from the real answer to our emptiness. What do you “use” to fill up your empty places?

Guided prayer:

*“ Dear God, Help me to see the places I have tried to fill my own God shaped vacuum. Sweep me clean, but fill up my heart with your love and your mercy. Amen”*

**Day 85: Jesus seems to offend his Mom**

**Matt 12: 46-50, Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21**

Guided reflection:

Now, as a mother, this story in the day and life of Jesus offends me. We call Jesus’ mother “the Holy mother of Jesus,” yet when she comes to where he is in ministry and asks to speak to him, he gives her the brush off. He says that his true relatives are those who do the will of His Heavenly Father. I always wondered about what she wanted to say to him. Was he really setting a boundary with her? Maybe she had a list of people she wanted him to “heal”or was planning a family reunion and wanted him to be the star. Who knows? But putting Mary aside, Jesus’ point is that we are “in the family” if we do God’s will. So, are you “in”? (But the next story starts with “Jesus went out of the house”… maybe he did go home after all!)

Guided Prayer: *“We do not know the whole story here, O God, but we do hear the point – that if we*

*do your will, we are all in this together… we are family! Thank you for including me and knowing my heart. Amen.”*