

# Family Feud

February 12 – Mark 3:20-35; Matthew 12:22-50; Luke 8:19-21

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 43 – 322 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus returned to his second home and Galilean headquarters in Capernaum where He was confronted by overwhelming crowds, accusing scribes, and an unsupportive family. His notoriety had grown to such an extent that He could not go anywhere without throngs of people pressing in on Him. He and His disciples were so busy meeting the needs of the masses that they did not have time to eat. Jesus sacrificed Himself for the good of others.

Amid the chaos came religious leaders from Jerusalem, no doubt sent to condemn Jesus' ministry or to discover something they could use against Him. They were jealous of the attention He was getting and believed He was stirring up trouble (*Matt. 12:23*). Thus, they viewed Jesus as a threat, which is why they hurled their worst accusations at Him.

When they saw Jesus casting out demons, they claimed He did so with the power of Beelzebul or Beelzebub (which means "Lord of the flies, death, or dung," an Old Testament reference to Satan (*2 Kgs. 1:2; Matt. 10:25*)). Jesus first unraveled their argument, then explained that He was more powerful than Satan, as the "One who binds the strong man and plunders his property" (*Mk. 3:27*).

Next, Jesus warned the scribes of the dangerous game they were playing, crediting the spirit of the devil for the work of the Spirit of God. He called it the unforgivable or unpardonable sin. After exposing their evil hearts and evil words, the religious leaders demanded that Jesus perform a sign or miracle, to prove that He was from God. Jesus refused their request, saying that the sign would come later. "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (*Matt. 12:40*). He was prophesying of His death and resurrection.

## Daily Reflection

While there was a lot to unpack in today's passage, I was struck by the reaction of Jesus' family to His ministry. When they heard what He was doing, they concluded that He had lost His mind. They even conspired to apprehend Jesus and restrain Him (*Mk. 3:21*). Before His death and resurrection, Jesus' siblings did not believe He was the Messiah. Thus, they did not support His ministry but rather worked to hinder it (*Matt. 10:36; Jn. 7:5*).

When His family arrived in Capernaum, Jesus knew their motives, which explains His comments. "My [real] brothers and sisters are those who do God's will" (*Mk. 3:35*). He was talking about His followers. Followers of Christ (that's us) are siblings in the family of God.

What has been the reaction of your immediate and extended family to your faith in Christ? Describe any pushback to your ministry efforts.

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Jesus summarized our passage when He said, "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters" (*Matt. 12:30*). How should we view unbelieving family members compared to our spiritual family?

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# Soil Samples

February 13 – Mark 4:1-20; Matthew 13:1-23; Luke 8:4-15

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 44 – 321 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We witnessed a significant shift in Jesus' ministry as He began teaching with parables. Parables are simple stories that communicate important spiritual truths. His first parable was about a farmer sowing seeds. Everyone in the audience was familiar with farming, with seeds, and with sowing, but Jesus was not teaching a lesson about farming. He was talking about God's Word (the Gospel) and how people respond to it.

**When the good news of salvation (seed) is shared with a group of people (soil), it is received in different ways.** First, there are those who do not receive it at all. They reject it. The seeds have no chance to take root because they land in a place without soil (road), and they are snatched by the birds (spiritual enemy).

Second, there are those who hear the Gospel and seem to receive it (shallow soil). They accept the Gospel based on emotions or intellect or because they desire a "good life." But when difficulty comes, they are disillusioned or disappointed, and they abandon the Lord.

Third, there are those who hear the Gospel but are so distracted by the worries and wealth of the world that God's Word gets lost in the mix (thorny soil). Finally, there are those with good soil, who receive the Gospel by faith and bear much fruit in their lives.

"He who has an ear, let him hear." Jesus said this often before or after He shared the Gospel with a crowd of people. It was a cryptic way of stating that though everyone has ears, they do not readily hear or accept the truth when they are presented with it. As were the people of Jesus' day, so are people today. The Gospel goes out every day. **Seeds are being sown by Jesus' followers regularly, but only those with good soil will accept and believe it.** Everyone else will harden his heart to the good news of God's gracious gift of salvation.

## Daily Reflection

The seed of the Gospel has been sown in your life. How did you receive it? Can you identify with one or more of these types of soil? Explain.

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If the good news of salvation is true and the only hope for our souls, then why doesn't everyone readily accept it?

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We've been commanded by the Lord to share the Gospel with others. How does this parable inform your work of sowing seeds? Does this parable encourage or discourage you? Explain.

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# The Kingdom of God

February 14 – Luke 8:16-18; Mark 4:21-34; Matthew 13:24-52

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Day 45 – 320 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus continued teaching the people of Galilee with parables, which was a fulfillment of prophecy (*Ps. 78:2*). Here, His parables focused on the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God. The phrase “kingdom of God” is used 68 times in the New Testament, while the phrase “kingdom of heaven” is used 32 times and only in the book of *Matthew*. Broadly speaking, the kingdom of God is the rule of our sovereign Lord over His creation, or it can refer to the final kingdom that Christ will establish on earth. Spiritually speaking, the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God refers to salvation, those who trust in Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life by faith and repentance (the Church).

At times, it is difficult to know which kingdom the Lord was describing or what point He was trying to make. However, today, the Lord was teaching about salvation, how people respond to the word of truth, His Gospel message, like the Parable of the Sower yesterday. From these parables, we can glean some general but important truths.

First, though the spiritual kingdom of heaven (the Gospel, salvation, the Church) had a small and humble beginning, it will grow to impact and include people all over the world (Parables of the Growing Wheat, the Mustard Seed, and the Leaven). Second, the kingdom of heaven is of such value that the Lord will give all He has, His life, to purchase it (Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl).

Third, God’s enemy seeks to derail His plans and destroy the kingdom of heaven (Parable of Leaven and the Enemy Sowing Tares or Weeds). Fourth, there will be a final judgment when God will separate those who are His from those who are not (Parables of the Tares and Fish). Finally, Christ’s followers (that’s us) must seek to understand and share these truths with others (Parable of the Lampstand, also *Matt. 13:52*).

## Daily Reflection

There is another interpretation of the stories of the treasure and pearl. Both were hidden and found, and when they were found, the person who discovered them gave everything he had to possess them. This interpretation does not insinuate that we earn salvation through works. Rather it highlights the priceless value of salvation, once hidden from people before Christ, now revealed to people by Christ. **Once discovered, there is nothing else in our lives that deserves such admiration.**

Both interpretations of this parable are meaningful. Christ gave His life to purchase the Church with His blood (*Acts 20:28*). There is nothing that God values in this world more than the Church. Similarly, once we realize the value of what He’s done for us in salvation, that He is our only hope in this life and the life to come, **we will treasure our relationship with Him more than anything else.**

Read *Mark 10:21, 22; Luke 14:33; and Philipians 3:7, 8*. What challenge(s) do you find in these passages?

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We treasure so many things in this world, but do any of them compare to our relationship with the Lord, to the salvation we have in Him? **Sadly, many people treasure the kingdom of this world more than the kingdom of heaven.** What about you?

# In the Same Boat

February 15 – Matthew 8:23-34; Mark 4:35-5:20; Luke 8:22-39

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 46 – 319 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus calmed a storm on the Sea of Galilee, then healed two men possessed by demons. After teaching parables all day, Jesus was tired and needed to rest. He asked the disciples to go to the other side of the lake. But while He was sleeping, a terrible storm arose and endangered them all. The disciples woke Jesus in a panic, who quickly calmed the storm with a few words.

When they got to the other side of the sea, two demon-possessed men approached Jesus. One must have been more dominant or violent than the other, as the second man is not mentioned in the accounts of *Mark* and *Luke*.

The demons bowed before Jesus. They knew who He was and that He had great power over them. They hinted at their future judgment, as if they knew the punishment that awaited them. The demons also had a collective name, Legion, because they were many (a Roman legion had 6000 men). Jesus freed the men from the demons, which caused a stir among the people. They implored Jesus to leave them.

It's interesting to note that the men who were demon-possessed lived among the dead, they were half-naked, out of their minds, and constantly hurting themselves and others. But after Jesus removed the demons, the men were fully clothed, calm, and talking with the Lord. The enemy brings death and destruction. In Christ, there is both life and liberty.

I often like to ask the why question about stories like these. Why did Jesus take time to cross the sea only to be told to leave as soon as He arrived? Did He not know this would happen? The answer is in the details.

That region was largely populated with Gentiles (non-Jews), who had not yet heard about Jesus or received the good news of the gospel. The evidence is in the name Decapolis, ten Greco-

Roman cities, and the raising of pigs, which is an unclean animal in the Jewish culture.

This legion of demons prevented the people from hearing about Jesus. Yet He crossed the sea, endured a storm, and risked the dangers of an angry mob, all to remove the demon barrier and send two freed witnesses into the region to "report to the people the great things the Lord has done" (*Mk. 5:19*). The entire episode opened the way for the Gospel to spread.

## Daily Reflection

On a more personal note, can you imagine what the disciples were thinking as they crossed the sea? On the way over and on the way back, they sat amazed at what they witnessed. First the calming of the wind and waves, then the calming of the demoniacs. **Who was this Person in the boat with them?** They had seen Him perform miracles before, but this was different. Who tells the storm what to do, and who commands the evil one? They were speechless.

When Jesus said, "O you of little faith," He might as well be talking to me. Like the disciples, I am often overwhelmed by the things I cannot control, as they were with the storm and demoniacs. But I have in the boat with me one who controls all things. What overwhelms me is no big deal to Him. All I must do is go to Him, like they did, and say, "Lord, save me!" I don't have to panic or fear. I don't have to worry or fret. **He's in the boat with me, and He's sovereign.** I simply must have faith in Him.

What are you facing right now that is overwhelming you?

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**Don't forget whose boat you're in.**

# Faith and Peace

February 16 – Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56; Matthew 9:18-34

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 47 – 318 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus returned to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, where He performed more miracles. One of the miracles occurred while He was walking to Jairus' house. A woman who had been bleeding internally for 12 years touched Jesus' clothes. Another miracle Jesus performed was healing Jairus' daughter, whom He said was asleep. We know that she was near the point of death, so perhaps she was in a coma or had already died. Either way, Jesus healed her.

In the last two days, we have witnessed Jesus' power over nature (calming the sea), demons, disease, and death. In miraculous ways, He was exhibiting His divine power to prove His identity as the Messiah. Men cannot control nature. We are powerless before demons, we cannot cure all diseases (as the doctors could not stop the hemorrhaging), and death is inevitable. Yet Jesus was (and is) more than a man. He was God in the flesh. For Him, all is possible.

There are details to note, of course, about these miracles. First, the healing of the demoniacs (yesterday) took place in a Gentile area. Today, Jesus was back in Jewish territory. We can tell by the fact that Jairus was a synagogue official, the presence of the wailing mourners (a Jewish custom), and the subtle mention of the twelve tribes (12 years of bleeding, 12-year-old girl).

The shunning of the hemorrhaging woman was another detail. According to the Law of Moses, bleeding women were unclean, unable to marry, and unable to worship at the Temple (*Lev. 15:25-33; 20:18*). That's why it was important for Jesus to identify the one who touched Him, so that He could publicly declare her healed and whole. She would no longer be an outcast.

Here are two other details to note. Several times Mark included Aramaic phrases in his book (*Mk. 5:41*), which allows us to know the language used at the time of Jesus. Also, mentioned for the first time was Jesus' inner

circle (v.37), when He chose Peter, James, and John to accompany Him in Jairus' house. We are not told why He chose these men, but these three would see and experience moments the others would not.

## Daily Reflection

Though these miracles were amazing, we must not overlook their common bond — **faith**. When Jesus healed the bleeding woman, He said to her, "Your faith has made you well" (v.34). When Jairus' received word that his daughter had passed away, Jesus told him, "Do not be afraid, only believe" (v.36). To the blind men, Jesus said, "Because of your faith, it will happen. **For these individuals, faith produced a peace.** Jesus told the woman, "Go in peace." For Jairus, Jesus' words must have been comforting.

How does faith produce peace? Noah Webster said faith is "the assent of the mind to the truth of what is declared by another, resting on his authority, without other evidence" (*American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828*). The Bible says faith is "the conviction of things not seen" (*Heb. 11:1*). **When we know and trust the one to whom we pray and in whom we believe, we have a peace of mind, no matter what it is we are facing** (*Phil. 4:7, 8*).

When and how has your faith produced this indescribable peace amid life's difficulties?

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If you are not experiencing peace, pray for faith. **Faith and peace are gifts of God**, not miracles of our own doing (*Eph. 2:8, 9*).

# Familiarity and Faith

February 17 – Mark 6:1-6; Matthew 13:53-58

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 48 – 317 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus returned to Nazareth, where He received a cold homecoming. Everywhere else He had traveled and taught, He'd been followed, even constrained, by huge crowds. In modern lingo, Jesus had achieved rockstar status, yet the people of Nazareth were skeptical and aloof. What exactly was the problem?

While the townspeople were impressed with the wisdom and authority of Jesus' teaching, even the miracles He performed, they were bothered by what they knew about Him. **Their familiarity with Jesus hindered their faith in Jesus.**

For example, Jesus had lived in Nazareth for 30 years as just "a regular guy" in town, but now He claimed to be the Son of God, the Promised One, and the Savior of all mankind? Has He lost His mind? The people knew Him as a carpenter. He had no special education in the Law of Moses. He didn't graduate from an elite college, earn any impressive degrees, or receive any specialized training. Jesus had no professional credentials. He held no political office or religious position, yet here He was instructing them in spiritual matters. How can this be?

There was also that matter with Jesus' mother, who got pregnant before she was married. In their eyes, Jesus was an illegitimate son, born out of a scandalous affair. What makes Him so special now? Then, there was his family. Even His brothers and sisters thought He was crazy (*Mk. 3:20, 21*). Why should the townspeople think differently?

Rather than see Jesus for who He was — the one sent to redeem them from their sins — the people of Nazareth dismissed Jesus as a fraud and refused to believe in Him. **Their familiarity hindered their faith.** "Jesus wondered at their unbelief" (*Mk. 6:6*). They missed the opportunity of a lifetime, the greatest moment in history. They were in the presence of God's Son, yet their hearts were cold and callous.

## Daily Reflection

It is difficult to read this account without getting angry at the people of Nazareth, yet we are often guilty of the same mistake. The phrase, "Don't judge a book by its cover," comes to mind. We readily make judgments about people or situations without knowing the facts. We dismiss people because of their appearance, occupation, social status, or lack of popularity, education, or position.

The truth is that God often works through humble means, in unconventional ways, and through ordinary people. Jesus was no ordinary person. He was much more than a carpenter. The people of Nazareth couldn't look beyond what their eyes were telling them. They judged the book too soon and missed the good news of salvation written on its pages.

The other truth is that we have become so familiar with the story and teachings of Jesus that we often miss the person of Jesus, who He really is and what that means for our lives. As a result, **our familiarity hinders our faith.** To many, Jesus is just a character in a big book from ancient history. He is not real, He is not present, and therefore, He is not impactful.

How can you avoid becoming like the people of Nazareth, dismissing the work of God because He doesn't meet your expectations? How can you remedy the blindness that familiarity produces and see the true person of Jesus?

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# The Cost of Discipleship

February 18 – Matthew 9:35-11:1; Mark 6:7-13, 30-32; Luke 9:1-6

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 49 – 316 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus continued His ministry in Galilee both teaching and healing. However, there was a definite transition that occurred today. Up to this point, Jesus had done all the work, and the disciples who followed Him just watched and learned. But, today, the Teacher gave an assignment, a mission. It was time to apply their learning and help Him “go into the fields and gather the harvest” (*Matt. 9:36-38*).

For this short-term mission, Jesus put the disciples in pairs (*Mk. 6:7*) and sent them to the Jews (*Matt. 10:5, 6*). He then empowered them with His authority to heal (*v.1*) and gave them important instructions and warnings (*v.8-42*). The goal was to share the good news of the Gospel and bring people to salvation in Christ. While we can’t duplicate their mission exactly (i.e., raise the dead, cleanse lepers, etc.), there are observations we can make and principles we can apply from the guidance that Jesus gave.

First, while it is okay to receive financial support from God’s people, we should never use the Gospel to enrich ourselves (*v.8-11*). Second, not everyone will be hospitable to the Gospel. Some will accept Jesus, but many will not. We do not force the Gospel on anyone, but rather move on from those who reject it (*v.12-15*).

Third, the Gospel has enemies (wolves), and they bite. Satan will oppose any effort to share the Gospel with others (*v.16-39*). We must be prepared for opposition, rejection, and persecution. Opposition may even arise in our own family (*v.21, 34-37*). “A disciple is not above his teacher” (*v.24*). If the Teacher was persecuted, then His students will be also.

However, we must not fear persecution (*v.26, 28, 31*). God cares for us, and He knows what is said or done to us (*v.26*). He also knows what we say or do to serve others in secret, and He will reward us (*v.40-42*). Our fear (love and

reverence) of God should overshadow our fear of man. That’s easier said than done, of course.

Finally, there are times when we need to rest (*Mk. 6:30-32*). Ministry to people can drain us in many ways, and it’s okay to take a break. Be intentional and schedule times to be refreshed.

## Daily Reflection

To summarize His instructions, Jesus added these pointed words, “He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it” (*v.38, 39*). In short, **the price of discipleship is high. It demands total commitment to Christ, even at the cost of self-love, family, friends, jobs, reputation, money, popularity, and life.**

What has following Christ or sharing Him with others cost you?

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What does your answer tell you about the cost of your discipleship?

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We tend to live life for ourselves, our goals, our desires and dreams, our wealth and security. Can you imagine telling the Lord, when you stand before Him some day, that you chose to live for yourself and not for Him? **The greatest use of our time and life is to spend it in the service of Christ**, regardless of what happens to us. Is He worth that to you?