



Theme: Good, Good News!
“Good News Spreads Quickly”

Weekly Memory Verse: *‘But for us; There is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created, and through whom we live.*
–1 Corinthians 8:6

Family Activity for the Week: “Do you want to build a snowman?”, a popular song from the Disney children’s movie Frozen, is the song the younger sister sings to her older sister. It’s a way the two of them connected in the past, and there’s this longing to reconnect, to embrace, to share each other’s love once again. Many people in our congregation and our community, feel isolated and alone. They long to reach out but can’t. What if you were to build a snowman in a neighbor’s yard? A quick 15 minutes spent, to bring joy to another? I think that would be a wonderful way to celebrate Jesus’ love and to share the hope of His eternal Good News!

Monday, February 1 – Read Mark 1:21–39. The only person who might have ever had a right to feel he should (or could) try to fix the world all at once was Jesus. But he didn’t! Yes, he healed sick people, drove out demons and ministered to the whole town gathered at the door of the house. But in the morning, without telling anyone, he left the whole crowd waiting while he prayed. When the disciples nervously said, “Everyone is looking for you,” Jesus replied, “Let’s go somewhere else.” He took the long view of God’s plans, and of his own place in them, and yet the Good News he shared STILL spread quickly.

- ▲ Imagine for a moment how a modern PR expert might have planned for Jesus to “capitalize” on the crowds he drew in Capernaum. (He was, after all, the Lord of the universe come to live on earth.) In what ways did Jesus’ behavior differ from the advice you imagine him getting? In what ways can you learn from Jesus’ example, and adopt his attitude toward “success” and letting God, not popular acclaim, define your true value? How might this help to spread the Good News?
- ▲ Verse 34 used language that, in Semitic idiom, implied that Jesus healed everyone who came to him. In his day’s view, it also took in virtually every human illness: he healed “all kinds of diseases” and cast out “many demons.” Today, God usually works through people trained in physical and emotional healing—but it’s still God at work. What hurt(s) do you bring to Jesus today? Are you open to God’s help and healing through today’s means? How can your healing story be part of the Good News of Jesus for others?

Prayer: *Lord, you know even my most carefully hidden or deeply buried hurts and fears. I ask for your healing touch. I trust you to be at work for my good and that your Good News will be shared in that healing. Amen.*

Tuesday, February 2 – Read Romans 2:1–4 and Luke 7:11–17. Having met the risen Christ, the apostle Paul wrote that “God’s kindness is supposed to lead you to change your heart and life.” At many points, the gospels show Jesus acting kindly out of his deep concern for hurting people (e.g. [Matthew 9:36–38](#), [Mark 8:1–8](#)). Today’s story from Luke 7 is an outstanding example of how Jesus showed God’s kindness. He went to a village called Nain. He met a large
(Message Notes and Meditation Moments for January 29–30, 2021 – For more, go to www.summitdurango.org)

crowd coming through the city gates, not to greet Jesus but to support a grieving widow and mother going to bury her only son. There's no hint in the story that Jesus knew the woman or had gone to Nain to meet her. But whatever his original plans, he laid aside any other agenda until he brought the woman's son back to life and restored him to his mother.

- ▲ To lose a child is among the most painful of human experiences. As the woman Jesus encountered in Nain, walked with her community in sorrow, Jesus had compassion for her. When he told her not to cry in verse 13, he was not chastising her emotion but extending comfort and preparing her for the resurrection to come. In that day, losing an only son was not just an emotional loss. Under Jewish law, only through a male relative did a widow have legal standing to own property or sustain herself. So, Jesus kindly saved the widow in Nain from likely poverty and marginalization as well as the loss of her son's love.
- ▲ What has Jesus saved you from? In what ways does a sense of his kindness powerfully at work for you and through you give you strength and a sense of purpose every day? How have you had a chance to share that Good News with others?

Prayer: Loving Jesus, your kindness wasn't a dull duty. It flowed from the overflow of your love for all of creation. I'm not you, but I want to learn more all the time about how to let your love flow out of me to all those around me. Amen.

Wednesday, February 3 – Read Acts 8:27-38. An Ethiopian in Jerusalem was a long way from home. Acts said he'd come to Jerusalem to worship, but how did he get his hands on a scroll to be reading on his journey home? Perhaps in Jerusalem he'd heard some of the spreading stories about Jesus. Whatever led to it, he was curious about the sacred Hebrew readings in Isaiah. His curiosity produced initial confusion. He admitted he needed help to understand what he was reading. Philip's immediate task was simple—help this curious man find the meaning of the gospel message.

- ▲ The Holy Spirit sent Philip on a mission to help guide the influential Ethiopian to understand the gospel from the prophetic words of Isaiah 53. Philip ran to the chariot eager to help the man. That example of eager obedience is inspiring. When the Holy Spirit whispers to you, how willing are you to listen? Are you eager to help others understand your faith?
- ▲ People with spiritual questions and wonderings need your help to make sense out of what, for many, can be a very confusing message. When was the last time you helped someone make sense of the gospel message? Do you feel equipped to do so? If not, what could you do to feel more confident and capable?

Prayer: God, teach me how to listen closely for the Holy Spirit's whispering guidance. Help me have the courage to eagerly obey. Stir within me, Lord, a desire to better equip myself to help curious people make sense of the gospel story. Amen

Thursday, February 4 – Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. This chapter refers to the argument of the Corinthians asserting their freedom to eat food sacrificed to idols. Some believed this was okay as they did not believe in those gods or idols, while others believed it sent a message that they believed in those gods or idols. For a newly converted Christian in Greco-Roman cities this was not simply a religious, but also a social problem. Such meat, which was offered for sale and served at family celebrations, at gatherings of private associations and clubs, or at public festivals, had passed in one form or another through religious rites. The struggle is two-fold for these early followers of Jesus. How do they feel about eating this food AND how does it affect others who are watching them?

- ▲ We talk about sin in our Wesleyan tradition as brokenness or separation, between us and others; us and God; even within ourselves. How is it that what is not sin for one group is sin for another? What general principle is Paul applying in verse 9? In verse 2, Paul points out that if we are focused on what we know, we are likely to exclude empathy and concern for others. Do you ever get focused on knowing something about God at the expense of being known by God as Paul alludes to in verse 3? What might hinder you from loving people who do not know something you know?

- ▲ Where, in your experience, is one person's "freedom" another person's "stumbling block"? Alcohol? Certain types of clothes? Dance? Music? Lifestyle? Political issues? How can you help spread the Good News by your actions, and what you choose not to do so it might help another person avoid stumbling?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I want to glorify you with my faithful commitment to make disciples. Help me remember that you are always present with me as I live out your commission. Amen.

Friday, February 5 – Read Acts 1:4-8 and Acts 8:4-17. The "Samaritans" in Jesus' time lived in territory between Israelite Judea (in the south) and Galilee (in the north). The rivalry and hatred between the two peoples went back through generations for centuries (cf. [2 Kings 17:24, 29-41](#), [Ezra 4:1-5](#)). That history made it remarkable to see the early Christians matter-of-factly following Jesus' mandate to preach in Samaria. Something major (and wonderful) was happening as they welcomed these former enemies into the faith.

- ▲ Jesus set the stage for what happened in Acts 8—he always related to Samaritans with respect and compassion (see, for example, [Luke 17:11-19](#)). How do you think his example helped prepare the apostles to interact in redemptive ways with Samaritans? In what ways, and with whom, are you modeling inclusiveness for your family, your friends, and your business associates?
- ▲ The spread of the early Christian faith didn't happen because the disciples were unusually broad-minded on their own. The Holy Spirit's activity showed the apostles that God freely accepted the Samaritans, so they'd better find a way to join in what God was doing. Are you willing to accept and welcome anyone the Holy Spirit places in your path?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, as I read about your life, it seems that you hardly even knew the word "enemy." Keep shaping my thoughts and actions to see people through your eyes of love and compassion so I might spread you Good News. Amen.

Saturday, February 7 – Read Acts 9:36-42. There are many ways of serving others. There's no record of a church building in the city of Joppa, but the church was there. Exhibit A was a marvelous seamstress named Tabitha (Dorcas—meaning "gazelle," in Greek). There's no evidence that she ever preached a sermon, but God equipped her to sew, and gave her a heart for the poor. The "show and tell" time in verse 39 is a deeply touching scene. Tabitha lived her faith in such beautiful ways that God used Peter as a channel to allow her to keep living it longer.

- ▲ Tabitha loved people, lived out her love through her gift of sewing, and changed a whole city. What are you able to do that God can use to bless others? To what extent do you think behavior like Tabitha's is a matter of natural inclination, and to what extent do you believe it reflects intentional moral choices? God used Tabitha, the seamstress with a compassionate heart, to lead many to believe in Jesus. What role(s) has God equipped you to play in serving others? How committed are you to doing your part in helping others to "put their faith in the Lord"?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me never to think, "All I can do is _____, and that doesn't matter." Make my life, and whatever abilities I have, count as much for you as Tabitha's lovely life of service. Amen.