

## “From Low to High: LOW”

Scripture: Mark 1:29-39

Graphics: low, dirt, heal, preach

Big Truth: Jesus was not afraid to touch, serve, preach to, and love those who were in need. He also made his way up the mountain of Transfiguration at the pinnacle of his ministry. We are called to go to the low places and the high places with Jesus in order to worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.

Focus Phrase: Jesus calls us to the low places with Him to heal, witness, and pray.

### 1. Introduction

- A. The lowest place - the lowest elevation - in the U.S. is at a place called Badwater Basin, in Death Valley National Park, California. It just sounds nasty, doesn't it? It's 282 feet **below** sea level and is uninhabited. People who go there are cautioned to not hike in that part of the park after 10am because of the extreme temperatures.
- B. The highest elevation place is Mt. Denali in Alaska. Its peak is 20,310 feet **above** sea level. And, at the peak, it too is uninhabited. In order to hike in Denali, you have to check in with the Ranger Station on the way in and on the way out, so that they know you didn't get eaten by a grizzly bear or fall into a ravine. It is, however, breathtaking scenery.
- C. I've been to Death Valley and I've been to Denali (the park, not the peak). What I will tell you is that they are beautiful, but they both come with challenges that you must be prepared to face. In essence, you have to want to be there, not just stumble into those places unprepared.
- D. If you think that you can just walk into Death Valley without things like water or good hiking shoes, then you'll be surprised how quickly you realize how unprepared you are. If you hike up Denali, even to get a glimpse on a sunny day from miles away, the snow is deep and the temperatures are low. It wouldn't take long, without the right boots or warm jacket, for you to give up and go home, if you don't get eaten by a bear, that is.
- E. Yet, if you're prepared and trained and ready to go to those places - equipped for the task - then those places can provide amazing experiences that you will remember for a lifetime.
- F. In three weeks, we'll enter into the season of Lent. The season of Lent is a time to spend in the wilderness, spiritually. It's a time to spend in reflection and self-examination and asking God to show you what you cannot see about yourself. The season of Lent is a gift to us for us to be better disciples of Jesus, through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.
- G. In preparation for that, we'll spend the next two weeks in training for that journey. It's a run-up to Lent. That training will entail going from Low to

High in order to follow Jesus where he went...to see what he did and said in the lowest places, with the lowest people...and in the highest places, with the highest people.

- H. Today, we'll hang around Jesus in Capernaum. Capernaum is a seaside town in the region of Galilee, where Jesus did things like heal the sick, pray, and tell regular people about the grace of God - low things in low places with people who were low.
- I. In your notes, jot this down: Jesus calls us to the low places with Him to heal, witness, and pray.
- J. Let's do just that right now...
- K. PRAY! (Jesus, You are Lord...)**
- L. Galilee was a place Jesus went to often, when he wasn't doing ministry in Jerusalem and the towns around Jerusalem. It's where he called the disciples and where he got LOW in ministry.
- M. Grab your bible! It's important to bring your bible to worship because we WILL use it. Let's go...

## **2. Scripture**

- A. READ Mark 1:29-39**
- B. One of my favorite places to visit when we went to the Holy Land was that ancient city of Capernaum. There are multiple reasons why like the fact that the synagogue foundation mentioned in this text is still there. You can also get a sense of the way the town was laid out, and archaeologists have done a lot of work to uncover the ancient town.
- C. But one of the most amazing parts is you can actually see what scholars think is the house of Peter's mother-in-law. And, as is the case in most holy sites in Israel, a church is built over the top of it.
- D. Even so, the church has a clear glass floor, so that as you're worshipping or visiting the church, you can look right through the bottom of the floor of the church to see the excavated remnants of this house where Jesus healed so many people who were sick and demon-possessed...where he got LOW in order to heal, pray, and witness to God's grace and power.
- E. This house, under a modern-day church, is one of the lowest places in the area. It's a symbol for us of the fact that Jesus spent part of his ministry in the dirt and dust of this small town on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.
- F. Jesus was NOT afraid of getting his hands dirty. Jesus did not shy away from people or situations that were unclean, or people that were filled with sickness or demons. Jesus, in fact, sought out people. Real people. People with diseases, and sores, and who were outcast and broken.

- G. Jesus just got done preaching in the synagogue, which was a highly-important role that very few people had in the first century...priests and rabbis were the ones who lead worship and read the Torah and taught the Jewish people.
- H. Yet, his next move, this scene, was to move from that position of authority and status, down into the home of a woman who has a name but we don't know it.
- I. I love how the text says, "He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up." Lifting someone up requires that you, at the very least, bend down to offer your hand, but most likely required a person to squat down, since bedding in the first century was close to the ground.
- J. This posture of being low with people who were low is an incredible contrast to the position of status and authority that Jesus just came from.
- K. Next week, we'll see the pinnacle of Jesus height on the mountain of Transfiguration...where Jesus went from low to highest of high.
- L. This scene doesn't end with a healing of Simon Peter's MIL. Just the opposite. People heard that Jesus got low and they brought people from all over, down to that house...to be lifted up, just like our unnamed mother-in-law.
- M. Sickneses that, honestly, made people feel SO LOW. It's not like today when we get a cold or flu and need to stay home for a bit to recover. Diseases in the Ancient Near East made a person unclean...separated and cast out. And if people determined that you were possessed by a demon, you were sent out into the wilderness, out of community altogether.
- N. Jesus healed them. And there were many. Sick. Demon-possessed. The lowest of the low. And Jesus went there...to them. For them. To heal and cast those demons out...
- O. I can only imagine how draining that must've been.
- P. The next morning, Jesus got up early, and went, alone, to a place where he could pray. I can imagine what that looked like: Jesus, on his face before the Father. Weary and burdened because of the people who were in need and his love for them all. Jesus, as low as he could get in that lonely place of prayer, pouring out his heart to the Father. "Give me one more, Father. Heal them. Lift them up. Show me where to go next...what low place where low people are gathered to be lifted up?"
- Q. And even though the disciples hunted for him (that's such an interesting phrase), they found him in that low, lonely place and wanted him to keep going. "Everyone is searching for you." I bet they were.
- R. But Jesus KNEW that he wasn't done yet. His mission was to keep going to the lowest places in order to lift more people up. From diseases. Through prayer. And, as we read, to share the message of hope and love, forgiveness and grace, to a hurting and broken world. "For that is what I came out to do."

### 3. Application

- A. Where are the low places in our communities or schools or families or workplaces where Jesus wants to go to lift people up?
- B. And are you willing to go with him? To get low with Jesus? To go to the places and the people that would require you to bend down, take their hand, and lift them up? To pray for people and situations that are low...broken, diseased, hurting, lost? And in those low places and with low people, to proclaim the Good News that Jesus is alive and God's grace can be theirs?
- C. Listen...You and I, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit of Jesus, have incredible power to pray, heal, and witness in the low places in this world.
- D. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- E. We have power to lift up low people - through hands-on healing, humble, confident prayer and bold witnessing to our faith in Jesus.
- F. How do I know? Well, I've seen it, church. I've seen in right here in this sanctuary. How many times have we laid hands on someone who was facing a difficult medical diagnosis or struggle, and when the body came together, there was healing.
- G. Now, no matter what the outcome of the disease or diagnosis, healing begins long before that. Healing, in the body of Christ, begins when one person says to another, "We should pray for that person." And they grab one person, and that person grabs two people, and then three, and people notice what's happening and they drop what their doing to get LOW and lay hands on someone. And there's HEALING in that moment because the body of Christ is faithfully praying and weights are lifted and caregivers are encouraged. That's healing...before the other healing!
- H. And then we witness to the goodness of God who is at work from beginning to end...from LOW to HIGH.
- I. That's just one example of who this works.
- J. What about in your school? Who needs healing and what is God asking you to do in the power of the Holy Spirit? You may not want to go to that student who is not in your friend group to answer that call. But, when you get low, the Spirit will lift that person up. And what, really, will it cost?
- K. What about at work? To that person who is facing difficulties? And this becomes even more profound when you're the one in charge or given a position of authority. How is the Holy Spirit leading you to care for those in your care?
- L. Or your family? Or the community?

- M. Jesus went to the people who were so low they had no where else to turn. And he healed and prayed and witnessed to the good news.
- N. You are called to do the same. To get low in order to heal and pray and witness...to take someone by the hand and lift them up...to pray for God to open a doorway for you to walk through...and then just share your story with Jesus...tell the low person how you prayed over a young man who was low, and that day healing began...and that same week there was healing happening...a person, a family, and a church was lifted up! From Low to High!
- O. Jesus calls us to the low places with Him to heal, witness, and pray.

#### 4. Conclusion

- A. Next week, we'll go to Mark chapter 9, when Peter, James, and John, go with Jesus to a very HIGH place...to see Him shining like the sun, with two others.
- B. This morning, right now, we're invited to begin this movement of getting low by going to a low spot with Jesus. The Last Supper...where Jesus sat with his disciples and made it very clear that he needed to die...to go down low into a grave...
- C. That reminds of that famous Easter hymn that goes like this:
- D. *Low in the grave He lay Jesus my Savior!  
Waiting the coming day Jesus my Lord!  
Vainly they watch His bed Jesus, my Savior!  
Vainly they seal the dead Jesus my Lord!  
Death cannot keep his prey Jesus, my Savior!  
He tore the bars away Jesus my Lord!  
Up from the grave He arose  
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes  
He arose a Victor from the dark domain  
And He lives forever with His saints to reign  
He arose! (He arose)  
He arose! (He arose)  
Hallelujah! Christ arose!*
- E. Jesus got low...for you and me...and our response is to get low, now, with him and for the sake of the Kingdom.
- F. Let's come to this table...low, humble, and with hearts ready to go out from this place to stay low with those who are low. You don't need to go to Badwater Basin in Death Valley. You just need to come to this table to begin.
- G. Let's Pray...PRAY!!