

Belmont Exeter House Group Notes w/c 15th January 2023

Come and See – in the House of Mercy - John 5:1 - 18

We're working our way through the gospel of John in our Sunday morning services. Our home group studies will pick up the topic from the Sunday before the meeting. This means we won't cover the whole of the Gospel of John in these outlines. Feel free to adapt this content, or to study other passages.

John wrote his gospel so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20 v 30&31). As we study John together, keep that purpose in mind and ask, "How does this passage help me believe that Jesus is the Messiah?"

This study is for the passage from the morning service on 15th Jan. If people aren't able to be at the service then please encourage them to catch up online via YouTube or the talks page on the Belmont Exeter website.

This outline is the bare bones of the study: more thought needs to be given to the way you start and finish the evening, use (or don't use) the questions themselves, and think about the way this passage may affect your own group members. Think about the big ideas and how to apply them to everyday life. Here are three book titles you may find helpful to have available for study leaders through the series.

John for Everyone by Tom Wright, pub. SPCK, (short 'daily' chapters on each section)
The Message of John by Bruce Milne, pub. IVP (more in depth analysis and explanation)
John for You by Josh Moody, pub. Goodbook Co (sermon style & with focus on application)

BIG IDEA: God is always at work, bring restoration to lives through Jesus, and for the glory of Jesus.

WAY IN: Try a word association around the word 'Rest' or 'Sabbath'. Come back to these ideas at the end of the study to see how understanding might have changed.

READ: John 5:1 - 18

Context

These next few chapters are a series of encounters between Jesus and the authorities. This one takes place in Jerusalem where Jesus heals a man who had been paralyzed for a long time. This passage is full of 'narrator comments' from John (v2,3,9b,13,16,18) to help us understand the events

DIG IN

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about Jesus? The Bible? God? *This is an open question to see if there are particular themes to explore which are on the minds of the group.*
2. What do you make of Jesus' question in v6? Why would He ask this?
There's a cost when Jesus changes our life. The beggar would be giving up an income.
3. What differences do you notice about the man's expectations for healing and Jesus action? (v7 & 8)
The man was expecting his actions, the work of others to bring healing, in contrast, it is Jesus words alone. Is John making a works / grace contrast?
4. The Jewish leaders looked on and complained. What misunderstandings does their response reveal?
They missed the purpose of Sabbath as a place for recreation and healing. They couldn't see what God was doing. They were concerned about lifeless compliance
5. What do you think is the thrust of Jesus' challenge in v14? What is the 'something worse'?
Being healed was the start of this man's restoration. Jesus appears to be challenging him to go on living in grace and humility. The man has been healed but will he follow Jesus?
6. What two claims does Jesus make which cause outrage to the Jews?
a. Doing the recreating work of God is his work. b. God is his Father

LIVE IT OUT

1. Looking at the work Jesus was doing on the Sabbath, how does that influence how you view work / rest / Sabbath?
2. Are there changes you'd like to see in your own patterns of life which would reflect the purpose of Sabbath? Through his Spirit in you, how could Jesus specifically want to bring new creation rest to others?
3. On our frontlines, what everyday and ordinary acts of mercy could we be doing which reflect the work of the Father and give glory to Jesus? What help do we want from the Lord and His people to do those things?

PRAYER

Ask the Spirit to reveal areas where self-dependence and unbelief (v7) are hindering you from experiencing the rest that Jesus purchased for you (v8).

As a community, be specific in prayer about asking the Spirit to reveal areas in which you can more intentionally take action to bring new creation rest to those around you.

Some background details to note:

In this next section of John, chapters 5 – 10, we're shown Jesus engaging with 4 Jewish feasts (Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, Hannukah). Each feast is a marker of God's work in the life of the people of Israel. John shows us how Jesus is the fulfillment of each of these feasts. He does it through a series of events which prompt a question or an objection. Jesus response is often provocative or confusing and then we're challenged to a response of belief or hostility. Keep this in mind as you read these sections.

The name Bethesda translate to 'House of Mercy'. This reflects the expectation and tradition of healing in that location but also frames the work and message that Jesus is doing in this chapter.

"In John 5, the Jewish religious leaders are fired up because Jesus has healed a man on the Sabbath. In their minds, this is a clear violation of the Law and one deserving of severe punishment. Jesus' response, as always, is insightful, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (John 5:17). The point Jesus seems to be making is this: the Sabbath is about experiencing life as it was meant to be, and ever since humanity fell into sin God has been working to restore what has been lost and broken. Jesus is working on the Sabbath, but paradoxically his work is about restoring the true meaning of the Sabbath (unhindered enjoyment of relationship with God), and it is grounded in that very reality (his relationship and identity as the Son of God, see verses 19-20). In Isaiah 58, there seems to be a similar connection between the active work of renewal and the idea of truly making the Sabbath a delight. We can see this by comparing verses 6-7 with verses 13-14."

From 'Reframing Jesus Portraits of Glory, Discipleship guide'
<https://seattlepastors.org/gospel-of-john/>

You might want to explore further the idea of Sabbath keeping as restoration by looking into Isaiah 58.