

# New Mission Statement Devotions

## Devotion 3 – Traveling the Way of Jesus

Invite each person to close their eyes and think about their favorite image or story about Jesus. After a couple of minutes of silence, ask each person to share that image or story along with why they find that image or story meaningful.

Read each Scripture passage slowly, inviting participants to pay attention to the word, phrases, images, questions that arise within them as they hear these verses from the Bible. Pause after each reading, allowing time for people to share those words or phrases.

### Scripture Readings

*<sup>35</sup>In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. <sup>36</sup>And Simon and his companions hunted for him. <sup>37</sup>When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." <sup>38</sup>He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." <sup>39</sup>And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.*

*<sup>40</sup>A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." <sup>41</sup>Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" <sup>42</sup>Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.*

Mark 1:35-42

*<sup>16</sup>When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*<sup>18</sup>"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,*

*<sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

*<sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." <sup>22</sup>All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" <sup>23</sup>He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" <sup>24</sup>And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. <sup>25</sup>But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup>yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup>There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman*



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the Syrian." <sup>28</sup>When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup>They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. <sup>30</sup>But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Luke 4:16-30

<sup>13</sup>Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; <sup>14</sup>but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." <sup>15</sup>And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

Matthew 19:13-15

### Reflection

What is the "way of Jesus"?

What is the "way" he treated people?

What is the "way" he called people to live?

When he went on "his way," where did he go and what did he do?

We know from different gospel stories that he went throughout the region of Galilee and Judea, and even crossed over into Samaritan (foreign) territory. He did not stay put in the capital city of Jerusalem, the center of power and religion, expecting people to come to him. Rather he seemed to always be on the move, healing, teaching, casting out demons, feeding the crowds, cleansing lepers, eating with sinners . . .

N.T. Wright in his book, *The Meaning of Jesus*, summarizes his description of Jesus as a *first-century Jewish peasant announcing God's kingdom*. **This was the very center of his mission and message.** (page 33).

Marcus Borg in his book, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, goes into greater detail when he writes: *Jesus used dramatic public actions. He ate meals with untouchables, which not only generated criticism but also symbolized his alternative vision of human community. He entered Jerusalem at the head of procession on a donkey – a virtual parody of prevailing ideas of kingship . . . He challenged the social order of his day and indicted the elites who dominated it. He had a clever tongue, which could playfully or sarcastically indict the powerful and proper. He must have been remarkably courageous, willing to continue what he was doing even when it was clear that it was putting him in lethal danger. . . He was a remarkable healer: more healing stories are told about him than about anyone else in the Jewish tradition. He attracted a following, including people who left their previous lives behind . . . There must have been something quite compelling about him.* (pages 30-31)

The way of Jesus is not just an intellectual exercise of learning about what Jesus did and taught and believing that it was/is true. It is a compelling reality embodied in the life and teachings of the one who came to proclaim and live out the reign of God.





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It is a way that disrupts our “normal,” socially acceptable way of doing things. If Jesus were simply a nice guy who went around feeding people, healing them, and teaching them to love one another, why would he pose a threat to the established authorities of the day? Why the need to get rid of him? Why was he crucified on the cross, executed by the Roman Empire? Because the way of Jesus is the way of God’s reign in the world and God reigns in very different ways than we do. Jesus’ first sermon (Mark 1:15) was “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent (turn around, change directions) and believe (trust, live, embrace) the good news.*” From that moment, he went on his way (actually God’s way) inviting others into this new way (God’s way) of being.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What actions, behaviors, or teachings of Jesus do you find the most compelling?
2. What is your understanding of why Jesus was executed? What did he do that got him in trouble with the authorities of the day?
3. How is the “way” of Jesus something that could attract people? How is the “way” of Jesus something that could challenge people?

### Closing Prayer

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen

(ELW page 220)

