

# Has our journey to here been good?

- Global cafe
- Easter camps feedback and baptisms
- Stories of God's work from the Godspace series and the revival aspect that came from Nehemiah
  - Today we start something new

## PRAYER

### How Did Jesus Do Outreach?

## 1. Healings

Luke 4:38-41

## Friday night shopping was really popular...

- ... in New Plymouth when I grew up
- ... because shops weren't open in the weekend
- ... so it was your last chance to stock up
  - ... or if you were a teenager, it was a chance to get dressed up with your mates and go play Pacman and Space Invaders and eat hot chips
    - That was the big time in the '80's
      - We looked forward to Friday nights

## But I remember a whole area of shops...

- ... that for a period, no-one went to any more
- ... because they wanted to avoid the street preachers there
  - ◆ I can't imagine the shopkeepers were too happy with that

## I wasn't a christian in those days...

- ... and I remember how offputting that kind of outreach was
- I kept well clear of it too

## Imagine that that scene is one end of a continuum

- For the sake of a name, let's call it Street Preachers in New Plymouth Mall
- Reflecting on it a bit, it's very clear to me that those people were taking outreach very seriously
- But the way it came across to me at the time was as outreach that is:
  - Forceful
  - Uncreative
  - Formulaic - they looked like they had a one size fits all approach to outreach, that clearly wasn't connecting with the majority of people
    - ◆ And I think of how crowds gathered around Jesus, by comparison
- If I describe that incident further I'd say that what they were saying and what they seemed to represent looked like no fun at all
- Their message sprung from what I'd now describe as a pretty black and white kind of theology
  - And their message was very sin-focused

## What about the other end of the continuum?

## I was invited out one night ...

... by some new folk I was trying to connect with in my church

- You take up those invites if you're a pastor because these are people who are keen to find a place in your church family
- We had dinner and it seemed like a really fun night

## After dinner we played cards

- I physically recoiled when I saw my hand, and that made them laugh
- These weren't normal cards - with Kings, Queens, Jacks and Aces
- These were porn cards
- Each card had a naked porn model on it

## It's pretty hard to explain how awkward I felt...

... as a pastor

... finding myself staring at pornography, in front of people I'd just met

... and facing that tough decision:

- Do I offend them by saying I'm not going to play?  
... these people I'm trying to connect with?  
... these newcomers to my church
- Or do I go along with it, and just try not to look at the cards?
  - What would you have done?
- It's fair to say that these folk had a pretty liberal view of the Christian faith!
  - The card game was just one example of that

## I can't actually remember how I handled that night...

... I just remember how awkward it was

- But I did get to know those people reasonably well in the months that followed and found out a lot about what they believed and why
- Just so we have something to refer to them by...  
... let's call them the Players of The Unexpected Card Game

## And these folk by contrast...

... didn't believe in outreach - at least not in any conventional sense

- "I believe what I believe; let others out there believe what they want to believe"
- Or if pressed on it, you might hear them say something like: 'If people see we're "normal" there's a chance they might want to be like us'
  - But then these guys were such worldly Christians that being like them didn't really mean being any different to anyone else in society
- I mean inviting someone to a game of porn cards - how's that supposed to bring anyone any closer to Jesus?
  - Or how is it supposed to portray you as a follower of Jesus?

## These guys definitely saw themselves...

... as being loads of 'fun'

... quite unlike the grim, serious, street preachers from my New Plymouth years

## It became pretty clear that Scripture...

... wasn't important to these Christians

- They saw it as primitive, too hard to understand, and too wrapped in cultural layers to be applicable today

- Much less that it should have any authority over their lives

## And one of them said to me...

... that he believed 'sin' was a made up concept

## I'll bet you've seen Christians...

... at both ends of this spectrum

## What a huge topic this is!

- We're thinking here about how we as Christians, interact with the world
  - Isn't that just about the whole of what life is?

## Does it feel important to know where you stand...

... between these extremes and why?

- I mean, do we float around vaguely somewhere between these two extremes
  - Or do we know exactly where we stand?
- Where would you put yourself on that continuum?
  - I'm sure we'd all say we're in the centre
    - ◆ So probably a better question to ask would be, where would others put you on that spectrum?
- Then again, is the centre the right place to be?
  - Or is there some whole other way of looking at it?

## To help on this

... I've put together a series I've wanted to do for ages...

... asking ***How did Jesus do outreach?***

- I know he wasn't either of those extremes
  - ... and I know his approach is anything but formulaic

## What would happen, I thought...

... if we picked one gospel and went through the whole of it

... looking at how Jesus does outreach whenever he is beyond his group of followers and beyond the synagogue?

- ◆ So I did exactly that as I put together this series
- And all I've done so far is an overview
  - I don't know the full answer to the series question
    - This really is a journey of discovery together

## So the first place if you look in Luke's gospel...

... where Jesus engages with anyone beyond his inner crowd and beyond the synagogue

... is Luke 4, and it happens to be a healing story

- So let's take a look at it - page \_\_\_\_\_
- It's worth seeing it in context so you see for yourself how Jesus is doing outreach in the passage and the ones around it

### **Luke 4:38-41 New Living Translation (NLT)**

Jesus Heals Many People

38 After leaving the synagogue that day, Jesus went to Simon's home, where he found Simon's mother-in-law very sick with a high fever. "Please heal her," everyone begged. 39 Standing at her bedside,

he rebuked the fever, and it left her. And she got up at once and prepared a meal for them.

40 As the sun went down that evening, people throughout the village brought sick family members to Jesus. No matter what their diseases were, the touch of his hand healed every one. 41 Many were possessed by demons; and the demons came out at his command, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But because they knew he was the Messiah, he rebuked them and refused to let them speak.

## It's a small passage so let's look at it on screen for a minute

- Before going any further there's a bunch of fun facts in this passage
- Why don't we take just a moment and see if the people round you can spot any fun facts in this passage?

### DISCUSSION

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- from Luke 4

- **Simon/Peter was married! (v38)**
- **This happy couple also lived with... his mother in law! (cf. a trad kiwi home!)**
- **He healed all of them! (v40b) 100% success rate & he dealt with every single case!**
- **'The whole town gathered at the door' (from Mark's version of this story - Mark 1:33)**
- **Healings are one of Jesus' most frequent modes of outreach (almost 1/3 of Mark's gospel is healing stories)**

## Fun Facts:

### 1. Simon/Peter was married!

- You wonder what Peter's wife was up to when he was falling asleep in Gethsemane
  - Or denying that he knew Christ
  - Or attempting to walk on water!

... and as the rock on which the church is built it certainly raises questions about how Catholics ended up with a celibate priesthood

... but let's not be distracted!

### 2. This happy couple - Peter and his wife also shared the house with his mother in law!

- Now I know there are cultures represented at mabc where that's perfectly normal  
... but to those who grew up as kiwis in New Zealand the idea of sharing the house with your mother in law takes a lot of getting used to!

### 3. in v40 it says Jesus healed all of the sick people who came around!

- The touch of his hand healed every one!
  - That's a 100% success rate
  - I've prayed for plenty of people for healing
    - And some people have a spiritual gift for praying for people for healing
    - But I never met anyone who had a 100% success rate in praying for healing

And more to the point he dealt with **every** person who was sick who came round

- So 100% attempted; 100% healed
- And notice also, the healing was instant
  - Notice how immediately the mother in law gets up from her sick bed and starts cooking dinner!
    - ◆ Sometimes when you pray for someone they'll tell you it sped up the rate of healing
    - ◆ But it's not too often that healing is immediate
- And this is true of the vast majority of Jesus' healings - like 'take up your mat and walk'
  - The healing was immediate

### 4. A fun fact when you also look at Mark's version of this story...

... is that it says, 'The whole town gathered at the door to watch'

- So the word has got out: 'Jesus is round at Peter's place. He just did this miraculous healing of Peter's mother in law'
- And so the whole town heads round and brings all their sick people
  - ... and they're all watching at the door while Jesus goes about healing people
  - And given some of them were demon possessed it makes you wonder if this spectacle was a bit like a **house of horrors** for a while there!
  - Imagine if it was your place!

### 5. Healings are one of Jesus' most frequent modes of outreach

- See how many of them there are if you have your Bible open
- So often Jesus' interaction with the world beyond his immediate followers is a healing
- In fact if you looked in the gospel of Mark, roughly one third of that whole gospel are healing stories

And this lands us in a really tough place as we try to emulate how Jesus did outreach

- We can't do it the same way as you Jesus
  - Because when we pray for people we don't have a 100% success rate
  - And mostly the success we have doesn't happen instantly

But how much easier would outreach be if we could!?

- Imagine if you could walk down the street and see someone in a wheelchair and offer to pray and know that they'd stand straight up as soon as you said Amen?
  - We could hold meetings in rocket park and say - does anyone know anyone who's sick?
    - ◆ Bring them here and we'll heal them - 100% success guaranteed
- That'd make outreach a bit easier wouldn't it?

I guess there are some obvious reasons why our prayers for healing...

... don't have the same success rate of those of Jesus

- But that's not the question for today

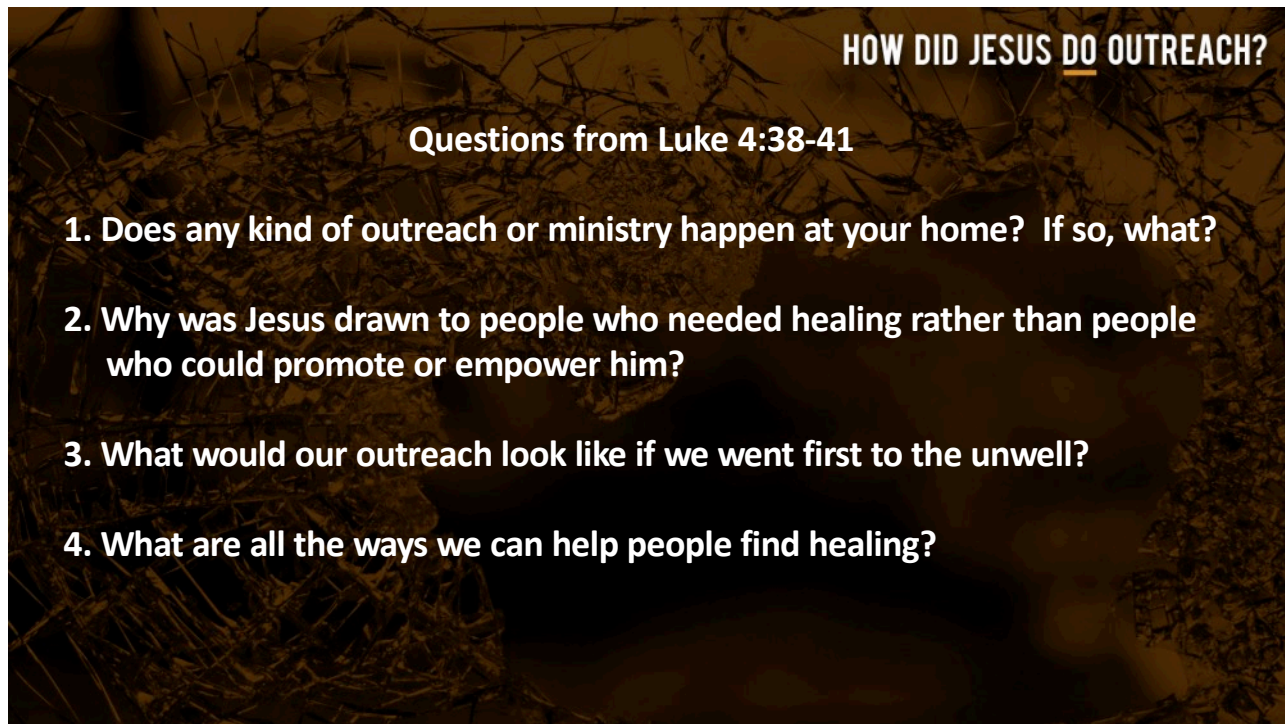
If we gave up on outreach...

... because we can't do what Jesus did most of the time

... that would be a sad and simplistic conclusion

What I think we can do is ask some good questions of this passage

- I've got four questions - and these questions lead directly to action
- Here they are:



## DISCUSSION

### Notes:

1. Life Group? Prayer with someone you have round for dinner? Street party with neighbours? Have someone to stay who's going through a rough time?
2. A third of his recorded ministry makes no sense from the perspective of success. Networking? Better with the powerful Pharisees and Sanhedrin members
- 3.
4. Medical outreach / Fen. Supporting cancer or AIDS research. Prayer Ministry / Healing services. CAP Recovery course?

How have we done? / Have we made good headway on this topic?

We have a series graphic for this series

- Did you notice what it is?
  - ◆ A broken window (cf couch in Nehemiah series)
    - Jesus was drawn to broken people
      - In today's passage - the physically and spiritually broken

A broken window can't stay broken, or it no longer fulfils its function

- A home owner wants a broken window repaired
- So Jesus also wanted us to be whole - he didn't want us to stay broken
- That's why he went to the unwell so often

## So who is on your heart today when you think of brokenness

... and the need to be whole again?

- Bring that person with you (metaphorically) as you come for communion
- And consider whether you could help[ them on their journey to wholeness by doing something for them this week

COMMUNION - with background music

PRAYER MINISTRY CALL

Song: Build Your Kingdom Here