

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

January 25, 2026 "The Platform of Jesus. Jesus drives out evil spirits and heals"

I Intro.

We're finishing up the first month of 2026 and we're back in full swing. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

It's an election year, and we're going to find ourselves getting pulled to places, emotions, because we feel like we're right. Chasing things that are going to tempt us to compromise some of our deeper values, because we want those things we feel 'right' about to get done. This will cause us to overlook, not condemn certain things, because we're swayed by the deep desire to see what we believe in, to happen. Worse, it'll affect our walk with Christ. And blur our ability to determine what 'feels' moral and what is actually right. So, we need something to attach ourselves to so we won't be whipped around. We need to be grounded in what it means to be a follower of Jesus during this upcoming year to protect us from drifting. To be grounded well, we're going to look at moments from the beginning of the ministry of Jesus to help us see what was important to him. Because what was important to Jesus, should also be important to us. And that should ground us also. "***The platform of Jesus***".

III Sunday.

It's the final Sunday of our series. We've hit some big ideas. We've talked about this overarching vision of justice, equity, and freedom and liberty. We've talked about being honest about our weaknesses, and how seeking God can help us see those vulnerable areas in our life. We all work together to create a society that promotes the well-being of everyone. But that's easier said than done isn't it?. We all have our life to live. We have jobs, responsibilities, bills to pay, things to take care of. Considering all of that; **How does this emphasis of practicing what was important to Jesus look in our regular life? How do you go from the lofty vision of justice, producing good fruit, fighting off temptations that could compromise personal values and beliefs, releasing the captives and setting the prisoners free, to our everyday life of trying to be who Jesus created us to be?** Is this kind of life even possible?

We said last week; Living focused and devoted to our beliefs and values comes out of the aches of our heart. **So, how do we live out our values and beliefs in our everyday, ordinary life?** The answer; By just being personally fully present in people's everyday lives. We're still in Luke 4. The final message in this series is simply a continuation of what Jesus was already doing. He had been

baptized. He faced temptations and testing to prepare him for his ministry. When he spoke at the synagogue Jesus selected the message God had been proclaiming since he chose the ancient Israelites to be his people. After Jesus read the scroll of Isaiah at the synagogue, he told them what he would be doing. They all cheered. He then told them he would do it where he grew up, but they were so blind they couldn't see they were missing the true work of God. And people outside the organized practice of their faith were more obedient and understanding of what God was really about than were the religious people. Here's the last verse before the one we're going to read says;

When they heard this, the people in the synagogue were furious. Jumping up, they mobbed him and forced him to the edge of the hill on which the town was built. They intended to push him over the cliff, but he passed right through the crowd and went on his way.

Nothing like some hometown love and respect. No one was going to tell them they got practicing religion wrong. People don't take it well when you tell them that this work is going to be difficult and make some people uncomfortable. Power always persecutes those who challenge their power. One of my favorite quotes is; "A rabbi isn't a real rabbi until he's run out of town." Now Jesus got about doing what he said he was going to do. It was time to take care of the basic life needs of people.

Here is the primary passage.

Luke 4:31-40 Then Jesus went to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught there in the synagogue every Sabbath day. There, too, the people were amazed at his teaching, for he spoke with authority.

Once when he was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon—an evil[g] spirit cried out, shouting, "Go away! Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are the Holy One of God!"

But Jesus reprimanded him. "Be quiet! Come out of the man," he ordered. At that, the demon threw the man to the floor as the crowd watched; then it came out of him without hurting him further.

Amazed, the people exclaimed, "What authority and power this man's words possess! Even evil spirits obey him, and they flee at his command!" The news about Jesus spread through every village in the entire region.

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

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. 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.

[g] evil also means 'unclean'. Unclean was a huge generic category. It wasn't just sin, impure, ungodly or defiled. This was the inner condition of a person as understood against the nature of God.

Think about what would be some examples of what being 'unclean' are?

How do we interpret and understand stories like this in scripture with the knowledge we have now? People in those times explained natural phenomena with descriptions of spirits and the 'gods' controlling things. Rather than getting caught up in trying to describe and explain what evil spirits

might have been, and what healing looked like. We need to look at what kind of life these people had, and how whatever it was they were suffering from affected how they lived. This is what was the most important issue Jesus was addressing. Jesus refused to answer the; “*who sinned that this man was born blind?*” question. Which is born out of a more blaming viewpoint of how people were sick and ‘unclean’. We get caught up in the “*whys*”, “*hows*” when people find themselves in difficult places. We want to place blame, find what they did wrong, and who we can blame. In this encounter, and so many of Jesus’ ministry among the people, that wasn’t an important issue. Jesus focused on meeting that person where they were and meeting their needs. Simply meeting people in their struggle, no blaming, and meeting their needs. That’s the healing aspect of the ministry of Jesus.

Two things we do to practice “The platform of Jesus”. This tells us everything we need to know about what was important to Jesus. No need to do a real deep, exegetical (the original language of the text) walk through of this passage. There’s no secret messages, or hidden layered meanings in it. Things people struggle with will isolate them and create all sorts of anguish and trauma within them. People experience all sorts of things like; alienation, shame, loss of dignity, voice, agency over one’s own life, cut off from others, being labeled as dangerous, immoral, broken or evil and unclean. Forced to live with a societal definition of how a person like them is supposed to be treated. It’s in addressing these human needs where the actual platform of Jesus is seen in action.

1. Meet people where they are. “*Evil/unclean spirits*” were the only way people back then could describe behavior they didn’t understand. They called them evil, unclean. We call them perverse, sinners, (pick your label). The person is acting in a way we don’t understand, or fits what we expect, so we won’t welcome them to be one of us. We’re not comfortable with people like that in our church, so what do we do? We do what Jesus did. We meet them where they are.

If we are to meet people where they are— where are people?

And when we meet these people what should be our posture towards them?

If “*The platform of Jesus*” was doing this work, we have to ask; **how did Jesus do this work?**

Matthew 9:35-36. Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Most people are— where they are, physically and spiritually because no one has shown them a better place to be. Picking up from what we learned last week, we don’t judge, condemn, or call them the enemy. Meeting them where they are is showing them the same compassion Jesus did, because they may have never been shown a better way. Meeting them in their world humanizes them. People hide in their uncleanliness because they feel shame, unworthy. The work of humanizing others, removing shame, restoring their dignity, worth, making them real people, children of God, is what Jesus came to do. Meeting them where they are removes what dehumanizes them. Restoring them as ‘real’ people. Don’t underestimate the power of just being with people in whatever they’re going through.

2. Take care of them and address their needs. When we meet people where **THEY** are, then we are more likely to see what their needs are. YES...by all means invite people here. I was told by a student leader at NCC that the teens are inviting their friends here. Our students are intentionally forming relationships with people who either don’t know God, are seeking God, or are looking for a place to grow. Doing good work walking alongside them. But going where people are, meeting their

needs, means we don't have an agenda, preconceived idea or belief about 'being' with people. We simply go where they are, find out their needs, and do whatever we can to meet those needs. 'Meeting needs' means— meeting needs, until the person is able to meet their own next set of needs. People aren't IKEA bookshelves. You don't just throw them together. They're more like— IKEA plants. It's seeding, watering, bringing them in for the winter, setting them back out when it's warm enough. More importantly. Not having to be the one that sees the fruit. We're not called to be successful. We're called to be faithful.

IV Challenge.

Jesus doesn't just want us to fight against evil and injustice in the abstract. To talk about lofty ideas and theories, and hold bible studies about helping people. Jesus wants us to get in the trenches and be close to, touch, have relationships with people the church and religion don't want to deal with. Rome, the state, didn't kick these people out of community. Religion did. What was important to Jesus. The platform he stood on was straight forward. It was to be about the work of establishing the Kingdom of God, by just being with the people wherever they are. No judgment, condemnation, what they 'should' have done. Just being where they were, and helping them get what they need.

We are to go to the places these people are.

We're going to reread **Matthew 9:35-36** again, but this time we're going to add the rest of the passage; **37-38. Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields."**

We close with this specific account in the life of Jesus because it was in order of its appearance in scripture. But also because the work of "*The Platform of Jesus*" has roots bigger than just in cultural, societal understanding and structures. The bottom line is we are called to be with others wherever they find themselves. This real work begins close to your home. In your neighborhood, our schools, in the shops, stores, restaurants, the everyday places we find ourselves. Not only is this personal (people close to you), but it's embodied (you are fully THERE with them). Next Sunday the Food Pantry will be feeding people, asking their needs, and praying over them. We do this restoration work of Jesus in the presence of others.

We need to remember— **this is holy work**. There are all sorts of people who the church, and in some cases we ourselves, have labeled as unclean. Unworthy of our attention let alone love. And "***The platform of Jesus***" compels us to go to where people are, and find out what they need. We are about the work of restoring the dignity, personhood, and beauty of people. There are no 'others'. There is just us. And we 'get to' meet us where we are. And meet our needs!