



Reach

Part 1

August 1, 2021

Reach One More

Over the next several weeks, we will be working our way through our new series entitled, “Reach” during which we will discuss the necessity of Reaching towards one another, Reaching forward towards the Call of God as the Call of God reaches towards us, and the Lord reaching towards us as individuals! It is my goal during our time together for me to share with you specific instances in the life of Jesus where He was Reaching for One More and hopefully provoke all of our hearts to a response to be willing to be more like Jesus as we make the

conscious decision to reach for One More. Before I ask you to get out your bibles, I would like to tell you a story. (Story of the Starfish)

I want you to turn with me to the Gospel of Saint Matthew chapter 26, beginning in verse 47 to verse 50; we will begin our time together in this text. Please stand for the reading of the Word.

The Gospel of Saint Matthew 26:47-50, “While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.” ⁴⁹ And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.”^u Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.”

Point #1 - Jesus, while being taken advantage of and ultimately betrayed, was still reaching for One More

Matthew chapter 26 records the story of Jesus and His interaction with His betrayer in the Garden of Gethsemane by the name of Judas. Let’s look at the text together from verse 47 to verse 50.

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” ⁴⁹ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.”

Judas is known for his betrayal but many fail to remember that it was not always as such. Judas was a key man in the ministry of Jesus and in spite of the failures of Judas, Jesus still called him, “Friend”. He was still reaching out to Judas and empowering him to work miracles and cast out devils in spite of the fact that Judas was stealing from the ministry accounts.

The Gospel of Saint John 12:6 records, “He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put in it.”

Jesus had a financial scandal in His ministry but it did not stop Him from reaching for One More. Judas didn't begin his ministry with Jesus as a downright scoundrel or Jesus would not have brought him into the fold. There had to have been something about the life of Judas that caused he and Jesus to connect.

And to further drive this point home, you never set someone over your finances if you do not trust them.

The Gospel of Saint Luke 6:16 records, “And Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.” Judas, like many people in ministry, did not start off his ministry with the intentions of wrecking his life. Judas was a part of the twelve, the same twelve who worked miracles, and cast out devils, and saw the miracles of the loaves and fishes. This same Judas was the one who saw Jesus walk on the water and heal the leper. Judas was not some outsider who seemingly manifests out of nowhere; this man had a call of God on his life.

Many have asked why there are those in ministry that wind up going down a wrong path and begin to utilize their ministry as a means of manipulation, or they have a failure of some kind but it seems like God is still blessing their ministry. Because like Judas, Jesus refuses to give up on anyone and that includes you!

Jesus’ decision to reach out to Judas was not hindered by the actions of the man but rather was motivated by the Heart of the Father. Hear me well this morning, Jesus is not afraid of associating Himself with you because, in the end, He’s the only one who can change you.

And we, like Jesus, must be willing to keep on reaching for One More even though we run the risk of the one we reach having the capacity of hurting us, betraying us, or, in the case of Judas, betrayal even unto death.

If Jesus can make the decision to continue to love in spite of the actions of the one He loved, then why do we feel that we get the option to choose whether or not we will forgive or love or restore someone who has hurt us?

When Jesus was asked by His disciples to teach them how to pray, Jesus included a very important part of that prayer that so many fail to truly grasp... The Gospel of Saint Matthew 6:12 records, “and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Jesus goes on to say in verse 14 of Matthew 6, “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Why did Jesus say that? Simply put, if you don't see the value in forgiving others then you don't see the value of Jesus' sacrifice to forgive you. “but pastor it's hard for me to forgive those who hurt me!”

I understand but your forgiveness of that person isn't costing you your life is it? Jesus died to forgive you; you don't have to die to forgive someone else; you only have to die to yourself.

And in spite of the pain of betrayal, Jesus was still reaching for One More ...

Point #2 - Jesus, while being ridiculed, was still reaching for One More

The Gospel of Saint Luke chapter 19 records the story of Jesus and his interaction with a man by the name of Zacchaeus. Let's look at the text together. **The Gospel of Saint Luke 19:1-10** *"He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have*

defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.”¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

There are a few things about this text that truly stick out to me. Let's begin with the person of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus, like most people, did not start off his professional career with the intentions of becoming one of the most hated people in the social construct.

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector who made his living off of enforcing the taxation laws of Rome on the Jewish people and to add insult to this misdeed is the fact that Zacchaeus himself was a Jew. Tax Collectors were hated because it was common place for them to abuse their power to steal additional monies from the masses for their own pleasures. To use a Revolutionary War term, he was a turn coat who had betrayed his countrymen to side with the “enemy”.

But here we have Jesus entering in Jericho with the clear intentions, according to the text, of simply passing through and he finds a man who had scaled a tree just so that he would have the opportunity see this man named Jesus. And as Jesus passed by, he saw this man in the tree and told him that He was to be staying at his house for the day.

Jesus was reaching out to a man hated by society who had decided to climb up into a tree to see the crowds, all the while not realizing that the tree was positioning him for a breakthrough.

Hear me well this morning, Jesus was not afraid of associating himself with Zacchaeus because, in the end, He was the only one who can change the heart of the man whom everyone else hated.

The Scripture records in verse 7-8, *“⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will restore it fourfold.”*”

When Jesus entered the home of Zacchaeus, his entire world changed and Zacchaeus was willing to give all of his wealth away because he had had one experience with the Master. He was willing to throw away what the world had given him over what Jesus had offered him.

Jesus’ decision to reach out to Zacchaeus was not hindered by the opinions and grumblings of others but rather was motivated by the Heart of the Father. The Gospel of Saint John 5:19 records, *“So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his*

own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”

Jesus’ decision to reach out to Zacchaeus was the secondary consequence of the Son seeing what the Father was doing and He followed suit. The Father had already made His divine mind up about what He intended to do in the life of Zacchaeus and the Son was simply fulfilling the Will of the Father! Jesus was not afraid of diving into the trenches of Zacchaeus’s life because, in the end, He was the only one who could end the war of Zacchaeus’ soul.

And with that said, Jesus is not afraid of diving into the trenches of your life because, in the end, He is the only one who can transform your life and change what everyone else thinks about you. And Jesus’ pursuit of you is due to the Father having already made His mind up about what His will is for your life!

Dr. Eugene Peterson, world renown theology and scholar, said, “When we sin and mess up our lives, we find that God doesn’t go off and leave us - he enters into our trouble and saves us.”

And we, like Jesus, must be willing to keep on reaching for One More even though we run the risk of having to deal with other people's grumblings and dissidence because they don't like the fact that you are reaching out and loving on people that they deem unlovable.

Dr. Mark Rutland, the great pastor and preacher, declared, "How can we be the salt of the earth if we are afraid to touch the dirt?"

When are we going to make the choice to reach out and love people the way that Jesus loved and be willing to wade off into the muck and the mire of their lives? If we are to be the salt of the Earth then we must not be afraid of dealing with dirty people!

And in spite of the sting of grumblings and murmuring, Jesus was still reaching for One More ...

Point #3 - Jesus, while on the cross, was still reaching for One More

Luke chapter 23 records the story of Jesus and his interaction with a thief who was being crucified next to Him. Let's look at the text together from verse 32 to verse 43.

³²Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." ³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" ⁴¹And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

This story records part of the last hours of Jesus' life and even though His life blood was pouring from His body, Jesus was still reaching for One More. Jesus is praying for the soldiers who are gambling for His clothes and the people who mocked him saying, **"He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"**

He was still reaching for One More and that "One More" was hanging on the cross next to Him. Up to this point, we've seen Jesus reaching out to Judas the betrayer and we've seen Jesus reaching out to Zacchaeus the Tax Collector but in this text, we find the Son of God hanging upon the Altar of the Cross and His hearts cry is that of the heart of the Father; I've got to reach One More!

The amazing thing about this text is that even though death was fast approaching, it did not dissuade nor detour the focus and goal of Jesus' life and ministry; He was praying and interceding to keep the judgment of God at bay from the lives of those who had beat the flesh from His back, spit upon Him, mocked and ridiculed Him, forced Him to carry His cross to His own crucifixion place and ultimately nailed the hands who cleansed the leper, nailed the hands that caused blinded eyes to see

and nailed the hands that caused the dead to rise up and walk to the roughhewn beam of the Cross of Calvary.

They nailed the feet that walked upon the waters of a stormy sea and were anointed by the oil from an alabaster box of a woman who was an outcast of society.

But in spite of all of this torturous experience, His heart was still so full of love and compassion for humanity that the nail pierced hands of the Savior of the World were still reaching out to a dying man who was hanging right next to Him.

When Jesus stretched His arms out on that ole rugged cross, He was demonstrating to the world that there was nothing that humanity could do that would cause Him to not love them; even while the ones He loved the most were killing Him. With the stretching forth of His hands, He was declaring to all generations, “I Love You This Much!”

2 Peter 3:9 declares, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Let me tell you something friend, sin does not discriminate and it doesn't differentiate; it gives equal opportunity to anyone and everyone and like the man on the cross next to Jesus, you may feel that you have gone too far to be saved and done too much to be redeemed.

But the Scriptures are clear that Jesus does not discriminate and Jesus does not differentiate but desires that all should come unto repentance. Even if that day of repentance is when the last breaths are being expelled from your mortal body.

Sin may be an equal opportunity destroyer but Jesus is an equal opportunity Savior!

And if Jesus was still reaching for One More in spite of the pangs of death, then what is our excuse to not keep reaching in spite of the pain that our reaching causes us; someone needs what's inside of you. **DO! NOT! STOP! REACHING FOR ONE MORE!!!** Because Jesus **NEVER** stopped reaching for you.