

Desperation



Have you ever been driven to desperation? Perhaps your house has been destroyed (in various ways), an auto accident that forces you off the road until you can find a replacement vehicle that's affordable, an illness to you or a loved one that has the potential of being life threatening or even a job loss. This is a brief list to be sure and I'm certain you could add other circumstances that would drive someone to desperation.

Let's look in the Bible and see what might have caused 1st Century individuals to be "Driven to Desperation". A failed party might not be at the top of your list of circumstances but I know the effort and emotion that goes into a wedding reception today and I'm sure that it was the same even then. 1st Century wedding receptions could last for as long as a month (Thus the word "Honeymoon") and the host was obliged to provide all the components for that period of time and certainly if they didn't the level of embarrassment would be intense. So, who do you go to when something runs out? This reception was fortunate enough to have invited Jesus and His mother. As a good Jewish mother, she confronts Jesus with the lack of wine and really won't take no for an answer. There is more going on here than just Water to Wine, the containers that were used were ritual purification (such as Baptism) containers, the water that went into those containers should have been used for that purpose but Jesus changed it into wine, perhaps the same wine you drank at the last communion you attended and according to the Feast Master that wine was the best that had been served there. Jesus turns Desperation into Exhilaration.

After Jesus spends some time dispensing His parables and other information He offers the disciples a cruise to the other side of the Galilee. While they were in mid trip a terrible storm arose such that the disciples were terrified. In their desperation they cried out, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing". Did Jesus not care about the men He had called together and spent time with, besides what did they expect Him to do? He surprised them by making the storm go away. They never saw that coming and they were filled with astonishment and even fear. How often, when you ask Jesus to intervene in your desperation are you surprised by the results? Jesus turned Desperation into Revelation.

Part of Jesus's mission was to dispense His wisdom and this time He was on the shores of Galilee when He commandeered Peter's boat to assist Him in delivering His message. When He finished His message, He told Peter that he should "Go Fishing", well Peter was not only "Desperate" but very tired after a whole night of catching nothing. He must have thought Jesus doesn't know anything about fishing, but apparently, he decided to humor Him and paddled out to fish. We all know the story, Peter filled his boat and John's boat as well but more than that it brought Peter to a better understanding of what Jesus was about. Perhaps Jesus has provided some form of abundance in your life, Peter knew he didn't deserve what he got and said so. How would you have reacted? Jesus turned Desperation into Remuneration and Adulation.

Healing was also part of Jesus's ministry. He had just finished His discourse on "The Mount of Beatitudes", crowds were still flocking around Him and Matthew says that despite the crowds a leper came to him. To get a handle on the level of desperation in this person you must understand that Leprosy in the 1st century was a death sentence and during that dying process you were isolated from all the rest of humanity. So, what do you do when your body smells like rotting flesh and you know that your future is short. According to this person you go to Jesus and beg, even though you know that everyone around you has ostracized you. Jesus was more compassionate than any of those around Him and expressed His willingness to discharge the person's death penalty and even did the unthinkable by touching the person. There you are, smelling good and your future is looking bright! What would you do? Jesus said, "Obey the Rules" *show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded*. Who said you don't have to follow the rules, "Not Jesus"? That was down the road but

immediately you might do some serious “Thank-Yous” and if it were possible administer a big hug. Jesus turned Desperation into Restoration and Jubilation.

Jesus is at a festival in Jerusalem and there is a pool called Bethesda there, where many suffering from all sorts of disabilities go in hopes of getting healing. Interestingly He sorts out one person who describes themselves as rather desperate, since they have no one to assist them in the healing process that is the only way to the curative potential of this establishment. Jesus asked this person, “Do you want to be healed”, and instead of a positive response, it was “Duh, because of the afore mentioned circumstances, it seems unlikely to ever happen”. Jesus said, “why don’t you just get up and walk” which he did. As luck would have it, the Clergy said, “that was wrong” and interrogated the person about how all this happened. Later Jesus confronted the man again and exclaimed, “*See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.*” Which makes you think that maybe Jesus is advocating a “Sinless Life” even though He knows how difficult that would be for humans. Jesus turned Desperation into Mobilization.

This man had a son that according to him had been possessed from “Childhood”. Apparently, the Disciples thought they could handle it but failed, leaving the father even more desperate than he had been. I’m sure you can imagine how desperate you might be if a loved one of yours were incurably ill. Jesus took the man aside to interrogate him about the boy’s condition, where he explained that the boy would roll on the ground, foam at the mouth and even fall into water and fire. This is certainly a hideous picture, that no one would relish to endure. The man exclaims in his desperation, “if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”, the father obviously believed, else he wouldn’t be there but he exclaimed that he was filled with “Unbelief” and that he needed help as well as his son. What ever malady the boy had Jesus commanded it to leave the boy and in the process the boy convulsed even more such that when all was over Mark reports that the boy appeared as though he were dead. That never obstructed Jesus, and He lifted the boy up and presented him to the father sans the malady and very much alive. Jesus turned Desperation into Rehabilitation.

When someone in the first century was afflicted with “Anything”, it was considered punishment for a sin they had committed. The disciples were discussing, “Who had Sinned” that this man was “Born Blind”. Jesus offered a different scenario of the circumstances and proceeded to plaster the man’s eyes with mud. When the man did as directed (That is to wash in the pool of Siloam) his lack of vision was rectified. It must be terribly difficult to imagine what thoughts and emotions could have passed through his mind when he found himself with vision that he had never had before. As with other healings Jesus administered, the then clergy found fault with the process and interrogated this person but he stood his ground, even though he would now be barred from The Temple (excommunicated) and even suggested they might support Jesus’s teachings. Later Jesus approached this person and explained who He was, and with his new found vision the person believed that Jesus was who He said He was. Jesus turned Desperation into Reconstruction and Veneration

Jesus then pointed out that “Sight and The Lack There Of” is more than a condition of visual acuity, real vision is about what Jesus is doing in this world even today, what He has already done for you and perhaps even joining Him in His Mission.