

Sermon Note: Holy Habits

Third Sunday After the Epiphany

Introduction

As we continue our Epiphany series on *Foundations & Futures*, we focus this week on how Jesus grounded his ministry in “holy habits” like worship and community. When Jesus stood in the synagogue to read from Isaiah, he reminded us that spiritual growth is built through steady rhythms of worship, prayer, and study. This week, we reflect on how these practices not only shape our faith but also empower us to live out God’s mission.

Illustration Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d618g59NbSU>

Note: This clip contains language that may be objectionable to some viewers. Please consider this before watching.

In this clip from *The Karate Kid* (1984), Daniel learns how the “menial” tasks Mr. Miyagi gave him have been training him all along.

Why This Video?

This clip illustrates how repetitive, seemingly mundane tasks can lead to transformation and growth. In the same way, worship, prayer, and scripture study may not feel dramatic at the moment, but they are training us to live faithfully and courageously. These habits prepare us to respond to life’s challenges with grace, rooted in God’s presence.

Video Discussion Questions

1. Why does Daniel believe the chores he’s been doing are pointless?
2. What does Mr. Miyagi show Daniel that changes his perspective?
3. How does Daniel’s reaction reflect the importance of trust in a teacher or mentor? Could there be dangers in this trust? How do you know the difference?
4. Have you ever experienced a moment where you realized that consistent, small efforts were preparing you for something greater?
5. What might this clip teach us about the importance of committing to habits in our lives?

Luke 4:14-21 (NRSVue)

¹⁴Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding region. ¹⁵He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶When 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, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸“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 set free those who are oppressed,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰And 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. ²¹Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Study Questions

1. After the temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13), where does Jesus go, and what impact had he already made?
2. After he left Galilee, where does Jesus go? What day is it, and why does this matter?
3. Why did Jesus choose to read from the book of Isaiah? What message did he share?
4. In Jesus’ time, rabbis would stand to read Scripture out of respect for God’s Word, then sit to explain and apply it. When Jesus sat down and declared, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing,” he claimed the prophecy for himself—delivering a much shorter sermon than anyone expected! Why is this significant?
5. Jesus speaks of bringing good news, release, and recovery to those in need. How might you embody this message in your community?

Additional (Optional) Questions

1. In the scripture reading, who had the power in the situation?
2. What does it mean to have “true power” in a world that often links power to control?
3. How can you exemplify humility when holding a role of influence?
4. Why do you think Jesus attended the synagogue that day?
5. Have you had positive experiences either as a leader or a follower? How do you think good leaders guide and influence others without coming across negatively, or as if they are abusing their power?
6. In your life, who or what seems to have power over you or your choices? How do you feel about that?
7. In what ways have you been tempted to get an immediate result? Do you think it would have been easier for Jesus simply to “create” a more immediate result?
8. If you had the choice, would you rather be in a position of power or to be powerless?
9. How do you think people’s choices to pursue power affect those around them?

10. Some Christian traditions call God “omnipotent,” which means “all-powerful.” Do you think that is true? Why or why not? Is it possible that God’s power might be different than how we think about humans having power?

Weekly Action

Make a commitment to at least one new spiritual habit. This could be a daily prayer, regular scripture reading, or a gratitude journal. Commit to this practice with the specific goal of deepening your relationship with God. Consider sharing your practice or your experience of this practice with a trusted spiritual partner or family member.

Prayer

Holy God, as we leave this gathering, may Your Spirit guide us to live out Jesus’ call to love, serve, and liberate. Open our eyes to see the needs around us; open our hearts to respond with grace. Send us as messengers of Your hope and peace. Amen.