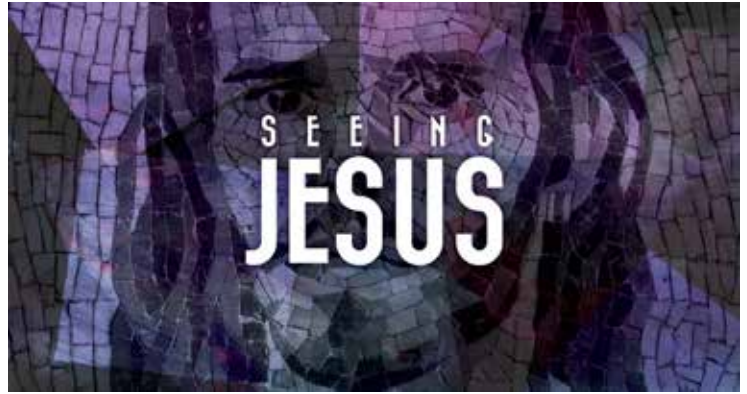


# WEEK OF APRIL 23



DAY  
1

## WORK AND GRACE ... AND HELP

John 5:1-18

Take a moment to read the text.

If we read closely, as followers of Jesus we will see the **grace** of God all over this text. We'll also see the **work** of Jesus. What's more, we'll sense the Spirit's invitation to roll up our sleeves, jump in, **and help**.

Look back at verse 7. Did you notice what the man said? He said: "I have no one to **help me...**"

The great spiritual writer Frederick Buechner said something we would do well to consider: "To lend each other a hand when we're falling, perhaps that's the only work that matters in the end."

It's hard to know what to do with ambition these days. Some argue we should focus on impact by making the greatest impact possible on the greatest number of people. But often, when you look behind the scenes, there's a trail of wounded hearts as the price of success. In our desire to do great things, we often do great damage.

Some argue that we should focus on influence by seeking to gain as wide an audience as possible.

Others suggest we should focus on none of these things because ambition is toxic. They would say it's the driving factor in so much of the brokenness and pain in the world. So, what are we to do with ambition?

One of the things I've heard recently from people who have come to Living Word is something surprising: "**This was really helpful.**" Helpful. This is not a word visionaries use. "I want to be helpful" probably won't get you hired for your dream job.

And yet, this is where Jesus focused his energies. A man laid in the same state for 38 years and couldn't find help. Enter Jesus.

This is where we can channel ambition and energy—into being helpful and coming alongside others who are struggling. We can give resources where there is lack, stability where there is chaos, and love where there is fear.

The world is waiting for a movement of helpful people.

Let it start today, with you and me.

DAY  
2

## How We Help

Genesis 18:18-19

Yesterday, our devotional focused on the need for Christians to be helpers. But what kind of help does the world really need? How can we be the people who represent Christ well and help where help is needed?

In the Old Testament, God chooses Abraham to be the father of his people. God is going about the business of making a people for himself, and he wants those people to be the ones who do what is right and just.

There are many passages in both the Old and New Testament that spell out what it means to do what is right and how to be a helper. Proverbs 31:8-9 tells us to:

*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,  
for the rights of all who are destitute.  
Speak up and judge fairly;  
defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

God tells us that we are blessed when we give. We are to be generous people, who give to whomever is in need. We are to be hospitable people, providing refuge and rest to those who have none. We are to be generous in sharing the message of the gospel. And we are to be especially kind and forgiving to those who are part of the family of faith, showing the world that we are people of love.

*Where in our community can you be a helper that acts on behalf of the poor and oppressed? Where can you work on behalf of others?*

DAY  
3

## How God Helps

**Ephesians 4:11-16, Romans 12:1-2, Philippians 4:6-7**

Many of us, at one time or another, have gone to God for help. Maybe it was for a diagnosis we just received, a relationship hanging by a thread, struggles at work, or any number of other incredibly difficult situations we might be facing. Usually, when we are in the thick of these troubles they are all we can think about. Philippians 4:6-7 reminds us exactly what to do in these circumstances: “Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer... And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

But what about those times when things are going okay? Is God’s help only needed in times of trouble? How often do we find ourselves going to God for help when there aren’t difficult situations weighing us down? Sometimes we forget that the best way God helps us is not just by being there in our time of need, but in his heartfelt and continual desire to see all of us transformed to become more like Christ.

Scripture shows us that the more Christlike we become, the better equipped we are to deal with whatever life throws at us. Romans 12:2 from *The Message* says, “Fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it.” And Ephesians 4:12-13 tells us that that God puts people in our lives “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

God is infinitely interested in helping us and has in more ways than we may ever realize.

*Think about where you have seen God’s help show up throughout your life. Ask God to help you continue to be transformed into being more like Christ.*

DAY  
4

## A Movement of Helpers

**Matthew 5:13-15**

Fred Rogers, best known to those of us who grew up watching Mr. Rogers on PBS, once filmed a video for parents to help their children during times of tragedy. He said, “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’ To this day, especially in times of ‘disaster,’ I remember my mother’s words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers—so many caring people in this world.”

Reading that quote, I can’t help but think that Fred Rogers, who was a Christian, was likely informed by scripture’s call for Jesus’ followers to be the helpers that the world so desperately needs. In today’s passage, Jesus is preaching his Sermon on the Mount and he reminds his disciples that they are to represent Christ through good deeds, so that people will see what they do and respond by praising God.

I’m not sure that my individual “helping works” have every prompted a non-Christian to want to know more about Jesus. But I do know that history is filled with movements of Christians who represented Christ by addressing social ills, taking care of the sick, advocating on behalf of the poor, building hospitals, and much more. Taken together, our actions as a movement of helpers has literally altered history and prompted people to take another look at Jesus.

We are a part of that ongoing movement of helpers.

*How can you represent Jesus well this week? Where are you called to help?*

## Personal Reflection & LifeGroup Conversation

**ONE:** How are you doing at helping? Do you think you are someone who people turn to for help?

**TWO:** We are called to be a community of helpers. How do you think the Christian community is doing at helping these days?

**THREE:** Are there any issues/people groups/social issues that you feel especially called to helping? How have you gotten involved?

**FOUR:** Where do you need God's help right now? How can your group pray for you?