

SM017 – All Night in Prayer

You're listening to Stories of the Master.

The stories of Jesus have reached into the hearts of millions. They have changed people, families, and nations. Not all have loved the stories Jesus told. Not all have honored the life He lived. Some were angry with Him, the things He did and the things He said. Others were deeply moved and found hope. What will your response be?

Today on Stories of the Master, All Night in Prayer, and it is taken from Luke 6:12-49.

My name is Jonathan, and I will be your Storyteller and Teacher.

I'm so glad you're here. Gather your friends. Come close and listen. It's time for the world to hear again the stories of the Master.

And now, All Night in Prayer.

Part 1

It had been a long day for Jesus, a day that was filled with controversy but also a day that had brought the blessing of God to many. And now two groups were meeting in Galilee that evening. One group was a crowd of physically sick people who walked to Jesus and found healing. Another group was a crowd of spiritually sick people who walked away from Jesus and found bitterness of soul. The physically sick went away knowing they had been touched by the hand of God. The spiritually sick plotted on how they could get rid of Jesus.

The people who had come for healing were now gone. Jesus was alone with his disciples but rather than return to the village that night, Jesus decided it was best to stay away and spend the rest of the evening in prayer. His followers stayed close by and one by one began to nod off to sleep - but Jesus prayed on.

One hour, two hours, three hours, Jesus prayed. What did he pray about to his Father in heaven? Did he pour out his soul about the Pharisees? It is never pleasant to be confronted by people and accused of doing wrong. Even though he was the Messiah, the Son of God, the king of Israel, the confrontation and rejection of his people pained him. Why did the Pharisees insist on their extreme application of the Laws of Moses. Surely this was not what God had intended. God wanted his people to rest on the Sabbath but to say that you were breaking the law if you reached out your hand and stripped off a few grains of wheat for a snack bordered on spiritual insanity. What had happened to his people? Why were they so blind to the law's true intent and so focused on the absurdity of their rules?

Jesus continued praying. He thought of the synagogue service and of the man with the withered hand. That hand had kept him from working and making a living. And what better day than the Sabbath to heal him. Had not God given the Sabbath as a weekly reminder that He had released them from their bondage to the Egyptians? What better day than the Sabbath to celebrate a new work of God –

releasing a man from an infirmity so he could be free to work with both hands! But his people were blind and hardened of heart and did not see it that way.

As Jesus prayed he thought on all the people who had come to him that day – the blind, the sick, those possessed with evil spirits, and so many other maladies. God had empowered him to heal them all and how he wished the leaders in Israel would join with him in touching the lives of the hundreds, the thousands who were so needy.

There were so many who were needy and this was just in Israel. Jesus' thoughts went to the whole world and the needs of untold millions who were crying out for help.

“Father, you have sent me into the whole world to seek and to save the lost. I have done your will but your people have rejected me. I have gone to those who are poor, those who are hungry, those who weep and given them your love. But the rich and the well-fed, those who have received your blessings have turned away. They laugh, they scorn, and now they plot my death.”

Jesus got up from his private place of prayer and walked quietly among his disciples. Dozens had accompanied him into the hills and were there with him – all of them sleeping as he prayed and as the camp fires burned low. There was Peter and his brother Andrew. He smiled as he thought of the first time he ever spoke to Peter, “You are Simon but from now on you will be called Rock.” Peter had liked that and he tried to be a leader and a rock for his brother Andrew and the others but he still had so much to learn. Jesus looked at James and John, men with a fiery temperament, sons of thunder he would call them. He saw Nathanael bar Talomai and remembered how he was skeptical of Jesus – “can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael had said. But now Nathanael, or Bartholomew as he liked to be called, was one of his most solid followers.

What an odd assortment of men God had given him. What extremes among them. He thought of Matthew, the man who collected taxes for the Romans and Simon the Zealot, the one who would love to cut down the Romans in a revolution – yet there they were sleeping side by side. Jesus had given them a greater vision that was shaping them into a new kind of man that was greater than violent revolution and greater than giving in to the Romans.

The greater vision was the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, how his people had longed for the reign of God on earth. The prophets had foretold of the coming of God's kingdom in unmistakable terms but it seemed like God's kingdom would never come. The Assyrians had come but not God's kingdom. Then there was the Babylonians and the Persians and the Greeks but still no kingdom.

Judas Maccabeus and his brother led a successful revolution against the Greeks and had freed the land from oppression for a century but what good had it done? The people's hearts had not changed. The leaders were corrupt – the religious ones had formed into different factions and life continued as before with all its uncertainty and fear. And then the Romans came. For almost 100 years the Romans had ruled in the land God gave to Abraham.

But now he had come. He was here, the Messiah, the Son of Man, the Son of God, the king of Israel was in their midst and he was bringing the kingdom to them – if only they could see it and grasp it.

As Jesus continued to pray, a plan began to take shape in his mind. On the next day he would gather all of his followers and he would speak in the clearest ways about the kingdom, the kind of kingdom he was bringing, and what it would mean for people to follow him. It was now time to spell out in clearer detail what his kingdom was about.

But before he did that, he would have to do one other thing. He would have to select twelve to be with him, to learn from him, to think like he thought and to see the world as he saw it. He would send them on mission as part of their training and he would empower them to perform miracles and to cast out demons as he had.

If the leaders would not accept him, then he would appoint new leaders for Israel. Had not God done this before? God had raised up king Saul, but he had to pick a new leader, David to reign over his people when Saul became corrupt. God had chosen the priests to teach his people but he had to raise up prophets when the priests had turned away from him. Jesus would do the same with these men. He would select new leaders for the nation. He would form a new band of 12 men to replace the old tribal loyalties.

The sky was beginning to turn from its inky blackness to a dull grey. It would soon be morning. Jesus had prayed all night, but he was strangely refreshed. The confrontations of the previous day had been washed from his soul and he faced the new day with enthusiasm and zeal for the things of God.

“Wake up. It’s time to get up! We have much work to do. Gather yourselves together for I have many important things to say!”

The sun was soon over the horizon and every one was up and prepared for the day. Jesus gathered all his followers together and made an important statement.

“I have been in prayer, and God is leading us to a new day in Israel. All of you have been following me for these past weeks but it is time for me to select 12 of you to be my apostles. Yes, I said 12, and yes you are understanding the significance of that number. The 12 I pick will become the new leaders of God’s people. Just as Jacob had 12 sons and they became the princes of Israel and their tribes entered the land to conquer it, so I will pick 12 to be princes in Israel. They will be my right arm of strength and they will enter the land on the missions to which I send them. Just as Yeshua of old led the people in conquest of the land, I the Yeshua of today will train these 12 as my ambassadors for my kingdom.

“Simon, you are now Peter, and you are the first of the 12. Andrew, Peter’s brother, you first found Peter and you must be one of the 12 also. James and John, sons of Zebedee, sons of thunder. Philip, I choose you and I choose your good friend Bartholomew. That is six of you. There are six more that I must choose.”

“Matthew. You have been faithful since that day that I called you away from the toll booth and from the day you made a great feast for me. You and Thomas will be the 7th and 8th. James, son of Alphaeus, you

will be the 9th and Simon the Zealot – I like your zeal and I will show you how to direct your zeal for the work of God.

“Two more remain. Judas, son of Alphaeus and Judas Iscariot. You will be my 11th and 12th. You are my apostles. You are to remain with me. You are to be my side in everything I do. I will train you to preach as I preach. I will give you authority over the enemy of mankind as God has given me authority.”

“And now, the rest of you, those who were not chosen – an important work remains for you. Much is to be done. The harvest is great but the workers are few but if all of us are going to work together for the kingdom then you must understand the kingdom of God and how he is working in the land so gather close to me and listen carefully while I lay out for you our kingdom agenda.

Then Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place and there was a large crowd of his disciples and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. And all the people were trying to touch him for power was coming from him and healing them all.

Then, Jesus turned his gaze toward his disciples and he began to proclaim the kingdom manifesto. For centuries God’s people had waited for this. At last it was here.

Interlude

Hello everyone, this is Jonathan Williams, the creator, storyteller, and teacher of Stories of the Master. It’s fascinating to me to think through the gospels and imagine what it was like to be there when Jesus walked among his people, and when he prayed all night. Imagine that, praying all night long. I hope you know that he prayed all night long for you and for me. Yes, the circumstances of the day had caused him to go to his Father, but really his prayer was for you and me and everyone else who would need to hear his message. I hope you realize how much he loves you and how he has sacrificed that you might have life with him.

Today’s story and all the stories of the master are a ministry of Word of God, Speak where we teach the truth of God’s word to change lives, build a biblical view of life, and connect your story to God’s story. One of our ministries is this Stories of the Master broadcast where we retell the story of Jesus and the stories he told. The world needs to hear the stories of Jesus in a fresh way that they might find life in him.

I hope you will consider joining us in this great ministry to take the stories of Jesus all over the world to a world that desperately needs to hear him. Write to us at Stories of the Master – PO Box 90047 – SA TX 78209 in the USA. Or you can contact us on our website – www.storiesofthemaster.com. Your gifts in the USA are tax deductible.

We hope you will also go to the Resources page on the website and there you will find many resources to help you in your discovery of Jesus and in your relationship with him.

Jesus has been all night in prayer and God has revealed to him who the 12 apostles were to be. Jesus is now with them and multitudes of other followers. It is time for him to lay out the kingdom agenda.

Let's return now to the second part of our story, All Night in Prayer, and see what that night of prayer brought the next day.

Part 2

The crowds sat and listened as Jesus began speaking to them about the kingdom of God. They would not be disappointed with his first words for they expected the kingdom nothing short of a revolution in the land. Jesus spoke:

Blessed *are* you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed *are* you who weep now, for you shall laugh. ²² Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. ²³ Be glad in that day and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. ²⁴ But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. ²⁵ Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe *to you* who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe *to you* when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

The people loved it! Jesus was reversing the social order of the day. This was indeed a revolution! What they had been taught all their life was that if you were rich it was a sign that God's blessing was upon you and that if you were poor then something must have gone wrong for you or God was withholding his blessing. But here was Jesus telling them they were blessed, that the shalom of God, the salvation of God was coming to them, the poor, the hungry, the needy, and those who weep. And he was even saying that God would turn away the rich and the full and those who laughed it up all the time and seemed to have everything going for them. Jesus was going to turn things upside down in the world!

But wait, what was that word about people hating you and ostracizing you? That wasn't too pleasant. It seemed like following Jesus wasn't going to be just one big party for the poor. It seems that following Jesus meant that people would hate you and ostracize you and insult you and scorn your name as evil.

Jesus continued,

"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either.

Wait a minute! What kind of kingdom was this? A kingdom of loving your enemies. Simon the Zealot looked at his hands that so eagerly longed for a sword but now Jesus was telling him to love his enemies! James and John, the sons of thunder listened in silence as Jesus said to do good to those who hate you. Peter who was so quick to speak and to complain and to wish curses upon others listened with great eagerness as Jesus told him to bless others who cursed him, and to pray for those who mistreated him. He had received a lot of mistreatment in his fishing business. It seems he could never get ahead as the middle man to whom he sold his fish was always demanding too high of a price and he was left with

so little. But Peter began to realize what Jesus was doing. He was doing what no other leader had ever done. Jesus was reaching into the hearts of people. People needed prayer. People needed spiritual healing as well as physical healing. People needed a demonstration of the love of God.

And what had retaliation ever done. In the past when one man was hit he would retaliate but had that ever solved anything? Never – Jesus was moving beyond those laws and establishing higher laws – the laws of the kingdom of God. If someone demands your coat, don't just give him your coat – give him your shirt as well. That would surprise a lot of people!

Jesus continued:

Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.³¹ Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.³² If you love those who love you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners love those who love them.³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same.³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same *amount*.³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*.³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

The hearts of Peter and James and John and the other apostles were greatly stirred by these words. This was indeed a teaching like they had never heard. And it was refreshing. It seemed that their history was an endless cycle of warfare and retaliation and victory followed by bitterness and defeat as their enemies became stronger. And they thought on how they were really no different from their enemy when they engaged in this kind of behavior. If they were always fighting and warring and refusing to give and refusing to pray and wanting curses to come down upon people, were they really any better than the sinners?

Jesus said:

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

And He also spoke a parable to them: “A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?⁴⁰ A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.⁴¹ Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?⁴² Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

Jesus looked at a tree that was close by. It had bad fruit on it. It reminded him of the Sodom trees he had encountered in the Judean wilderness many months before that bore tasteless and sickening fruit. Jesus pointed to the tree and said:

For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. ⁴⁴ For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. ⁴⁵ The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

Jesus was bringing his message to a close but there was one more important word he had to give. It was not enough for people to call him Lord and disobey him. They had to obey him. It was vital that they obey. This was the kingdom of God that God was inaugurating in the land. This was a kingdom that was turning everything in the world upside down. This was the kingdom that would penetrate the hearts of men and that would one day fill the world with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Men must follow this king and this kingdom or they would lose their lives, and so Jesus said:

⁴⁶ “ Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? ⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who has heard and has not acted *accordingly*, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

There it was – the kingdom agenda. If men would follow these words of his their lives would be like a house built on a solid foundation. But if they did not listen, their lives would fall to the ground.

And when Jesus finished, he called his twelve to him, and they went back into the village to proclaim the kingdom in Israel.

Ending

It was quite a message Jesus gave to his disciples and to the whole multitude that was listening. It was indeed a revolution of the heart. Jesus was taking the weapons out of the hands of his people and filling their hearts with love, prayer, and goodness toward those who were considered their enemies, but who would eventually become their brothers and friends.

And Jesus left no doubt about the importance of following him. If you obey his teaching your life is built upon a rock solid foundation. If you disobey your life will come crashing down.

And so I ask you today, “have you given your life to Jesus and are you following him?”

I hope you will write to us at Stories of the Master and let us know how Jesus is speaking to you and how you are responding to him. Write to us at Stories of the Master – PO Box 90047 – SA TX 78209 in the USA.

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Your gifts will also help us in this ministry to take the stories of Jesus to a world that desperately need to hear his word. We hope you will check out our website where you can find resources to help in your discovery of Jesus and in developing your relationship with him.

My name is Jonathan Williams and I hope you have enjoyed today's story and I look forward to you joining us next week for another story of the Master. Until then, may the Master himself richly bless you.