

Sunday, January 8, 2016

Forest Hills United Methodist Church

Broad Series: Grounded (The life of Jesus in four parts, Exploring Jesus as the incarnation of God in the created world, and how that gives salvation an earth grounding.)

Series Part 2: Dirty Feet

Sermon #2: “Holy (Land) Dirt!”

Rev. Dr. David Werner

Scripture: Luke 4:16-30

Text: John 1:29-30 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one about whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is really greater than me because He existed before me.’”

Sermon Blurb: There He goes! Jesus is off and running. Well, not literally. But we now see Jesus fully grown and beginning His public ministry. What did Jesus understand His purpose to be on earth? Why, did He say, did He come? Here is God, in the form of a person, walking the dusty roads of the Holy Land. Why is He here? This Sunday we’ll start tracing Jesus’ travels, and we’ll eavesdrop as we hear Him explain why He came to earth. It might surprise you!

Gathering Song: *Enough* - Sanctify

Welcome: Pastor David

Worship Set: - Sanctify

Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies

Cornerstone

I Am Free

Kids invited to Kid’s Church

Prayers: HCI - Andrew

Offering: *O Taste and See* -Sactify

Sermon Video Bumper

PP#1: Grounded: Dirty Feet

Holy (Land) Dirt!

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one about whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is really greater than me because He existed before me.’” -John 1:29-30

Grounded: God’s Dirty Feet. “Holy (Land) Dirt!” John 1:29-30 “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one about whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is really greater than me because He existed before me.’”

PP#2: *Image of the holy family at Christmas in Bethlehem, with a holy glow.*

We're now in the second part of a message series that is running from December through May. It's a broad series that's tracing the earthly life of Jesus. Jesus is what makes Christianity unique. We proclaim that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, that He is both fully God and fully human. As God, and as God the Son, He always existed, even before time itself. Jesus is God. Jesus is the same as God the Father; Jesus is not the same as God the Father. We Christians proclaim this, but we really can't understand it, or explain it. We simply accept it and declare it's true.

But Jesus makes all the difference. He is our Savior, and He won forgiveness for us, reconciled us to God, won for us victory over death, and gives us eternal life.

Before He was born at Christmas, He is the Word of God, the Word through whom all things were created. He is the Light of the world. And at Christmas He was born as a baby in Bethlehem.

In Jesus we see that God gets directly involved in human affairs. He comes down and mingles into our lives. He meddles with us, interfering, messing up what is currently true. God gets personal, and gets involved in our lives.

That's why we're doing this series. Our faith in God is not just an abstract idea, something we assent to, or choose to believe in. God is not just a being we acknowledge and say we trust. Our faith is not just something we do with our minds, or even hearts. It's not just an idea or concept.

The Christian faith claims that God is real: ultimately, ideally, metaphysically, ontologically, but also temporally, physically, empirically, and historically. God shows up in history, on earth, physically. Our faith claim is that salvation is true, and that it really happened. Salvation is won by Jesus' earthly life, death, and resurrection. It has names, it has dates, it has locations, it has dirt. Jesus was a real person. He walked on earth. He lived in certain places, said certain things, did certain things. Our faith has a calendar, it has a map, it has memories.

God showed up in dirt. He's not just a belief. He has dirt. Our faith is in something actual, earthly: true in spirit, in mind, and in body.

We can't just believe whatever we want. It's not just true if you like it. God showed up, and revealed to us what is real. It's not just true for me, or for you. It's true for everyone. It is as real as dirt. That's why we can put our trust in Him.

PP#3: *Image of someone looking like we do, walking with Jesus.*

So, we're tracing the earthly life of Jesus over these next months. We're walking with Him. We're talking with Him. We're spending time with Him. We're experiencing Him as real in our lives. We're discovering He is as real to us as our salvation.

The first part of our series, last month, was Jesus before Christmas. God's dirty hands. We learned how He always was, and how He created everything that has been created. God got His hands dirty, taking some clay, and forming people. He also got His hands dirty by getting involved in people's lives: not staying far off, but rolling up His sleeves and getting in there with us. At Christmas He took on hands of dirt, and feet of dirt—a body made from dirt—and became one of us. God showed up fully human, in order to save us. Jesus became like us, so that we could become more like Him.

PP#4: *Dirty Feet sermon image*

This second part of our series is called "God's Dirty Feet." We're walking with Jesus, tracing His steps on earth, experiencing Him ourselves. We're going to trace His earthly life from when He

left His home town to begin His public ministry, until the day He entered Jerusalem three and a half years later. Then, in March, we'll start the next part of our series, when will walk with Jesus to the cross. We're going to call that, "Dirty Faith."

But, wait a minute. Jesus begins His earthly ministry at about the age of 30. So, let's take a minute and quickly trace His first 30 years.

And to do that, we're going to have...what my kids so eagerly call...MAP TIME!

PP#5: *Map of the world with an expanded location of Israel.*

Jesus' life has an actual location, with dates and places. The Christian Faith has no Holy Land, meaning, we don't need to go or be anywhere special in order to be Christians. But we do have a land that we consider holy because Jesus actually lived there. Our faith story has a map.

So, we head to the other side of the world, to the Middle East. It's the country of Israel today, along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It's a tiny place, really.

PP#6: *Map Time! Image of the outline of Israel fitting inside Minnesota.*

Jesus spent His entire earthly ministry in an area of about 120 miles by 40 miles. That's like from here to Duluth. Not a big footprint, at least geographically. Scholars estimate that He walked about 3,200 miles in those three and a half years.

But before, as an infant, He made it down to Egypt.

PP#7: *Map at <http://www.biblestudy.org/maps/the-journeys-of-mary-and-joseph.html>*

Now, here's a map of Israel in Jesus' day, the first half of the first century. You can find Jerusalem, up to the left, or northwest, of the Dead Sea. The area around Jerusalem is called Judea.

Go north, or up, from the Dead Sea to the smaller lake, called the Sea of Galilee, or Sea of Tiberious. The area around that area is called Galilee. This is Jesus' home area.

Find Nazareth, off to the left, or west. Nazareth was a typical Galilean Jewish village in about 5 B.C. The angel appears to both Mary and Joseph, telling them about Jesus birth to them. Then, probably in 4 B.C. they travel down to Jerusalem, and then to Bethlehem, six miles away. It's an 80 mile journey, and probably took three days.

When Jesus is eight days old, they take Him six miles back to Jerusalem for His dedication and circumcision at the Temple. Then they go back to Bethlehem for a while. They're probably living with some of Joseph's family.

Some months later, the magi come to visit. After they leave, Joseph has a dream and is told to take Mary and Jesus and flee to Egypt because King Herod wants to kill Jesus.

So, Joseph gets his family up in the middle of the night and heads down to Egypt. We don't know where, but it was probably about 250 miles. That's a major trip. Good thing the magi brought gold to fund it!

PP#8: *Map A at <http://www.generationword.com/notes/bible-information/jesus-maps-ministry.html>*

We also don't know how long they are in Egypt. Perhaps a few months. Herod dies in 4 BC, and when he does, an angel tells Joseph to take his family back to Israel.

He heads home, all the way back to Nazareth. Jesus is probably 1 or 2 years old. And Jesus grows up in Nazareth. It's His home town.

We have only one story about Jesus' childhood. It's when He's 12 years old. He and His family go down to Jerusalem for Passover. This suggests that Joseph took His family down to Jerusalem a number of times throughout Jesus' childhood, perhaps every year.

Well, this time, Jesus hangs out at the Temple, talking with the priests and scribes. When it's time to leave, they all leave in groups: the men together, the women together, and the kids all together. Joseph thinks that Mary took care of Jesus, and Mary thinks that Joseph did. Meanwhile, He's at the Temple. It's not until at the end of the first day, I don't know, somewhere north of Jericho, that they can't find Jesus with the children. They freak out, go back to Jerusalem, and start hunting for Him. They don't find Him until the third day! He calmly says, "Didn't you know that I would be in my Father's house?"

PP#9: *Image of Jesus, age 12, at the Temple, perhaps when Mary & Joseph find Him.*

This is the only story of Jesus' childhood. Remember, the Bible only tells the stories that are important for our salvation, not the stories we just might find interesting. This story is told, I think, because it already shows Jesus, at the age of 12, drawn to God's house, and able to understand Scriptural and divine things. He calls the Temple, "My Father's House." There's a hint, I think!

PP#10: *Map B at <http://www.generationword.com/notes/bible-information/jesus-maps-ministry.html>*

Well, we don't see Jesus again until He begins His public ministry. At the age of 30, He feels a divine calling to begin. We don't know really how much He understands of His divinity, but He seems to already have a special connection with God the Father. His earthly father Joseph is presumably dead, for he never appears in the rest of the Gospel accounts. There's just His mother and siblings.

Well, Jesus heads down to Bethany, to where His weird cousin John the Baptist, is living up to his name of baptizing people, calling them to repent and turn to God. Jesus shows up, and John prophesies.

PP#11: *Image of John the Baptist pointing to Jesus and calling Him the Lamb of God.*

John 1:29-30 "John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one about whom I said, 'He who comes after me is really greater than me because He existed before me.'"

Jesus then asks John to baptize Him, not because He needed to repent, but to affirm what John was doing, to show others what God required, and to fulfill Scripture.

PP#12: *Image of the dove coming down on Jesus when He is baptized.*

When John baptizes Jesus, the heavens open, and the Holy Spirit comes down upon Jesus in the form of a dove. God's voice spoke from heaven, saying, "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I am blessed" (Luke 3:21-22). Ah, there's another clue. More like a direct revealing. Jesus is God's son, who has a special relationship with the Father, and brings blessing to God.

PP#13: *Map B at <http://www.generationword.com/notes/bible-information/jesus-maps-ministry.html>*

Jesus is then led by the Spirit out to the Judean wilderness for 40 days, where He fasts and prays. My guess is that now God much more openly reveals Himself to Jesus, and He comes to a better understanding of His divine nature, His purpose, and ministry on earth. He already knows, I believe, that He will die on the cross.

That's why the next experience we see is Jesus being tempted by Satan to opt out of His ministry. Satan comes to Jesus while still in the wilderness, and offers Him easier alternatives and selfish options. But Jesus fights Satan with Scripture, and Satan leaves. See, all those hours at the synagogue memorizing Scripture was important. Confirmation class, this is why I make you do it!

Well, God sends angels to again take care of Jesus and build Him up.

Jesus then goes back to Bethany, and two of John's disciples begin following Jesus. One of them, Andrew, goes and gets his brother, Simon, and brings Him to Jesus, too.

Jesus then heads back up to Galilee. There he calls Philip and Nathaniel to follow Him.

But it seems Jesus has an event to attend. He takes His new disciples and goes to the village of Cana to a wedding reception there. His mother also had come down from Nazareth.

This is Jesus' first miracle, John says. The party runs out of wine, and Mary tells the servants to go tell Jesus. Evidently she thinks He can solve the problem. Isn't that interesting? There's another clue. Mary thinks Jesus can do miracles; perhaps she's seen Him do some. She also thinks that He cares about everyday problems.

Jesus is not ready to do public miracles yet, but He obeys His mother. He turns water into wine. Another insight into this Jesus we're following: He can do miracles, He does care about everyday struggles, He changes things.

PP#13: *Map C at <http://www.generationword.com/notes/bible-information/jesus-maps-ministry.html>*

Jesus then heads over to the fishing village of Capernaum on Lake Galilee. He calls more disciples, including James and John.

Then, like He's been raised, He goes up to Jerusalem for the Passover. While there, a man by the name of Nicodemus comes to talk to Him at night. Jesus tells him he must be born again. He then tells him, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, so that whosoever believes in Him, would not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world would be saved through Him." John 3:16-17.

It seems Jesus is well aware of His earthly mission and purpose. It is to provide everlasting life to all the world.

And true to His word, Jesus next heads into foreign territory. He goes into Samaria, and meets a woman at the well in Sychar. Jesus tells her that He is the living water (John 4:10). John 4:13, "Jesus answered, everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks from the water that I will give will never be thirsty again. The water that I give will become in those who drink it a spring of water that bubbles up into eternal life."

Did you hear that? Wow, it's amazing to be following along with Jesus. What are we seeing? What are we learning? Jesus is living water that when we drink of it, it will satisfy all our deepest needs. When we take Him in, He gives in us eternal life. Wow. Exciting stuff!

Jesus then goes back to Cana, where He heals the son of a royal official living there. Jesus proves He is the living water. He brings life to the sick and dying.

Well, Jesus then finally returns home to Nazareth. By now the word has spread about Him, and He is welcomed like a hero.

Well, what have we learned about Jesus? He calls God His Father. He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. God calls Him His beloved Son, who blesses God. He has a

ministry that Satan wants stopped. He gathers disciples to follow Him. He cares about everyday people and everyday lives. He can do miracles. Those who believe in Him will be saved and have eternal life. He can bring change and make things better. He is the living water, and it can well up within people to give eternal life. He can heal the sick and bring life right here, too.

Well, let's take a closer look at Jesus in Nazareth. Stay close now, keep up. We need to hear one more story this morning. Jesus is going to tell us directly what His ministry purpose is. It's in Luke 4, starting in verse 14.

On the Sabbath, Jesus goes to the synagogue. He's well known there. It's kind of like coming here to Forest Hills on Sunday. This was His church family for the last 30 years.

PP#14: Luke 4:14-22 (CEB)

14 Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news about Him spread throughout the whole countryside. 15 He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

16 Jesus went to Nazareth, where He had been raised. On the Sabbath He went to the synagogue as he normally did, and He stood up to read.

Luke 4:14, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news about Him spread throughout the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone." He seems to have become very popular!

Verse 16, " Jesus went to Nazareth, where He had been raised. On the Sabbath He went to the synagogue as He normally did, and stood up to read." See? He normally went to weekly worship. Here's a new year's resolution for us all. Let's attend public worship on a regular weekly basis. It was Jesus' regular practice. And we need it more than He does!

PP15: Luke 4:14-22 (CEB)

17 The synagogue assistant gave Him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.

He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, 19 and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." [Isaiah 61:1-2; 58:6]

Well, when He was there, they expected Him to give a message on the Scriptures. They hand Him the Scroll of Isaiah, and lean in to listen intently. Verse 17, "The synagogue assistant gave Him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." [Isaiah 61:1-2; 58:6]

The room is quiet. Everyone is staring at Him. What will He say?

PP16: Luke 4:14-22 (CEB)

20 He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on Him. 21 He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

22 Everyone was raving about Jesus, so impressed were they by the gracious words flowing from His lips. They said, "This is Joseph's son, isn't it?"

Verse 20, “He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on Him. He began to explain to them, ‘Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it.’

“Everyone was raving about Jesus, so impressed were they by the gracious words flowing from his lips. They said, ‘This is Joseph’s son, isn’t it?’

This is our boy, isn’t it! Darn right it is! He’s one of us! And did you hear what He just said? He said that He was the Lord’s anointed one. He is the one who is bringing good news. He is the one who will bring in God’s favor. And He’s one of us! Wow!

They really don’t hear what He’s saying. They are so excited about their close connection to one that seems to be the Messiah, that they want to be know as the ones who know Him!

But as they prattle on, let’s make sure we heard what He just said. Let’s have it sink in.

PP17: Luke 4:14-22 (CEB)

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.

He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, 19 and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” ...

“Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it.”

This is what Jesus defines His ministry to be. This is His purpose. This is who He is, and what He is doing. If you ever wanted a short summary of what Jesus is all about, here it is. This is how He describes what He’s doing.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” “Today this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it.”

Jesus knows He’s the messiah, the anointed one by God. God’s Spirit has filled Him, pushing Him to begin His ministry. Jesus is talking about ushering in a completely different way of life. He’s bringing a change. He’s changing water into wine. God’s favor is spread all around.

The physical changes mentioned point to deeper, more real changes. Those who don’t know God are poor. Because of Jesus, they hear that God so loved the world that they can have eternal life in Jesus. Those who are prisoners in their world, of their sin, of their lives, in Jesus they have release! Those who cannot see what is real, what is true, who God is and what Jesus is about, they can see the love of God as authentic and verifiable. Those who are walking burdened lives, carrying weary loads, oppressed by hardship and bitterness and hopelessness and failure, experience liberation. God’s favor has come! Jesus brings a new reality! It is here!

Are you one of these? As you’ve been walking with Jesus, has your heart gotten excited by what you’ve heard? Has your hope awakened? Did you hear Him just now? This is also for you! This is the year of the Lord’s favor. “Today this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it.”

This is Jesus, the one we’ve been observing and listening to. He invites you to follow Him. Will you walk this holy dirt with Jesus? “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Living water will bubble up within you and lead to eternal life. Whoever believes in Him will not perish, but live eternally. You must be born again.

“Follow me” says Jesus. This is “the year of the Lord’s favor.” Today it is “fulfilled just as you’ve heard it!”

Amen.

Closing Song: *That's Why We Praise Him* - Sanctify

Benediction: Pastor David