

Episode 4: The Perfect Opportunity

The main focus of this episode is on two new characters, Simon and Jesse, two very different brothers. The episode opens with a boy falling out of a tree and ending up paralyzed, without the ability to walk. His parents try everything to heal him, with no success. His baby brother is born, and the two brothers end up being very close, the best of friends. But when Simon decides to leave his family and become a Zealot, he loses contact with Jesse. Simon takes on a life of physical training, and discipline as a Zealot. Simon is mentioned in the bible in Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13.

The Zealots were a fiercely militant sect of Judaism whose members carried out assassinations on both Roman leaders and Jewish leaders whom they believed were either 1) collaborating with Rome's occupation of the land or 2) accommodating Rome's demands too readily. They were a separate group from the Pharisees and Sadducees at that day and age in history.

Simon states the following verse in the show to his Zealot Rabbi.

Exodus 22:20 (ESV) - Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the Lord alone, shall be devoted to destruction.

This is his justification for the actions of his group. He feels very strongly that he is bringing down God's justice. We know that only God can judge, provide justice and everyone will face his judgment in the end. Have you ever felt that you needed to take action in the name of justice? How can you be sure that your actions align with God's will?

Did you catch that Thomas said he didn't know Jesus lost his father? Biblical scholars believe that Jesus' father, Joseph, passed away as he was not present at the crucifixion with Mary and Jesus tells his disciple, John, to care for her (John 19:25-27).

Jesus and the disciples head to Jerusalem as they are celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. This is a feast that is meant to reenact the Israelite wandering and journey in the wilderness for 40 years. The Jews are expected to camp outside, head to Jerusalem and abstain from work for 7 days. This is also called the Feast of Booths.

Everyone has wandered through the wilderness at some point, and the Feast of Tabernacles serves as a remembrance of this. The Israelites wandered through the wilderness for 40 years surviving by God's grace and mercy alone. It was difficult, it challenged their faith and required obedience. Have you gone through a season where you felt like you were wandering in the wilderness? What was your experience and how did you feel going through it and then once you were on the other side?

While Jesus and the disciples were eating at the Feast of Tabernacles, Big James quotes Zechariah and asks Jesus a question. Circle below who will worship the King:

Zechariah 14:16 (ESV) - *Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.*

Big James questions the scripture above because he does not understand why one day enemies would celebrate the feast, Jews and gentiles together. Jesus says something will have to change. Jesus was that change, that sacrifice that opened the ability for gentiles, like us, to be able to worship God. Jesus died for everyone, not just the Jewish people. Zechariah prophesied this long before Jesus was born and within a couple of years, Big James will better understand this verse. Write a prayer below thanking God for Jesus and our ability as gentiles to go to heaven with him.

Simon has a mission to kill the Roman Magistrate. He was sent to Jerusalem with this mission and has been training for this very moment. However, you can tell he is having doubts. His whole heart isn't in it. He sees the men on the crosses on the way into town, crucified for doing just the thing that he was sent to do, murder.

Has there been a time when you felt the Holy Spirit pulling you in a different direction than you had planned? I imagine this is what Simon felt and why he had his doubts. What was the Holy Spirit prompting and did you follow it?

Bible Reference

Jesse reads from the letter that Simon left for him when he left home and went to the Zealots. He quotes scripture from Zephaniah

Zephaniah 3:20 (ESV) *Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.*

Did you catch that also in this letter Simon said that when he saw Jesse standing on his own two feet, he will know that the Messiah has come? I love how the creators had this included in the letter Simon wrote this to Jesse and then at the end of the episode Simon does see Jesse walk. Not only does he see him standing on his own two feet, but the one who healed him was the Messiah as he stated in his letter. Such a neat detail that they added to the story line!

DID YOU KNOW??

No where in scripture is this connection between Simon the Zealot and the healing of the man on the mat at Bethesda stated. We also do not know that the man's name is Jesse. The creators of The Chosen added this story and relationship between brothers for entertainment purposes.

Jesse was putting his faith in a pagan pool. He completely lost hope after being paralyzed for so many years. Was there a time, or are you currently in a period, where you lost hope? Maybe it was hope lost in a person, situation, or thing. How did you feel at that time?

Jesse is very distraught and has lost all hope in ever walking again. He has no one to help him into the pool. He has been there for 25 years and the pool has never healed him. It sounds like he had his hope and faith in the wrong thing! Jesus enters the scene and immediately picks out Jesse. Read below and circle what Jesus asks the lame man. Underline the response that the lame man gives to Jesus.

- **John 5:2-9 (ESV)** – ² Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. ³ In these lay a great multitude of invalids- blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. ⁴ For an angel went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. ⁵ One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” ⁷ The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no man to put me in to the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going, another steps down before me.” ⁸ Jesus said to him, “Get up, take your bed and walk.” ⁹ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.

Jesse doesn't answer with a resounding “Yes! Heal me!” you can hear in his response that he has no hope. He explains why he has not been healed because he couldn't get to the water. He didn't know who Jesus was and still had his hope in the wrong healing power.

Continue to read John 5:10-15. What do you notice about the Jewish leaders?

Jesse's lost hope was transformed by Jesus into healing. Even though Jesse lost hope to ever be able to walk again, God did not give up on him. So, whatever you wrote that you are losing hope in, know that if it is aligned with God's will, it will happen. God has not lost hope in you!

At the end of the episode, we see that Simon did not murder the Roman magistrate. He was ready to do it, but then he saw his brother walking! He stopped what he was doing and went right to him. God saved him from making a huge mistake that could have cost him his life. God wants to save your life as well. Open your heart to him and let him guide you away from sin and into his loving arms!