

When Peter saw the great catch of fish, he cried, "Oh, yes, You are the Lord! But I'm not a good man at all. Please just leave me alone!"

Jesus told him and Andrew, "Don't be afraid. Follow Me and I will help you become fishers of men." Then Peter and Andrew put down their nets. They landed their boats, which were full of fish, and followed Jesus.

As they walked along the shore, they soon met Peter's partners, two brothers named James and John. Jesus went up to them. "Follow Me," He said. They took one look at Jesus' face, felt their hearts turn over and agreed.

These men became Jesus' closest friends. They followed Him everywhere as He taught the people. They watched and learned from Him. They were Jesus' helpers, His disciples.

There's No More Wine!

John 2:1-11

A few days later, Jesus and His disciples were invited to a wedding in Nathanael's hometown of Cana. It was a big wedding. The party lasted several days. Jesus' mother Mary was there, too.

There were many, many people at the wedding. Food was heaped on tables. There was meat and nuts, rice, cakes and fruit.

All the guests drank a great deal of wine. Halfway through the feast the bridegroom noticed the wine was running out. "Oh no," he thought to

himself. "This is terrible!"

It was the bridegroom's job to make sure there was enough wine. If the wine ran out that meant the party might end early. That was no fun!

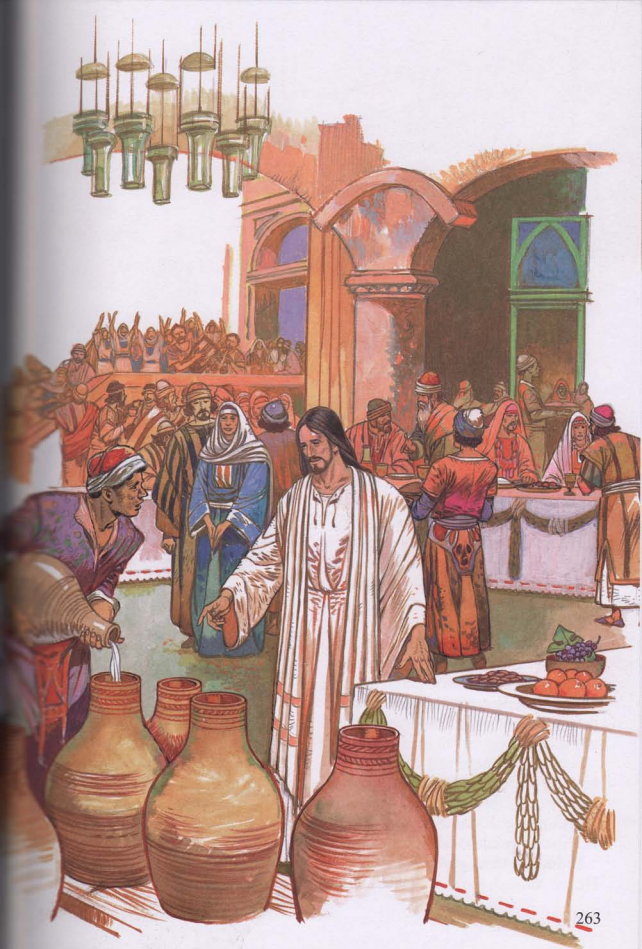
Mary saw the bridegroom's problem. She went to Jesus. "They have no wine," she said. Jesus said, "But why do you ask Me about this now? You know it's not yet time for Me to let people know who I am."

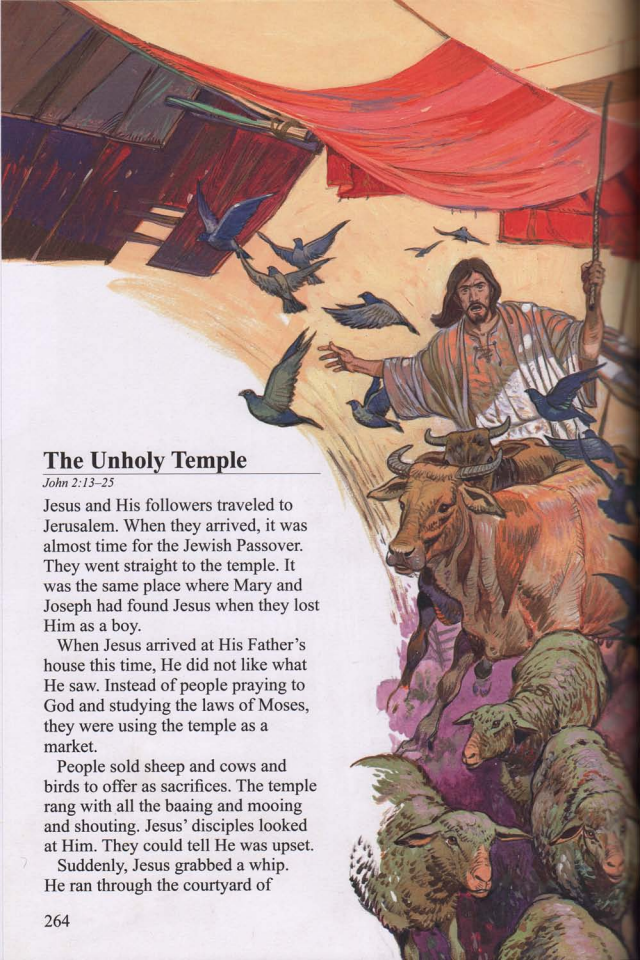
Mary called a servant anyway. She told him to do what Jesus ordered. Jesus told the servant to fill six huge jars with water.

Once the jars were full, He said, "Take out some water now. Bring it to the head waiter." When the head waiter had tasted the wine, he took it to the bridegroom.

"What have you done?" he asked him. "This is the best wine I've ever tasted!" The bridegroom did not know where all the wine had come from, but Mary knew .







The Unholy Temple

John 2:13-25

Jesus and His followers traveled to Jerusalem. When they arrived, it was almost time for the Jewish Passover. They went straight to the temple. It was the same place where Mary and Joseph had found Jesus when they lost Him as a boy.

When Jesus arrived at His Father's house this time, He did not like what He saw. Instead of people praying to God and studying the laws of Moses, they were using the temple as a market.

People sold sheep and cows and birds to offer as sacrifices. The temple rang with all the baaing and mooing and shouting. Jesus' disciples looked at Him. They could tell He was upset.

Suddenly, Jesus grabbed a whip. He ran through the courtyard of



the temple. His disciples stood and watched with open mouths. Jesus ran back and forth. He drove the animals and people from the area. "Get out!" He shouted. "Take these things away! How dare you turn My Father's house into a marketplace!"

He turned over the tables of the money changers. Coins splashed all over the floor. Animals ran in every direction. People shouted.

When Jesus had finished, He took a few moments to relax. Then He started teaching the people who had followed Him. During the next days of the Passover feast, He taught people about God. He also did several miracles. Many people believed what He said. They wanted to learn more and promised they would always follow Jesus.

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He Is the Water of Life

John 4:1-26

Jesus and His followers passed through a land called Samaria. The people there, the Samaritans, were longtime enemies of the Jews. No Jew ever wanted to talk to a Samaritan.

All the same, when Jesus arrived at a well in Samaria, He started talking with a Samaritan woman. Jesus was very tired from all the walking. He asked her, "Can you give Me a drink of water?"

She was surprised that a Jew would talk to her. She drew some water out of the well and gave it to Him. "Why do You, who are a Jew, talk to me, a Samaritan?" she asked.

Jesus said, "If you knew the life God could give you, if you knew who I was, you'd be the one asking Me for water. Then I would give you the living water from God. If you drink the water I give, you'll live forever and never be thirsty again."

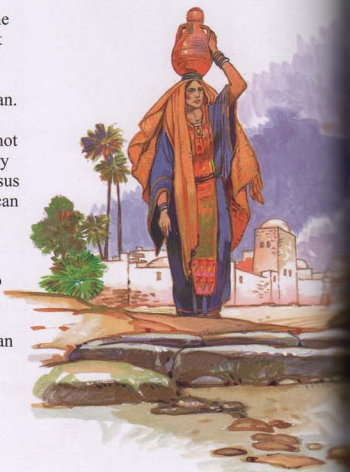
This puzzled the Samaritan woman. Water is something we all need in order to keep living. Especially in hot countries like Samaria, water is very precious. It is often hard to find. Jesus said, "Whoever drinks the water I can give will never be thirsty again."

"Oh, I want that!" she cried.

Then Jesus told her to get her husband. When she said she had no husband, Jesus told her all about her life. He even knew how many husbands she had had. "And the man

you are living with now is not your husband," He added.

The woman was very confused. How could He know all her secrets? She was scared of Him and tried to change the subject. Jesus knew what she was thinking. He wanted to help her. She said she did not know much about God, but had heard about a



Messiah who would someday come to earth.

Then Jesus said, "The Messiah is already here. You're talking to Him now!"

The Woman at the Well

John 4:27-42

"Who is that woman at the well?"

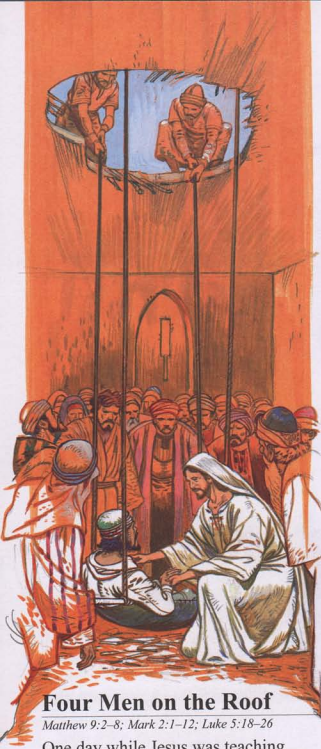


Jesus' disciples were walking back from the town where He had sent them to get food. When they saw Him talking to the woman they became very upset. "Jesus shouldn't do that. She's a Samaritan. No Jew wants to talk to those people," they said to each other.

When the woman looked at the disciples' angry faces, she thought she had better go home. Jesus had given her a great deal to think about. She left her water pot behind and hurried into town. There she told a group of people, "Come and see a man who told me all about my life! Is it possible? Could this really be the Christ?"

The woman's story made the people very curious. They followed her to the well and met Jesus. They listened to Him teach and felt their hearts and minds open to what He said. "Please, stay with us and tell us some more," they begged.

Jesus' disciples did not like this. They did not want to stay with the Samaritans. But Jesus showed His love for all types of people. He stayed in that city for two days. Many people believed He was the Messiah. Some believed because of the story told by the woman at the well. Most believed for themselves because of what they heard Jesus say. He taught about love and then had spent time with them, even though He was a Jew and they were Samaritans.



Four Men on the Roof

Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:18-26

One day while Jesus was teaching inside a friend's house, many, many people came to listen. They crowded around the tiny house. They tried to hear at least a few words of what Jesus was saying.

Four men carrying a stretcher pushed their way through the people. "Let us by! Let us through to Jesus!" they called out. When they saw they would never make it through the door, two of the men climbed on top of the roof of the house. The other two threw them ropes so they could haul the stretcher onto the roof.

On the stretcher lay a very sick man. He could not move at all. His four friends had brought him to see Jesus. They knew Jesus could make him better.

The four men began pulling tiles off the roof. They were making a hole! Inside the house, the people listening to Jesus heard a ripping sound above them. They looked up. Then suddenly, dirt and tiles fell on them. The next thing they knew, a stretcher was being lowered through the hole with a sick man strapped onto it!

Jesus saw how hard the man's friends had worked. He told the sick man all the bad things he might have done no longer mattered. He could start over. Jesus said, "Now get up and walk home."

The man did as he was told, just as if he had never been sick. "Glory to God! This really is His Son!" He and his four friends shouted and sang the whole way home.

The Tax Collector Says Yes

Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:14-17; Luke 5:27-32

As Jesus was walking down the street

he passed a table where a tax collector sat. The Jewish people did not like tax collectors. They worked for the Romans, who were enemies of the Jews. No one liked the tax collectors because they were such cheaters.

As Jesus passed this tax collector called Matthew, He said, "Follow Me!"

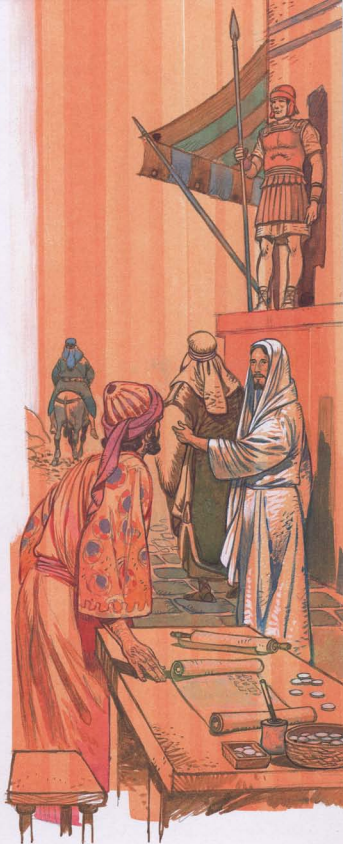
Matthew had already heard about Jesus. He wanted to follow Him, but Matthew was afraid Jesus would say no. Matthew was a tax collector, after all. When Jesus said, "Follow Me," Matthew jumped up from his table. He left behind his books and box of money. Matthew followed Jesus.

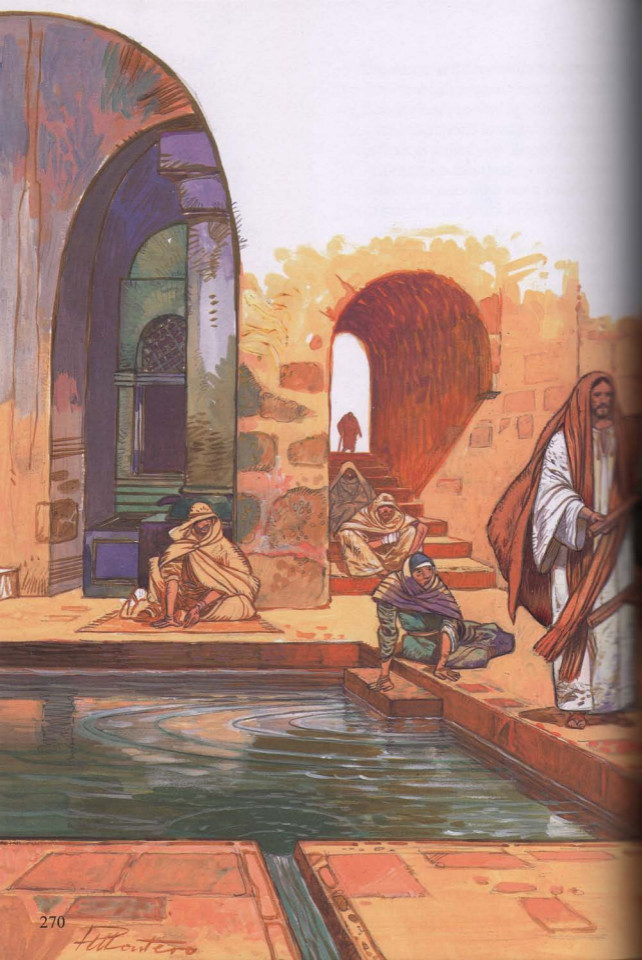
A few evenings later, Jesus was eating dinner in Matthew's house. Sitting with Him were more tax collectors and cheaters.

When the religious leaders saw this, they were not happy. They said to Jesus' followers, "Why does Jesus eat with all these bad people?"

Jesus said, "Do the healthy need a doctor? No, the sick are the ones who need help." Then He told them to think about how it was better to care for people with problems than waste time trying to follow rules which could only hurt people.

This was a new teaching for the religious leaders. They were used to thinking of God's rules as reasons to punish and judge. Jesus told them that God had given them the rules so they would know right from wrong. They were supposed to love and help each other.





Waiting for a Miracle

John 5:1-9

One day Jesus visited a special gate in Jerusalem called Bethesda. Near that gate was a pool with large steps. Many sick people lay on these steps. They were waiting for the water in the pool to move. They believed that

sometimes an angel of God came and stirred the water. Whoever was the first one into the water after the angel came would get better.

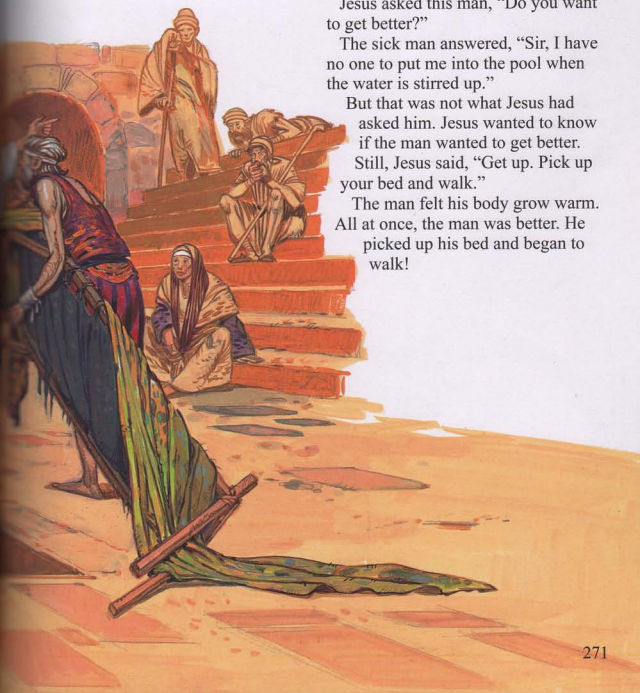
When Jesus passed by the pool He saw sick people moaning and groaning. Some lay shriveled up and dying. One man had been waiting thirty-eight years for the water to move.

Jesus asked this man, "Do you want to get better?"

The sick man answered, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up."

But that was not what Jesus had asked him. Jesus wanted to know if the man wanted to get better. Still, Jesus said, "Get up. Pick up your bed and walk."

The man felt his body grow warm. All at once, the man was better. He picked up his bed and began to walk!





The Twelve Men Set Apart

Matthew 10:1-23; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16

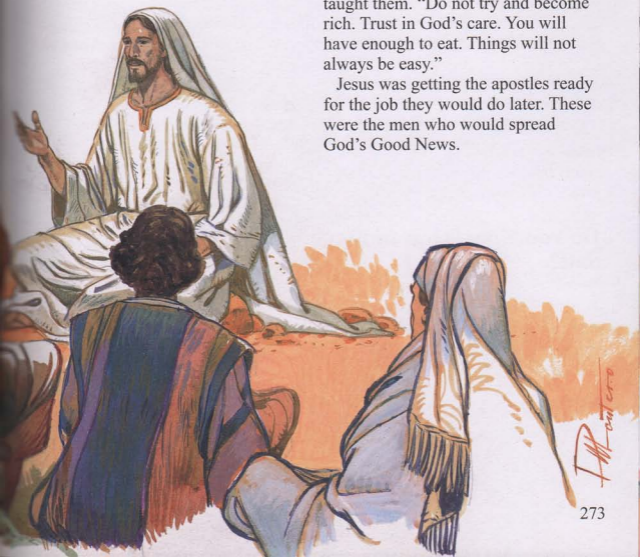
After Jesus had healed many people, He went off by Himself. He climbed up a mountain and prayed. All night long He prayed to God.

When the sun rose, He called His special followers to him. He chose twelve of them. These men would be His twelve apostles. They would be His special helpers, the closest to Jesus. They would be the ones to carry on Jesus' work, after He went to heaven.

It was a strange group Jesus chose. Peter, James and John were the closest to Jesus. They, as well as Andrew, belonged to the same fishing business. Matthew was a tax collector. Simon (another Simon, not Peter) was mostly interested in fighting a war with the Romans. The other men were Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, another James (this one the son of Alphaeus), Thaddeus (son of James), and Judas Iscariot, who would betray Jesus.

After choosing the twelve, Jesus sat them down and gave them special orders. "Go to the Jews and heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Give freely," Jesus taught them. "Do not try and become rich. Trust in God's care. You will have enough to eat. Things will not always be easy."

Jesus was getting the apostles ready for the job they would do later. These were the men who would spread God's Good News.



True Happiness

Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 6:20-26

Jesus gave a very important talk one day, on a hillside. He wanted to explain some of His teachings. Many, many people followed Him there. The talk Jesus gave is called the Sermon on the Mount.

On that hillside, Jesus taught the people about real happiness. The people noticed He turned everything upside-down. Instead of saying the tough and pushy people would be winners, He said the weak people and ones who depended on God were truly happy. This was something the people had never heard before.

“The most precious people in God’s eyes are the poor. The special ones are those who are hurting and gentle. They want very badly to see the right thing done. These are the people who take care of others.

“If anyone hurts you because you believe in Me, then be glad. You will surely be rewarded in heaven,” Jesus said.

Do You Know How to Be Salt?

Matthew 5:13-16

The people who heard Jesus were astonished. This was like no teaching

they had ever heard before. It made them feel loved and wanted by God.

“You are the salt of the earth,” Jesus said.

“But how can we be salt?” they asked each other.

The answer is that ordinary people are the ones who make the world a special place. Mothers and fathers raise their children. The peacemakers try to bring people together. People who work hard then come home and play with their children, all these people stop the world from wasting away. They are just like salt because salt helps keep meat from going bad or wasting. And salt makes food taste extra good. Ordinary people, not the rich or powerful people, can change the “taste” of the world from bad to good.

“You are the light of the world. You cannot hide a city on a hillside,” Jesus said. He knew the lights of a city would always be seen a long way off.

No one hides a light under a bucket. That would be a silly waste. So, too, people who follow God in their lives should not be afraid to do the things Jesus says. Every man, woman and child who loves God can show others what God is like. They do this by loving the people around them.

