

# But Jesus . . .

## *Walking in the footsteps of a subversive Savior*

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Throughout the Gospels, Jesus engages in unpredictable, unexpected behavior. When circumstances would suggest that Jesus should go this way, he goes that way. When there's opportunity to speak, he is silent. As we look at these stories of Jesus, what does it mean for us to walk in his footsteps? This series looks at the following actions as they apply to our walk with Jesus:

- Lingering
- Touching
- Having not
- Staying silent
- Rebuking
- Answering
- Bending

### *Week One: Lingering*

**Scriptures:** Luke 2:41-50 (NKJV translation)

#### **Key themes**

- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus engages in unpredictable, unexpected behavior. When circumstances would suggest Jesus should go this way, he goes that way. When circumstances call for action, Jesus *lingers*.
- In Luke 2, Jesus is seen *lingering* at the temple when his family expects him to follow them home.
- *Lingering* is difficult for us, because our schedules are so hectic and the demands on our time feel so intense.
- We can cultivate the ability to *linger* like Jesus by practicing:
  - Lingering with God (slow and deliberate worship and prayer)
  - Lingering with others (prioritizing who is in our life now rather than what we hope for in the future)
  - Lingering with self (being comfortable in our own skin and moving beyond “needing to be needed”)
- Forest Hills sermon link: <https://vimeo.com/103755369>

#### **Visual elements**

This week's objects are: Clocks/calendars/day timers/sticky notes/hourglass/things that remind us of time.

#### **Song suggestions**

STS 49 “I Will Come to You in the Silence”  
STS 31 “Jesus, Be the Center”  
HWB 5 “There Is a Place of Quiet Rest”  
Hillsong “Oceans”

#### **Children's time**

*Call the children to the front. Say:* I need two volunteers to race down the center aisle of the church to see who is faster. *[Have two volunteers race.]* Who do you think won? This reminds me of a Bible verse that says the race is not always won by the fastest person. Sometimes we go through life always on the go, going faster



and faster because we think that the fastest person always wins. There's another verse in the Bible that says that God is waiting for us. Maybe God is waiting for us to slow down a bit. Maybe we meet God when we slow down. Maybe we should be looking for chances to slow down, to breathe a little bit, and wonder and see and look if God might be waiting for us.

## Week Two: *Rebuking*

**Scriptures:** Luke 9:51-56

### **Key themes**

- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus engages in unpredictable, unexpected behavior. When circumstances would suggest Jesus should go this way, he goes that way. When others would use violence, Jesus rebukes them.
- “Jesus was seen as, and saw himself as, a prophet—like the prophets of old, coming to Israel with a word from her covenant god, warning her of the imminent and fearful consequences of the direction she was travelling, urging and summoning her to a new and different way. . . . Above all, Jesus adopts the style of, and consciously seems to imitate, Elijah.” —N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*
- When Elijah encountered resistance from a Samaritan (2 Kings 1), he called down “fire from heaven” to consume them. Jesus’ disciples expect Jesus to continue modeling his ministry on Elijah’s, including the use of divine violence.
- Jesus’ rebuke of the disciples is in line with Jesus’ other teachings on violence, but stands in sharp contrast to the cultural attitudes of the day.
- Forest Hills sermon link: <https://vimeo.com/105019364>



### **Visual elements**

This week’s objects are: Doves.

### **Song suggestions**

STS 16 “Peace before Us”

HWB 407 “We Are People of God’s Peace”

HWB 163 “Obey My Voice”

### **Children’s time**

*Call the children to the front. Say:* How many of you ever get mad? [*everybody gets mad*] What are some things you do when you get angry? [*stomp feet, yell, cry . . .*] Do any of you ever feel like hitting someone when you’re mad? Especially when someone takes something that’s yours or does something unkind to you?

The people who were Jesus’ friends—we call them disciples—once had people do something very unkind to them. They were traveling around and wanted to stay in a certain town, and the people there said they didn’t want them and told them to go away. So the disciples wanted to do something hurtful to those people. But Jesus said no. Jesus loved those people even though they weren’t nice to them. And Jesus loves us, even when we’re angry and maybe sometimes want to do hurtful things to people. Jesus says no, he doesn’t want us to do that. He wants us to love everyone just as he loves us.

## Week Three: Touching

*Scriptures:* Luke 5:12-16



### *Key themes*

- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus engages in unpredictable, unexpected behavior. When circumstances would suggest Jesus should go this way, he goes that way. Those whom others avoid, Jesus *touches*.
- In touching a man with leprosy, Jesus actions violate:
  - Common sense
  - Self-preservation
  - Religious & Social Expectations (taboos)
- Video trailer/clip for *Contagion*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sYSyuuLk5g> (lightly edited)
- Who has “leprosy” today? What barriers do we erect around them?
- “Touch” can bring healing, including direct physiological effects (reduced blood pressure, lower heart rate, increased cortisol production, increased oxytocin production)
- How can we, as Christ-followers, “touch” (whether physically or metaphorically) those who have been ostracized from society?
- How do we who feel “leprous” receive Jesus’ touch?
- Forest Hills sermon link: <https://vimeo.com/107495483>

### *Visual elements*

This week’s objects are: Medical/quarantine equipment.

### *Song suggestions*

*Gaither Music* “He Touched Me”  
*HWB* 511 “God, Who Touches Earth”  
*HWB* 149 “Great God of Wonders”  
*HWB* 377 “Healer of Our Every Ill”  
*HWB* 375 “Heal Us, Immanuel, Here We Are”

### *Children’s time*

*Call the children to the front. Say:* Does anyone know the best way to keep from getting or spreading a cold? [*washing hands*] Do you know why that is? Because a common cold is spread by germs that get on your hands and then into your body and then suddenly you have a cold. So really, you get sick by touching things and people.

In today’s story, Jesus uses touch to do exactly the opposite of that. He comes upon a man with leprosy. Now, leprosy was very contagious and nobody wanted to touch a leper for fear they would “catch” it. But Jesus reached out and touched this man, and with that touch the man was healed. Sometimes we can use touch to help others just like Jesus did. You can cheer up a friend by giving them hug. You can play with someone who’s looking for a friend. You can say something nice to encourage someone. So when cold season comes around and your parents and teachers are reminding to wash your hands often, remember that along with spreading germs, we can also spread God’s love by touching other people’s lives.

## Week Four: *Answering*



**Scriptures:** Luke 4:1-13

### **Key themes**

- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus engages in unpredictable, unexpected behavior. When circumstances would suggest Jesus should go this way, he goes that way. When others seek to confuse, Jesus *answers*.
- In *answering* Satan's temptations in the wilderness, Jesus *answers* with Scripture. However, Satan *also* quotes Scripture when tempting Jesus.
- Since Jesus and Satan both quote Scripture, this passage invites us to consider how we read, interpret and apply Scripture.
- In seeking to read Scripture like Jesus, we should:
  - Read Scripture as a story—an unfolding narrative with plot, characters, setting, and resolution. Jesus situates his wilderness experience in the story of Israel and their temptation in the desert.
  - Read the whole story—not just isolated “proof texts.”
  - Read the story with Jesus as the hero—Jesus is the center of God's story, not us.
- Forest Hills sermon link: <https://vimeo.com/105745653>

### **Visual elements**

This week's objects are: A variety of Bibles.

### **Song suggestions**

HWB 594 “Lord, You Sometimes Speak in Wonders”

Lynn DeShazo “Ancient Words”

### **Children's time**

*Preparation:* You will need to find a picture book with a cover picture that spans both the front and back covers of the book. Good examples are *Reuben and the Fire* by Merle Good and P. Buckley Moss, *Blue Chicken* by Deborah Freedman, *The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey* by Susan Wojciechowski.

*Call the children to the front. Say:* On each of these book covers you discover something extra about the story by looking at the front and back covers as a whole picture. Usually when you read a book, you start at the front cover and work your way to the back cover. [*Demonstrate using the picture book.*] But sometimes you can learn even more about a book if you look at the “whole picture.” [*Open the picture book and show the “whole picture” of the front and back covers.*] The Bible is kind of like that. We read stories from the Old Testament, and we read stories from the New Testament. But we don't get the big picture unless we look at the Bible as one big story. The story of God's love. So keep reading and learning about the Bible—any and all parts of it! But remember the big picture—it's all tied together by God's love for all of us in sending his son Jesus.

## Week Five: *Having not*

**Scriptures:** Luke 9:57-62



### **Key themes**

- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus engages in unpredictable, unexpected behavior. When circumstances would suggest Jesus should go this way, he goes that way. When others accumulate wealth, Jesus has not himself.
- We might expect that Jesus (the one by whom and through whom and for whom all things were made) would have chosen to live a life of material comfort. Instead, he spends his adult life in voluntary poverty, even going so far as to describe himself as “homeless.” (Jesus *has* nowhere to lay his head.)
- Jesus’ socioeconomic status (voluntary poverty) raises profound, potentially disturbing questions for us:
  - Would we recognize a homeless Jesus? (see video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6jSKLtmYdM>)
  - See also [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/17/homeless-jesus-sculpture-davidson\\_n\\_5167418.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/17/homeless-jesus-sculpture-davidson_n_5167418.html)
  - How does our own affluence reconcile with our claim to call Jesus “lord”?
  - How do our social systems and structures empower those on the economic margins to have their voices heard?
- Forest Hills sermon link: <https://vimeo.com/110767781>

### **Visual elements**

This week’s objects are: Lean-to, manger scene backdrop (Jesus had no place to lay his head).

### **Song suggestions**

*HWB* 206 “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

*STS* 26 “Helpless and Hungry”

### **Children’s time**

*Preparation:* Collect photos of presidents, celebrities, etc.

*Call the children to the front. Show a few of the photos. Say:* What do these people have in common? *[They are important; they have a lot of money . . .]* Do any of you know what the letters *VIP* stand for? *[Very Important Person]* Can any of you think of a very important person? Do you think Jesus is a very important person? Do you think when Jesus walked the earth many years ago he was a very important person? Maybe not so much.

When Jesus walked the earth, he wasn’t taken around in a limo and he didn’t live in a mansion or have his own private plane. In fact, he didn’t really have anything to call his own. He was actually pretty poor. In today’s Scripture he even says he has nowhere to lay his head. He was pretty much homeless. Sometimes we think we’re looking at someone who’s very important because they have a cool limousine or lots of money, but in reality we may be missing what God is doing. Because sometimes God does something that doesn’t seem very important at the time but ends up being very important later. So maybe we should pay more attention to things that might not seem that important and ask ourselves, “What is God doing that I don’t want to miss?”

## Week Six: *Bending*



*Scriptures:* John 8:2-11

### *Key themes*

- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus engages in unpredictable, unexpected behavior. When circumstances would suggest Jesus should go this way, he goes that way. When others court controversy, Jesus creatively disengages.
- The scribes and Pharisees attempt to pull Jesus into a political/religious debate: should we obey our Roman occupiers or the Law of Moses? In response, Jesus *bends* down to write in the sand—refusing to answer their question. Jesus displays a *creative carelessness* about the most pressing sociopolitical issue of the day.
- This invites us to be mindful about where we invest our energy and attention. The priorities of society may not be the priorities of the kingdom.
- Jesus also demonstrates *holistic* care for this woman. He protects her from punishment (*compassionate care*) while admonishing her to not sin (*clear conviction*).
- Forest Hills sermon link: <https://vimeo.com/109443466>

### *Visual elements*

This week's objects are: Glass bowls filled with sand.

### *Song suggestions*

Charlie Hall "Give Us Clean Hands"

HWB 137 "Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive"

HWB 136 "From the Depths of Sin"

HWB 226 "You Are Salt for the Earth"

### *Children's time*

*Call the children to the front. Say:* How many of you like to go to the beach? Have you ever built a sandcastle? What happened to it? [*wrecked by the water*] Have any of you ever built a sandcastle that lasted forever? That's not possible because sand is always moving, always being changed by the wind and the water.

In our Bible story this morning, Jesus bent down and wrote in the sand. We don't know what he wrote because it disappeared—sand is not permanent, it doesn't last forever. A lot of things in life are like sand, they change or disappear, but there is one thing that will always stay the same and be constant in life, and that's God's love for us. Jesus promised to his disciples and he promises to us that he is always with us. He will never leave us or forsake us. He is with us even to the end of time. So as you go through life, you may find that things change, you may like things you didn't use to like or you may not like things you used to like. But remember that God's love never changes.

## Week Seven: *Staying silent*



**Scriptures:** Mark 14:60-62

### **Key themes**

- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus engages in unpredictable, unexpected behavior. When circumstances would suggest Jesus should go this way, he goes that way. When others would seek an opportunity to speak, Jesus is *silent*.
- Jesus' *silence* in the face of being charged with capital offenses is unexpected. In wrapping up the series "But Jesus . . ." this silence will allow us to reflect on two key things we learn from Jesus' surprising actions:
  - We are not God. Much of Jesus' activity is predicated on the firm belief that a sovereign God has ultimate responsibility for the outcome of human history. Jesus' fate was not in the hands of the various "judges" he encountered (the chief priests, Pilate, Herod, the crowd) but in the hands of God. His journey had been determined in Gethsemane.
  - Jesus cares for and values each of us. Jesus' willingness to surrender his own life on our behalf shows us the depth of that love. For the joy set before him, Christ endured the cross. The "joy" is the redeemed humanity being birthed within the lives of those who follow Christ.
- Forest Hills sermon link: <https://vimeo.com/112045887>

### **Visual elements**

This week's object is: A cross.

### **Song suggestions**

*HWB* 507 "Gracious Spirit, Dwell with Me"

*STJ* 13 "My Soul Is Filled with Joy"

*STJ* 44 "The Love of God"

*S. Townend* "How Deep the Father's Love for Us"

### **Children's time**

*Preparation:* Collect broken items such as a toy, cup, etc.

*Call the children to the front. Show the children a broken object such as a toy, a cup, and so forth. Say:* I found this in my office this morning and it seems to be broken. Does anyone know who did this? [*Arrange ahead of time with either an older child or an adult that you will accuse them of having broken this object.*]

Well, I think \_\_\_\_\_ did it. [*Allow this person to deny the accusation.*]

Do you know what? \_\_\_\_\_ didn't really break this object. Have any of you ever gotten into trouble for something you didn't do? [*Allow responses.*]

How did it make you feel? [*Allow responses.*]

Did you deny it like \_\_\_\_\_ did? There's a story in the Bible where Jesus was punished for something he didn't do. He was brought before important people and accused of awful things he had never done. And do you know what Jesus said? Nothing. He was silent. Jesus loved us so much that he was willing to be punished—to be put to death—for something he didn't do, so that we could be forgiven and be with him forever.