

Theme: As You Are Going: The Church on Mission (Mt 28:16-20)

Title: – Jars of Clay, Spilling Over - Acts 9:32-43

Aim: God purposefully uses cracked vessels to accomplish His mission.

Intro: You may have heard the folktale about “an old woman who, every single day, would walk down to the river with two buckets attached to a long pole over her shoulders. One of the buckets was brand new, without a flaw, and the other one was very old with a large crack in it. Each time the woman returned home from her long walk with heavy buckets, the bucket with the crack in it was only half full of water. This went on for many years, until finally the old bucket asked the woman why she still used him. ‘You work so hard every single day to carry water home, and each time I am only half full. I feel so inadequate and useless. Why don’t you just throw me out and get a new bucket?’ The old woman told the bucket to look at the path they walk each day. ‘You’ll notice one side of the path is bare and empty, and the other side is filled with beautiful flowers. I knew of your flaw, so I purposely planted seeds on your side of the path, so that each time we walked home, the seeds would be watered. Without the crack in your side, we would not have these beautiful flowers.’” That’s not a perfect illustration for this message today, but it makes a valid point. Spillage happens, but it’s not always a bad thing. Theme: As you are going: the Church on mission. Spillage is a good thing for the follower of Christ on mission. Paul wrote in II Cor.4 about having the great treasure of Jesus/the gospel – the light of Christ shining into our hearts & out of our lives. He said in vs7 “***we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God & not to us.***” We are the jars of clay – cracked pots; but it’s thru the cracks that the light shines or the water spills out, resulting in flowers along the way being watered, or the darkness being pierced by the light – essentially Jesus spilling over from

our lives onto/into the lives of others. I hope that make sense. In our text today we have a great example of Jesus - the living water - spilling over/out of a Christian vessel & lives being changed. Acts 9:32-43 [READ]. At this juncture Luke left his coverage of Paul, the new convert called to be an apostle, & turns his focus back to a familiar character, the apostle Peter. Note 1st of all that I) **Peter was on the move**. He went “here & there among them all.” We surmise that “them all” refers to believers/the Church “throughout all Judea & Galilee & Samaria” (vs31). What was he doing? I firmly believe he was checking on believers throughout those area. The Church had expanded & Peter, to whom Jesus said, “Feed My lambs,” “Tend My sheep,” “Feed My sheep,” (John 21) was taking his commission from Jesus most seriously. As believers were scattered by persecution, they settled in these areas &, like they did in Jerusalem, probably gathered together for worship & fellowship. Peter was checking on various groups of believers in these various places to see how they were growing in Christ – feeding & tending Jesus’ sheep. The point is, Peter was going, & as he was going, he made disciples & surely also preached the gospel so that others believed in Christ & were added to the Church. As he was going, Peter ministered. As we have been repeating each week, Christians are called to make disciples as we are going – in all we do we should be ministering to one another & sharing the gospel w/those who don’t yet know Christ, always mindful of being channels of His love & grace. I’m not saying that’s always my practice but it should be. Christians should always be on the move, so to speak – working, growing, & as we go, be on mission. Luke notes that Peter “came down also to the saints who lived in Lydda.” It was there that II) **Jesus spilled out of Peter**, that jay of clay. David Gudzik tells us that Lydda is about “35 miles from Jerusalem, the site of Ben Gurion airport outside of Tel Aviv” (where we landed a few years ago on the BICS Holy Land tour. According to Strong’s, Lydda was,

in Peter's day, the 1st town on the northernmost of 2 roads between Jerusalem & Joppa. It was in Lydda that Peter ran across a paralyzed man, "named Aeneas, bedridden for 8 years." Understand, Peter wasn't looking for Aeneas; he was simply ministering to the saints in Lydda. Opportunity came as he was going about God's business. That's a very important point. Peter wasn't on a healing crusade. He didn't set up a tent & call for the lame & halt to be brought. He was passing thru Lydda, shepherding the saints, when he met Aeneas. We're not told whether or not Aeneas was a believer when he met Peter, just that he had been paralyzed for 8 years. Peter didn't waste time: "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you" – not taking any credit for what was about to happen, but giving Jesus His due. Gudzik pointed out that it was "perhaps a conscience imitation of Jesus healing the paralytic man (Mk.2:10-12)" when Peter said: "Rise & make your bed." Those are the words spoken by mothers to their teenage children on a daily basis, w/out the same results! Luke tells us that Aeneas "immediately rose (unlike those teenagers)." He was healed! Peter was a channel of God's power & grace. As many saw Aeneas w/his bed roll & others heard the good news, this became known to "all the residents of Lydda & Sharon" – the region extending from Caesarea of Palestine as far as Joppa. I agree w/Gudzik: "Presumably Peter took opportunity to preach the gospel" – "& they turned to the Lord." Wow! Jesus spilled out of Peter in this remarkable way, as he was going. The light & the power of Christ was displayed & Aeneas & many others were touched/transformed. But that wasn't the end of Luke's report. III) **Jesus spilled out of Peter & Lydda onto Joppa**. Joppa was about 9 miles from Lydda. Joppa is a city of Palestine on the Mediterranean Sea. It was the seaport from which Jonah set sail when he fled God's call to go to Ninevah. Luke reports that there was in Joppa "a disciple named Tabitha" – that was her Aramaic name. The Greek form of her name was Dorcas. I think I would

stick w/Tabitha. The name in both languages means “female gazelle/deer.” She was a prominent person in the church(es) of Joppa. “She was full of good works & acts of charity.” Tabitha became ill & died. Everyone was deeply grieved. Luke doesn’t say it, but I think they all had heard about Peter & Aeneas. They knew Peter was in Lydda, so they sent for him, asking him to come to Joppa. I don’t think they expected anything more than Peter coming & ministering to them in their grief. I think that’s all Peter had in mind also. Peter willingly went w/those who came seeking his help. When he got to the upper room where Tabitha lay dead, there were widows who had prepared her body for burial around her. Gudzik: “There is no indication in the Book of Acts that it was commonly or popularly expected that dead Christians would be resurrected to life again.” The ladies began to tell Peter about this special woman, showing him clothing she had made. It seemed that Peter sensed the leading of the Holy Spirit to ask for more than simply their comfort. Again, he did what he had seen/heard Jesus do – he put everyone out of the room, in anticipation (Gudzik’s words) “that God would do for Tabitha what He did for the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue (Talitha).” In John 14:12, Jesus said, **“Truly, truly I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; & greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”**

Amazing! Could that be possible? Yes, if Jesus says it’s so. Jesus went to the Father & sent the Holy Spirit upon the Church to be w/in each of us. The Holy Spirit works w/the power of Christ w/in & thru us! Peter “knelt down & prayed,” then turned to the body – the body: she was definitely dead. He said, “Tabitha, arise.” She opened her eyes & sat up. Then Peter “took her by the hand & raised her up.” Then he called all those who had gathered around & “presented her alive.” Just like Aeneas’ healing, this miracle became known, especially in Joppa, & again, “many believed in the Lord.” I’m sure Peter again took the opportunity to

preach the gospel, as well as others sharing their faith w/all who would hear. Again, the point is, as he was going, Peter spilled over – Jesus spilled out from that cracked pot, that jar of clay. But it wasn't because it was Peter. All who follow Christ & are desiring to be on mission by the working of the Holy Spirit, from them Christ will spill out. If we're walking w/Christ, tho we're but jars of clay, cracked pots, leaky vessels, we are not insignificant or useless. Jesus will spill over/out of us. And that's exactly what God has in mind. As we are going, let us be a church on mission.