

SCENE ONE: COMMON DISCIPLES

Not long after his time in the wilderness, Jesus began sharing a message of hope, saying, *“The kingdom of God is here! Turn from your ways and live in God’s ways!”* This was the beginning of Jesus’ life as a rabbi—a wise teacher of God’s ways. Rabbis were highly respected by the Jews for their knowledge of the scriptures and right living. As Jesus walked along the seashore, he saw some fishermen fixing their nets. Jesus called to them, *“Come and follow me!”* To have a rabbi ask you to be one of his close followers—called a disciple—was a huge honor. So these fishermen left their business and everything they had to be with Jesus. They traveled with Jesus as he showed them how to live in God’s ways.

SCENE TWO: HEALING A LEPER

While Jesus was walking with his disciples, a man who had leprosy came and kneeled in front of him. Leprosy was a painful skin disease and anyone who had it was feared being contagious and seen as “unclean.” People with leprosy were forced to live in camps on the margins of society. The man said to Jesus, *“If you’re willing, you can heal me and make me clean.”* Jesus was so moved with compassion that he reached out his hand and touched the man. In that day, no one would touch a person with leprosy for fear of catching the disease—that’s why Jewish law forbade it. Jesus said to the man, *“I am willing... be healed.”* Instantly, the man’s leprosy disappeared! Jesus knew the Jewish law, so he told the man, *“Don’t tell anyone about this. To be accepted, you must bring a special offering to the high priest and show him that you’ve been healed. Then everyone will know you’ve been cleansed.”* Jesus’ instructions would allow the man to be welcomed back into Jewish society. But the man was too excited about being healed, so he immediately began telling everyone he saw what Jesus had done! When the word spread about Jesus, large crowds started surrounding him everywhere he went. Jesus tried to enter towns secretly, but people would find out where he was and swarm him.

SCENE THREE: EATING WITH SINNERS

One day Jesus walked by Matthew, a tax collector, sitting at his collection booth. In those days, tax collectors were hated because they overcharged people on top of the already unreasonable Roman taxes and they took money for themselves. But when Jesus called out to Matthew, *“Come and follow me!”* Matthew left his job and wealth to follow Jesus. Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples over for dinner. Others were invited who were known to be either immoral or criminal . . . there were many people like this who were Jesus’ followers. When some of the religious leaders—called Pharisees—saw Jesus eating with these people, they were outraged. The Pharisees lived by a set of strict rules on top of the Jewish laws. Their rules prohibited eating with people considered “impure.” The Pharisees asked Jesus’ disciples, *“Why does Jesus choose to eat with those terrible people?”* When Jesus heard this, he told them, *“Healthy people don’t need a doctor; sick people do. I’ve come to call people to a changed life—inside and out. I’m not here to spend my time with people who already think they’re good enough.”*
[pause]

SCENE FOUR: AN IMMORAL WOMAN

Another time, a Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus over for dinner. But when Jesus entered the house, Simon did not welcome him or have his servant wash Jesus’ feet as was the custom. But Jesus still reclined at the table for dinner. Unexpectedly, a woman entered the house looking for Jesus. The woman was known in the town as being sexually immoral, so the Pharisees would not go near her. She

approached Jesus, carrying a jar of very expensive perfume, and kneeled down at his feet. She began to cry, and as she wept, her tears covered Jesus' feet. Then, she uncovered her hair, and let it down—something a woman was forbidden to do in that culture. The guests stared in shock and outrage. She used her long hair to gently wipe her tears and clean Jesus' feet. Then, the woman bent down and kissed Jesus' feet and poured her perfume on them. Simon, the Pharisee who'd invited Jesus to dinner, said to himself, *"If Jesus were truly one of God's prophets, he wouldn't allow this shameful woman to touch him."* But Jesus answered the Pharisee's thoughts, saying, *"Simon, I have something to tell you . . ."* *"Go ahead,"* Simon replied. Jesus told him this story: *"A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. Neither person could repay the man, so he decided to forgive both of their debts. Who would you guess was more grateful and loved the man more after he did this?"* Simon answered, *"I suppose the one who was forgiven the larger debt."* *"That's right,"* Jesus said. Then Jesus said, *"Do you see this woman? When I entered your home, you didn't offer me any water to wash the dust off my feet. But she washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't greet me warmly, but she has not stopped kissing my feet. You didn't anoint my head with oil, a courtesy I would have expected. But she has anointed my feet with rare perfume."* Then Jesus said to the woman, *"Everything you've done wrong is forgiven."* The men at the dinner table couldn't believe what they were hearing. They asked each other, *"Who does this man think he is? He thinks that HE can forgive sins?!"* Jesus looked again at the woman and said, *"Your faith has saved you; go in peace!"*