

This morning, I am in the seventh week of a sermon series that I've entitled "Meeting Jesus." I am making my way through Luke's account of the life of Jesus, looking at various interactions that people had with Jesus, in order to better understand what it means to know and follow Him. This morning, we are going to be in Luke 5, looking at Jesus' interactions with a leper and a paralyzed man.

Luke 5:12–26 - While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."¹³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.¹⁴ Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as **a testimony to them.**"¹⁵ Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses.¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.¹⁷ One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick.¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to **lay him before Jesus.**¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins **but God alone?**"²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?²³ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?"²⁴ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home **praising God.**²⁶ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

There are three things I want to focus on from this passage today:

1) Jesus' compassion

You're going to notice that themes are repeating themselves from earlier chapters, which is not surprising since Jesus' character does not change.

Luke 5:12 - While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Notice the conditional clause – if you are willing. The leper believes that Jesus is able to heal. He just isn’t sure if he is willing to heal.

¹³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him.

Why is this such a unique healing? If you’re unfamiliar with the laws surrounding skin diseases in ancient Israel, this man, because of his skin disease, not only had to deal with a challenging medical condition, but he had to live isolated from the community, outside the camp, so that no one else would not become infected with his disease.

Leviticus 13:45–46 - “Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’”⁴⁶ As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp.”

This predicament means that this man was taking a huge risk coming into the community to seek out healing from Jesus. This leper is desperate; he believes that Jesus is able to heal, but he does not know if Jesus will choose to heal him or reject him and tell him to observe the law of Moses and go back outside the camp.

But Jesus responds like this:

¹³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him.

Not only is Jesus willing to heal him, **but notice that he touches the man.** By doing so, He heals him both physically and psychologically, for this man had been without human contact for a long time. Every other person on earth, if they were clean and touched someone unclean, would become unclean. After all, that is why we want people who have a contagious illness to avoid being around other people. In every other case, the clean person would become unclean as a result of contact with another unclean person. But Jesus is different. He does not become defiled. He makes the leper clean.

Luke 5:14 - Then Jesus ordered him, “Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

Why does Jesus send him to the priest? Because the priest’s ritual, which is outlined in Leviticus 14, would give a stamp of authority on the leper’s new condition. He would be pronounced clean and able to rejoin the community by the powers that be. By sending this man to the priest, Jesus heals him physically, psychologically, and socially, all with a touch. That is the compassion of Jesus.

2) Jesus’ authority

Luke 5:17-19 - One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. ¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. ¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

What a scene. A large crowd has gathered to listen to Jesus, and although these men hope to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus, they can not get in the house. And so, they bring their paralyzed friend up on the roof and make a way through the roof to lower their friend to Jesus. Many homes in those days had steps up to the roof that were out in the open, and the roof would function as a second story of sorts. The roofs were flat, about six feet above the ground, with wooden beams across stone or mud walls, with layers of reeds, thorns and clay. And incredibly, these men have the audacity to break through the roof so that they can get their friend to Jesus.

Luke 5:20-26 - When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” ²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘**Get up and walk**’? ²⁴ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. ²⁶ Everyone

was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

Once again, see Jesus’ compassion. As the roof falls apart in front of him, Jesus does not reject or scold them or ask them to pay for the damages, but he honors their persistence and their faith in His power to heal. Notice that just like the leper, we have another example of boldness in seeking out Jesus for healing. The leper dared to break convention by entering the community to get to Jesus, and the friends dared to break through a roof to get their friend to Jesus. And Jesus responds to their bold move, but in a surprising fashion:

Luke 5:20 - When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

Huh. Now clearly these men came to Jesus so that their friend’s paralysis could be healed, so that their friend could walk again. And yet Jesus, upon seeing their faith, tells this paralyzed man that his sins are forgiven. What??? First of all, this is clearly another example of Jesus prioritizing spiritual healing over physical healing, which is a theme we looked at two weeks ago. Remember that Jesus was healing many people and casting out many demons, and after a night’s sleep, the whole town was coming out, looking for Jesus and hoping for more healing. But this is what Luke tells us:

Luke 4:42-43 - At daybreak, **Jesus went out to a solitary place**. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.⁴³ But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”

Jesus has the compassion to heal and cast out demons, but his priority is to proclaim the good news of the kingdom, to call people to repent of their sins and truth in Him for salvation. In other words, this man’s physical paralysis is nothing compared to his spiritual paralysis. His physical paralysis may affect his body, but it will not affect his soul for eternity. His sins are a much bigger issue than his physical paralysis, for it is his sins that have separated him from God. And so Jesus begins by dealing with his spiritual issue first, forgiving his sins. This, of course, upsets the Pharisees.

Luke 5:20-21 - When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

To understand why the Pharisees are objecting to what Jesus is doing, remember that in Jesus' time, there was a clear process to getting one's sins forgiven. Forgiveness of sins was connected to the temple and the sacrificial system. All of this had clearly been laid out in the Mosaic law. There were rituals for cleansing, there was a high priest, and there was an annual Day of Atonement where sins were forgiven. And here is Jesus, claiming to have the ability to forgive sins, or at the very least to speak for God, apart from the temple and apart from the sacrificial system. This would be like me pronouncing that you have the right to drive apart from going through the DMV to obtain a license. Jesus is bypassing the people and processes that have been set up and is claiming to speak for God, and the Pharisees see this as blasphemy.

Luke 5:22-23 - Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?"²³ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?

Jesus' point is that it is easier to say something that can not be visually verified. It is easier to claim to forgive sins than it is to heal someone's paralysis, since no one would know if his sins had actually been forgiven.

Luke 5:24-26 - But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.²⁶ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

But so you might know that I have the authority to forgive sins, I will heal this man's paralysis. The man gets up, goes home praising God, and the crowd is astonished by what they have seen. Once again, we see both the compassion and authority that Jesus possesses on full display. He is able to heal and to forgive sins, and He is willing to do it.

3) Jesus' source of power

Notice that in verse 24, Jesus calls Himself "The Son of Man." This phrase is very important in the gospels, as Luke will record Jesus using this expression 25 times. It is an allusion to Daniel 7, where Daniel has seen a vision of four beasts, who represent the various beastly kingdoms that will reign over the world in the near

future: Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, Greece, and Rome. And after the beasts, Daniel sees this:

Daniel 7:13–14 - “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

The empires of this world are like beasts, but God will give Jesus, the Messiah, authority to judge evil and to establish an everlasting kingdom of justice and love. Jesus, by referring to Himself as the Son of Man, saw Himself as the fulfillment of Daniel 7. Jesus was the one who had been given authority, glory, and sovereign power by the Father, the Ancient of Days. This is why He could heal and pronounce forgiveness and save people from their sins. The source of His power was from God the Father. Don't miss what happened in between these two stories:

Luke 5:15-16 - Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Notice that in between these healing accounts, Jesus withdraws to be with the Father in prayer. Do not miss that His power came from spending time with the Father. The demands on him were heavy. Everyone wanted a piece of Him. And so, he regularly withdrew to be alone with the Father. And that is the first implication of this passage for us today:

1) The power of God is available to you through prayer

Prayer was where Jesus' power came from. And that same power is available to you and me today. Listen to the promises in this amazing prayer of Paul's:

Ephesians 1:17–21 - I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for **us who believe**. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far

above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Oh, that you would know the power that is available to you through prayer! It is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead! Why do we neglect this power?

The same power that conquered the grave is available to us.

Do you say:

I can't get past the hurt – you can by His power

I can't overcome this addiction – you can by His power

I can't forgive – you can by His power

I can't make it another day suffering like this – you can by His power

God does not guarantee us healing of every disease and illness and injury this side of eternity, but come to Him believing that He has the power to do so, and the compassion towards you. Like the leper, come boldly to Him. And like the paralytic's friends, boldly bring your friends to Jesus for healing, trusting that He loves you no matter what His answer is:

Romans 8:31–32 - What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

2) Show the compassion of Jesus to the suffering and those on the margins

Jesus does not send the leper back outside the camp, but touches him and heals him. And Jesus does not scold the friends for bringing their paralyzed friend to him, but he honors their faith and heals him. May those of us who follow Jesus show the same compassion towards those who are suffering and on the margins.

Matthew 25:34–40 - “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and **you came to visit me.**’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or

needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' ⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

We are called to demonstrate sacrificial love, just like Jesus did. Remember that Jesus suffered and was crucified outside the camp, so that the leper and all who suffer could be brought in. And Jesus took on our sin so that the paralytic and all who have sinned could be forgiven and restored to a right relationship with God. We honor Him by not only trusting in the salvation that He offers to us, but by following His example in loving others, particularly those who are suffering or on the margins.

3) Bring your friends to Jesus!

Let the picture of the paralytic's friends be an enduring image to you of the lengths we can go to in order to bring our friends to Jesus. Like the paralyzed man, they can not bring themselves, for their sin has paralyzed them and keeps them from seeking God. But you can bring them to Jesus through prayer. Who is God calling you to bring to Him today? Let's come to Him in prayer.