

Jesus Christ 2.0
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If it's possible for Jesus to have a 2nd coming out party, our passage today might mark that event. How can that be? I mean, Jesus' fame and popularity is in the stratosphere at this point. He's healing people; he's performing miracles. His teaching is utterly amazing. But our passage today highlights another big step taken by Jesus. Jesus shows and proves that he's not just some powerful man of God; he proves that he's the one everybody has been waiting for. He shows he is the Messiah; he presumptuously, pompously makes himself equal with God (at least that's how some people feel about it). But is it arrogance? Is it presumptuous and pompous? Or is it true?

That's really important for you to discern today. Is Jesus really an amazing man who has an amazing power who knows how to put on a good show, or does Jesus possess all the power, all the authority and right and command of God himself because he is God in human flesh? You see, that's a big difference. You might give a man who can put on quite a show your appreciation and applause; you might even travel long distances to see him work, but you won't give him your life. I'm not seeing any altar calls at the end of any Penn and Teller shows or David Blaine specials. I know some people think Dr. Oz is a miracle-worker, but after his shows everybody goes home and does their own thing. But Jesus is more than that. Jesus is your Creator. Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of faith. Jesus is the Judge whose law you've broken; who has the power to sentence or pardon. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. So you understanding, seeing, rejoicing and submitting to this Jesus is critically important for your life and destiny (remarkably, that's an understatement). Because the truth of the matter is Jesus will determine your eternal destiny. Did you know that? Jesus will. You won't; we think that sometimes. We think we determine our eternal destiny by the faith-decisions we make. That's not true; Jesus determines your eternal destiny; your life is in his hands. So, you learning who this Jesus, what he can do is monumental. Who does Jesus accept? Who does he save? What does he value? Nothing is more important. So, let's read how Jesus reveals himself even more in our passage this morning (READ Luke 5:17-26).

Jesus is poised again to perform some more amazing miracles. Vs. 17 says that the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And Jesus has some new members in the audience. It says that Pharisees and teachers of the law from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem were there. They've come to check out this new rabbi. What's he really doing? What are the people getting so excited about? They've come with a critical eye as we'll see in moment.

The other important group in this story is this group of friends who bring their disabled buddy to get healed by Jesus. Jesus is inside a building, probably a home most likely, and the crowd is huge. There is no way in or out. So as Luke tells us, these men so eager to get to

Jesus hop on the roof and attempt to lower their friend to Jesus from the roof. 1st century roofs in Palestine were flat roofs with tile pieces placed on beams. On top of these tiles was a layer of sod or dirt to provide some insulation and to absorb some moisture. So, while the men really didn't destroy the roof, it took a good amount of work to remove the sod and tiles and lower their buddy down to Jesus to be healed.

Vs. 20 says, "And when he saw their faith." Whose faith? The faith of the men. The personal pronoun is plural so it's not just the faith of the disabled man, but the whole group of men. Jesus is impressed by their faith. Why is that faith? And what's so impressive about that? When you read the gospels, it seems Jesus always commends and praises the relentless pursuit of him. They were so eager for Jesus, so sure of his power, so convinced of his willingness to help that they took the roof off a home to be with Jesus and to get his help. That's faith! That's really believing Jesus is the One! Faith stirs and produces movement and seeking. Let me give you a few other examples. Mary wanted to be with Jesus so much, she was so insistent on sitting at Jesus' feet and just listening to him, she resisted the continuous calls of her sister. And Jesus tells Martha, "Mary has picked the good portion, the right treasure, and it won't be taken away from her." When a Canaanite woman demands the blessings of Jesus, even after Jesus tells her his blessings are not for her, but for the lost sheep of Israel, he says, "O woman, great is your faith!" She would not let Jesus go... it reminds me of Jacob wrestling with God in the wilderness refusing to let him go "until you bless me."

What impresses Jesus about the faith of all of these people is the relentless nature of their seeking. That's what faith does. Faith keeps pursuing Christ, it keeps seeking and yearning for more. And listen to how God rewards that seeking:

- The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. - Ps. 34:10
- Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart - Ps. 119:2
- You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart - Jer. 29:13

Look at the good, look at the blessing that comes with seeking God. Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing, they are blessed; those who seek God with their whole heart find him. FBC, seek the Lord! Don't just sit there. After hearing the scriptures on a Sunday morning, a Wednesday night; when you read the scriptures on your own, don't just say, "That's nice," and then go seek recreation, hobbies, grandkids, vacations. Seek Christ! There's this reciprocal nature to faith. I first listen and hear all that Christ tells me. Then, I go do what he says (that's a critical aspect of faith, too). And as I go and do what Christ says I realize, "I need to hear more from Christ" so you keep seeking him in the scriptures, in prayer, in your church family. That's seeking God. And God will look upon you with favor and grace for faith like that as you honor him and praise him as the object of your desires and the hope of your heart. Don't stop seeking Jesus even if you have to tear the roof off a stranger's house, go after Jesus. You won't be disappointed.

So, as soon as Jesus sees the faith of these men he says, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” Why does Jesus say this? Why is this the gift he has to offer (at least, initially)? I think two things are at work. First, he’s anticipating (and maybe even provoking) the hostility and opposition of the religious leaders. That’s what we are about to see. The religious leaders are about to lose their mind. This isn’t lost on Jesus; he knows they are there and why they are there.

But I think it’s also true that Jesus wants to give this man the best gift he can give him. And what’s that? Forgiveness of sin; a restored relationship with God. The men came looking for the good gift of healing, but Jesus has the better gift of salvation and mercy.

Friends, you and I need to come to the place where we know and say that God is our greatest treasure. We are constantly tempted to prize and treasure something other than Jesus. And we are not short of temptation even within the Christian subculture. With false teachers telling us that since we are children of the king we should expect a kingly life. With wolves in sheep’s clothing telling us God wants us to have our best life now, that we should expect healing from every disease we get, it gets pretty tempting to give into that pressure. And our own flesh begs for this. You know this, right? When you are sick what feels most urgent? Health and long life! When you are poor, what do think you need the most? Money!

Brothers and sisters, settle it right now: declare that you want God, his grace, his forgiveness, his mercy more than anything else and you’re willing to endure it all and give it all up for more of him. If you don’t settle it now; a time will come when your earthly commitments and loyalties will be threatened and in fear you will bow to them rather than to Christ.

Now, this offer of forgiveness stirs the dissent of the religious leaders. Look at vs. 21 (READ). For a card-carrying member of the order of the Pharisees to call someone’s words *blasphemy* is the biggest rebuke or condemnation you can get. Blasphemy was the final charge against Jesus before they crucified him. In the OT, the penalty for blasphemy was death. So, what is it? Blasphemy is mocking or cursing the name or character of God. It’s humiliating the name of God. Faithful Israelites were extremely careful not to even accidentally appear to be blasphemous to God; it was a very big deal. These religious leaders were making that accusation. They were saying, “You mock and degrade the name and character of God by claiming you, a peasant carpenter from Galilee have the power to forgive sins. Only God can forgive sins. You are dragging God’s name in the mud by saying you can do what only he can do; you are making yourself equal with God. Blasphemous!”

But was it? Look what Jesus says next (READ vs. 22-24). Jesus is telling them that their charge of blasphemy is completely wrong. He does that two ways. First, look how Jesus identifies himself. In vs. 24 Jesus calls himself the Son of Man. This is the first time Jesus calls himself that in the Gospel of Luke, but certainly is not the last. In fact, Jesus calls himself

the Son of Man 25 more times in Luke. It's Jesus' favorite way of referring to himself; what does it mean?

A lot of people think that when Jesus calls himself the Son of Man he's trying to emphasize his humanity and solidarity to the human race. "I'm a son of man like all of you." I don't think that's correct, though. So often in the gospels, just like in our passage today, Jesus calls himself the Son of Man when he's trying to convince people of his power and authority; when speaks of his divine might. When that phrase is used in reference to other people in the scriptures, it's often used to describe their low and meek stature; it's meant to humble them. God calls the prophet Ezekiel a son of man dozens and dozens of times to keep reminding him the extraordinary difference between himself as the prophet and God as King. But, as I said, just like our passage, Jesus calls himself the Son of Man when he speaks of his power and authority.

So, what does Jesus mean when he uses this for himself? There's a prophecy in the book of Daniel that says one day the appointed one, God's true servant, will come from the throne of the Ancient of Days and will be exalted in every nation and will reign forever and ever. Daniel calls him one "like a son of man." Who is this son of man coming? That's Jesus! Jesus is the one like a "son of man!" I would argue that when Jesus says, "I'm the son of man" he's saying, "I'm the one the Prophet Daniel saw in the vision! I'm the one appointed by the Ancient of Days to rule the world!" No, when Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man he's not trying to be meek and mild, he's proclaiming his supreme power and authority. And that's what he's doing here. "I'm the Son of Man, and I have authority just like the scriptures said I would."

Here's the second. When Jesus says in vs. 23, "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?'" he's saying, "Both of these are miracles. Both of these are the works of God. Both are impossible apart from divine intervention. So, if I can do the one (heal the disabled), surely I can do the other (forgive sins)." The scriptures say in vs 24, "'But that you may know that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins,' he said to the man who was paralyzed - 'I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.'"

That takes some moxy, right? Jesus just dropped the mic, didn't he? Jesus just called his shot. That's like you stepping up to the 180 yd par 3 and as you swing you say, "Hole in One!" Or when you step into the batter's box you point to the stands like Babe Ruth and his a home run. Come on! Jesus just did that. Jesus just went on the stage, performed the unthinkable, dropped the mic and walked off. Do you want to know if I can forgive sins? Boom! Just healed that man; now you know I can forgive sins, too.

Think about what Jesus just did: the religious leaders just said Jesus was blasphemous by claiming an ability that only God has. And here's Jesus saying, "Let me show you that I do, in fact, have that power and authority." He's just telling the pharisees, and you and I as readers, that he is indeed God. He's proving to all of us that he's not just some

amazing prophet, he is the True Prophet, the True Priest, the True King. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. He is the Judge of over all the world and the Justifier of everyone who believes.

That's why I said earlier: this is Jesus' 2nd coming out party. He's just taken another gigantic step forward in his self-revelation to the lost sheep of Israel. He did so in his subtle, but not so subtle, way. We know what the Pharisees did to Jesus when he said (Matt 26:64b), "But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." They killed Jesus for it (as the scriptures say) according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. They called it blasphemy. But what will you do about this? I say, "Believe! Be reconciled to God!" Begin your seeking today. Sit at Jesus' feet and listen like he is the one who has the keys to eternal life (because he does). And then, go out and do what he says because you believe him. And then go back for more.

Here would be some questions to help you process this morning's message:

- Does my faith look like a relentless pursuit of Jesus? Or do I follow Jesus like how I recline watching TV reruns?
- What *thoughts* do I need to change and what *actions* do I need to change for Jesus to be more than simply an amazing person, but my Creator, Savior, Judge and Lord?