

Text: Luke 5:1-26

Title: Jesus Forgives Sin

Truth: The Lord is willing and able to forgive our sins with a word.

Date/Location: December 3, 2023 at FBC

Introduction: Events of 5:1-26

1. Jesus taught from a boat to the crowd on shore.
2. Jesus directs Simon Peter to catch some fish.
3. Simon Peter realizes he is in the presence of holiness and feels shame.
4. Jesus encourages Simon and says he will have a new job, to catch men. He calls Andrew, Simon, James, and John to follow Him.
5. Jesus heals a leper and makes him ceremonially clean.
6. Jesus forgives a paralytic and heals him in a demonstration of His power to forgive sin.

I. Issues Raised in This Text

A. Jesus helped humanity with significant problems:

1. Life/work issues: the fishing business did not fare well the night before. He also created food for crowds (feeding the 5,000 and 4,000). He did use means in both cases. For Peter, the means were normal: casting a net. The location and supply were things outside of Peter's control and the Lord guided him to them. We must trust the Lord to take care of things outside of our control while simultaneously using the means that He grants us.
2. Physical illness - fever, various diseases, dropsy, blood loos, bad back, leprosy, even death. Jesus healed them all.
3. Spiritual illness that may overlap with physical illness—like demon possession. Addiction. The main issue is sin, as the Lord showed in his interaction with the paralytic man. Sin is at the base of every human problem, and it is the hardest thing to fix.

B. For #1 and #2 above, we may lose sight of our Lord's greatness because we fancy ourselves to have solutions to many of these

problems, whether through economic advancement, medicine, or technological prowess. Even for #3 spiritual illness, we have the idea that counseling, therapy, and medication can solve a lot of these problems. Not at all.

- B. Peter hesitated to obey the Lord, but he resolved to do so anyway. His obedience was rewarded. In general, obedience *is* rewarded, though not necessarily immediately.
- C. The catch of fish is an encouragement that God has another large catch for Peter to make, and that of the souls of men.
- D. Note Peter's response: the fish-catch miracle led him to jump to a spiritual conclusion, one having to do with his soul. His mind jumped rapidly from:
 - 1. the miracle
 - 2. to the deity of Jesus
 - 3. to the holiness of Jesus
 - 4. to "I am not holy"
 - 5. to shame
 - 6. to feeling the need to physically separate himself from the Lord.
- E. How do we know the names of the disciples who Jesus called here? Simon is clearly one (Luke 5:3), and his fishing partners James and John (Luke 5:10). But is the fourth man John or Andrew? From another gospel we learn that it is Andrew (Matthew 4:18).
- F. The leper had a very severe case. It is touching to read of his beseeching the Lord Jesus. He had nowhere else to turn. But Jesus was willing and able to take care of the situation. Afterward, Jesus commanded the man to follow the prescriptions in the Law of Moses for healed leprosy (Leviticus 13). Also, Jesus told him to not tell others what happened, but the news spread anyway.
- G. Because of the text in John 6:66, we do not view the multitude pressing about to hear the word of God as if this was such a wonderful thing. Many of them may have been fair-weather disciples, so to speak, who desired to be near the Lord for the healing, or bread, but in truth may have been like rocky or thorny soil that would ultimately bear no fruit (Matthew 13:3-9).

H. It has often been pointed out that the disciples “forsook all and followed Him.” It seems immediate and abrupt. There is more detail and more time passed between the disciples initial meeting of Jesus and their dropping everything to follow Him. Nevertheless, their commitment was decisive, quick, and thorough. This is how our decision should be for the Lord.

II. The Purpose of Jesus’s Coming and Ministry

A. When studying this text, we must ask ourselves, why does Luke record these disparate events—and better yet why does Jesus *do* them? Are they rather random events that show various truths about our Lord Jesus? I think they show us the bigger picture of the purpose of our Lord’s work.

B. We know that Jesus came to “preach the kingdom of God” and to “teach in their synagogues.” But there is something more to it than that. He did not come to merely teach nice morals. What exactly did Jesus come to do? Why did he perform all the miracles? This passage gives us two answers:

1. To catch men
2. To forgive sins

To catch men means to bring them into kingdom citizenship. This is not by trickery or force like in fishing with baited hooks and nets. The “net” is the good news about the work of Jesus Christ. When we believe, we are brought into the church, which is where we prepare and grow during our wait for the king’s arrival. Jesus came not just to catch men, but to train others to do so.

He also came to forgive sins, which means to remove the guilt of actions done by one party against another. It means to cease holding against that person their offenses.

C. The Lord did the miracle of healing the paralytic and it is recorded for us to know that Jesus has power on earth to forgive sins. And not for us only, but also the unbelieving Pharisees. And if he had that power when He was *here*, do you suppose he has any less now that He is in *heaven*? Indeed, Jesus does have the power in heaven to forgive sins (1 John 2:1-2; Eph. 1:7).

- D. Why does not God “just forgive everyone automatically?” That is an attractive idea, but if a person does not have a broken spirit or contrite heart about the wrong he has done, forgiveness is impossible. Look at it from the other direction—if someone has a hard heart about the wrongs they have done, they are just as guilty of them presently as they were when they did those wrongs or started those offenses. Forgiveness of a particular sin presumes that the person is not actively continuing that sin or related sins like pride and refusal to acknowledge God is right. Forgiveness of sin in general reflects that the person has turned away from their prior life of opposition against God.
- E. In this contrite personal setting, the basis upon which God can forgive is not merely that He is nice. It is that demerit of the wrongs you have done are taken by Jesus to be covered / paid for / removed in His cross-work.
- F. Remember that it is inappropriate to sensationalize the miracles of the Lord as if those things were His main purpose. They are wonderful actions, very beneficial to the people who received help, manifest evidence of the massive power of Jesus, and useful for the purpose of showing the Lord was really the Son of God and Messiah and therefore brought a message from heaven. The miracles were like “two-factor authentication” for the person of Christ. Actually, there were more than two factors: there was the testimony Jesus Himself, and then of John the Baptist; then the factor of the works themselves; then the testimony of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit (John 5:31-39). Coupled with how His teaching agreed with the Law of Moses, He fit the Hebrew Bible’s description of a prophet from God.

III. Applications

- A. Jesus’s act of teaching in this section is notable, but it is kind of old news since we have seen it in chapter 4. What was new?
1. First, what is new is that He interacts with Peter and Peter sees just how bad of a person he is. His case of spiritual illness is as severe as the leprosy.

2. Then, Jesus heals and cleanses a leper, impossibly “full of leprosy.” Jesus demonstrated by this two things: willingness and power. He was willing to be associate with the man and be close to him. He was powerful enough to solve the problem.
3. Finally in this section, Jesus again shows His willingness and power to heal, but with an added feature: forgiveness of sins, which is the most important problem of the paralyzed man.

Note the desperate need; that Jesus can solve the need; and that Jesus will forgive your sins.

- B. Problem: Many people do not know that they need forgiveness (Lev. 5:16 speaks to this “must,” as does Heb. 12:14). Imagine that you have wronged someone else but have no idea that you have violated any code. While some are hard-hearted about such things, others would be horrified to learn that they have hurt someone and have not expressed sorrow or made it right. Or perhaps you disagree that you have offended anyone.

A person who is apart from God is in this very situation. Strangely, we can be concerned about slighting another person but not about offending God. Is it because He is big enough to take it? Or because you cannot see Him? Or because He is unimportant to us? Whether you recognize it or not, the truth remains that when you sin, you “sin against God” (Psalm 51:4).

- C. Another problem: Is forgiveness possible? Do you despair in your thoughts that “I cannot be forgiven?” “I am too far gone?” “What I have done is too much; I only deserve Hell, if there is such a place.” Forgiveness does not come through doing extra good, for extra good cannot undo crimes committed. Forgiveness does not come through animal sacrifices, because animals are not made in the image of God and are therefore of a different “sort” of living creature than humans. They are not guilty for sin in the same way humans are, for one thing because animals are not culpable for the fall (not even the snake!).

Does someone have the ability to deal with your sin so thoroughly that it is no longer a show-stopping issue between you and God?

Yes! The answer is found only in the Christian faith, that is, in knowing God through Jesus Christ.

Remember this: Jesus is not only *able* to forgive sins, but He is also *willing* to do so for you.

Another reason that Jesus Christ is able to forgive sins—besides that He *died* for sinners and their sins—is that Jesus has the authority of God because He *is* God. The scribes and Pharisees were on the right track by saying that only God can forgive sins, but wrong in their charge of blasphemy against Jesus because they were seeing God incarnate before their eyes. Since sin done is against Him = Jesus as God, He can forgive it.

D. If you are a sinner, you need to get close to the Lord, not tell Him to get away! Peter told the Lord to get away (Luke 5:8). But the leper received a touch from the Lord (Luke 5:13) and the paralytic was brought near to receive help (Luke 5:18). These people did not necessarily come looking for the answer to their deepest need, but the Lord is gracious about that and supplied it anyway. Isolating yourself from the Lord and His people is *not* going to solve your problem!

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