

Not a Fan

Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? Now, it might sound funny because we are all sitting down at church listening to a sermon.. so of course we know who Jesus is... but no... I mean really, who is Jesus to you? What makes Jesus stand out for you?

Most people in the world say that He was a good man... or that He was a GREAT teacher... or that He was a powerful healer...

Likewise, there are some Christians that focus on Jesus' miracles and some that focus on Jesus' parables.... both are important.. but these things alone will not save you... You might LIKE Jesus for these things... you might even become a FAN! And follow Him around... insofar as it is convenient for you! But that alone is not enough...

Who is Jesus?

Have that question tucked in the back of your minds today as we work our way through the text today...which is Luke 5:17-26.... (NIV)

Let me paint a word picture with you... because I want you to follow me into the house where Jesus is teaching that day... Imagine that you are there... standing... watching Jesus seated at one end of the room teaching.. and at the other end... the religious leaders... You see... In a very short period of time, word of Jesus' ministry and his teachings and miracles had spread... that even the religious ruling class came to hear what Jesus had to say.... v.17. But not only were the Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting down to listen to Jesus... the text also tells us that a LARGE crowd was present.. most likely all gathered together inside a big house... And so... imagine with me... the religious leaders... are all sitting down in the front row seats... while the crowds are standing and shoving, trying to get a better view of Jesus...

If we didn't know any better... we would think Jesus is a celebrity! He is IMMENSELY popular. SO popular in fact that people were standing jam packed within the house..

Now, one thing we don't notice in the text is the fact that the religious leaders were sitting down. And the crowd was standing up. To us, we simply think - maybe the crowd of people arrived late... and there simply wasn't enough seats for everyone... That could very well be... But in JEWISH culture... it was the teacher that SAT DOWN.. and the students that stood up. Completely the opposite from what we are used to right? I mean, even now, I'm the one standing up and teaching... while the rest of you are seated! But this was the norm back then, and so... the fact that the religious leaders are sitting down before Jesus - who is also most likely sitting down.... shows us that they are there only to HEAR JESUS... They are not there to LISTEN to Him... If you will, they are having a STANDOFF of sorts... on one corner, the religious leaders... and on the other corner... Jesus... they are having a SIT-OFF...

And the crowds are gathered... listening intently to what Jesus has to say... when BEHOLD - v. 18 - some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed - because that they had heard that the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal... and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, but they just couldn't find an opening through the crowd - thats how jam-packed the house was... So... they resort to plan B.

They begin to make their way up to the roof. Now... Luke is very matter-of-fact in the way that he records this event.. but Mark gives us some more details... like how they had to REMOVE the roof and dig an opening... AND just to be clear - ROOFS are not a new invention... They were there WAY back then as well.. most likely this roof was flat and made up of pieces of timber - covered with sticks and mud.. and laid over with a rock tile...

So imagine this... you are in the crowd.. watching Jesus teach... when you suddenly begin to hear scraping and pounding as these men pull the rock tiles of the roof aside... and as they begin to dig into the dried mud.. dirt and twigs begin to fall from the roof... around Jesus...

Do you see how outrageous this event is? I mean, sure this is the Bible - but USE your imagination! These MEN are DESTROYING SOMEONE's ROOF! And Jesus... is being showered with twigs and dirt... !

I am almost positive that at this point, Jesus had stopped teaching and is himself watching the scene unfold with a bit of amusement... The Pharisees who had been sitting down near Jesus are standing up in shock as they angrily brush the twigs and dirt off their robes.. and in the background, you hear the owner of the house begin to shout! And the crowd.. well, they are just confused... All the while... Jesus continues to sit there... unshaken... with a small smile on His face and a twinkle of amusement in His eyes...

After what must have been at least 10 minutes of this... an opening big enough is finally made... and everyone is looking up! And wonder of wonders! BEHOLD - a man descending on a pallet! And he lands... right at Jesus' feet.

Everyone is watching to see what Jesus will do next... Because EVERYONE EXPECTS Jesus to heal the him. They get to see a miracle!! But Jesus does something else entirely... Something completely unexpected.. Something SHOCKING! Jesus looks up at the paralytic before Him... and then looks up at his friends who had destroyed private property to do this... and he says to the paralytic... Your sins are forgiven!

WHAT! Jesus! I thought you were the great healer man! Your supposed to heal this guy! But what? You are FORGIVING HIS SIN?

The crowd is confused... What had this man done ever done to Jesus to warrant forgiveness? Why was Jesus forgiving this man of his sin? Was he forgiving them of destroying private property? But that doesn't make sense.. that would be like a thief stealing something from a store... and the police catch him.. and just as they are about to cuff him... I show up on the scene saying - WHOAH WHOAH... IT'S ALRIGHT.. EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL... I FORGIVE YOU!

It doesn't make sense does it. If I actually did something like that, the cops might very well lock me up for disrupting justice. Or maybe even put me in a looney bin... Why does Jesus say to this man... your sins are forgiven?

By the way... this was paralytic.. Which means at least two things - in Jewish culture... if you had a physical defect... they believed it was a sign that either you or your parents were living in sin. Which Jesus clearly teaches in the gospel of John as FALSE... but more intriguing, I find... is that this man, by DEFINITION, was UNABLE to COMMIT many of the sins that you and I can COMMIT. He could never have looked through the playboy magazines of his day... He could not walk into brothels and sleep with a prostitute... He could not squander his time playing video games... he could not hit his wife or his children... assuming he had a family... HE WAS EXTREMELY limited in the sins that he could commit... So what exactly is there to forgive...?

What Jesus means... when he says to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven... is this... remember that time you were begging on the street, and your eyes lingered on that woman... and you dishonoured her by looking at her with lust... and later on dehumanizing her by turning her in your imagination into an object to fulfill your sexual fantasies? I forgive you of that. And remember that time you were so frustrated and sick and tired of being trapped in your own body.. that you used the only part of your body that could move... to SPIT on your friend's face as he tried to feed you? I forgive of you that.

What this shows us is that ALL sin is ultimately a SINNING against God. You can sin against your children... and you can sin against your parents... and you can sin against someone you have seen for the first time on the streets or on the internet... you can sin against your co-workers and your employees.. BUT this simple statement.. - YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN - IS showing us, that ALL sin, IS ULTIMATELY A SIN AGAINST GOD. THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS!

What do you mean that ALL SIN is ultimately a SIN against GOD? What about the MURDER of INNOCENT people??? What about the young girls that are being RAPED as they are being sex trafficked all around the world? How DARE you say THAT is ultimately a SIN against God!

While we may be the victim... God in one sense... is an even greater victim... the sin of murder and of rape weighs down more HEAVILY upon God than it does the victim... That is why DAVID can write the PSALM OF REPENTANCE after raping a woman and later, killing her husband... and not ONCE mention their names.... BECAUSE ALL SIN is ultimately against God...

When you cheat on your loved one... you are SINNING against God... when you swear at your friend, you are SINNING AGAINST GOD.. when you look down at someone... you are sinning against God... ALL SINNING is A SINNING against an ALL-POWERFUL GOD...

And the religious leaders...they are ENRAGED! they know what's up... they're smart people... The text says ... they began to question.. but the Greek carries with the nuance of INTENSE discussion... or HEATED discussion... WHO is THIS who speaks blasphemies! Who can forgive sins but God alone?? THEY WERE RIGHT! ONLY GOD has the authority to forgive sins! With all the background noise from the commotion, they must have been speaking softly enough to one another as to not be overheard because v22 goes on to say...

When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, “Why do you question in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? 24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.” 25 And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God.

Look it. WE must remember... MIRACLES are never an end in itself.. In fact, next week, we will be looking at what Jesus does AFTER his miracles... But he performs this miracle as a PROOF of His identity! Is it easier for me to say your sins are forgiven... Or is it easier for me to say to this man... get up and walk. BOTH ARE IMPOSSIBLE... for a GOOD MAN... OR a GREAT TEACHER... these things are impossible. But if Jesus is something MUCH MUCH more... If He is truly who He says He

is.... He can... And He does... Immediately, the man got up! And he went on his way... glorifying God. He went on his way glorifying God!

How could he not glorify God after what had happened. Not only was he freed from paralyzes, but he was freed from the greater burden of sin. Paralysis kept him from moving, but sin had him chained to death. Now he was free from both. Now, he had both physical and spiritual sensitivity. And because of it all, he glorified God.

Likewise... we too have been freed from our SIN which chained us to eternal punishment... And none of us in this room are paralyzed and can't move on their own... There is no excuse for us to not also be glorifying God in our lives by proclaiming what He has done for us... The paralytic just knew that He had been forgiven..BUT He was oblivious as to how it happened... On the other hand we KNOW HOW ... Jesus... had to DIE for us... It would be a great sin indeed if we are not glorifying God like this paralytic..

Luke 5:26. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!"

There WILL always be mixed responses to Jesus Christ... You see here... Everybody is amazed, and they glorify God, but at the same time, they are filled with fear and keep on saying that they have seen strange things. The truth is... the CROWD just doesn't quite know how to react. The Pharisees and teachers of the law eventually conclude that Jesus is not God, but is instead using the power of the devil to perform miracles. But the VAST majority of them end up just following Jesus AROUND... LIKE how a FAN follows around a CELEBRITY... UNTIL... later... when their celebrity Jesus begins to do things and say things that make him unpopular... they leave him... and SIDE with the religious leaders, chanting... CRUCIFY HIM... CRUCIFY HIM!

Isn't it sad.. that out of all the people in that room that day... only the paralytic and his friends were forgiven of their sin. Everyone else went away a little bit wiser after having listened to Jesus... After having followed Him around... but NO ONE left that house forgiven of their sin - EXCEPT

for the paralytic and his friends.. THEY ALL SAW A JESUS FORGIVE SINS.. but none of them left THEMSELVES FORGIVEN..

Going back to the question I asked in the beginning of the sermon. Who is Jesus? Who do you say that Jesus is?

At one time, Jesus asked his followers that exact same question: And he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” Why are they following me around... 19 And they answered, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.”

20 Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.” (Luke 9:18-20).

Jesus is asking you that exact same question right now. WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

What is your response to Jesus? Who do you say that He is? IS HE GOD? or is He just ANOTHER CELEBRITY THAT YOU FOLLOW?

Is all that Jesus is to you someone who can heal you... or someone who has some good things to say...

Or we have looked so far in the gospel of Luke at the humility and COMPASSIONATE love of Jesus.. He befriended SINNERS... he ATE with the people who no one else would eat with.. HE TOUCHED LEPERS... and He was born without a crown FOR US... BUT is that ALL that God is to you? Someone who is humble and compassionate and wise? Is Jesus JUST our friend? OR is HE ALSO GOD!

Later on... we will read that He was even spit upon and stripped naked for us... as He hung nailed upon a cross for our sins... GOD DIED FOR YOU!

This is a message that demands OUR SOULS.. our LIFE.. OUR ALL! You cannot just settle with liking Jesus...

ARE YOU A FAN of Jesus or are you a DISCIPLE of Jesus... Fans will follow Jesus BUT will never be saved... and FANS will come out to church and read the Bible.. but never be saved.. FANS will follow Jesus only insofar as Jesus remains a celebrity Only INSOFAR AS JESUS REMAINS LIKEABLE.

Here is what Tim Keller says:

Jesus cannot be just liked. His claims make us either kill him or crown him.

In other words, you cannot be a fan of Jesus. You simply cannot settle with liking Jesus. We must either kill Him or crown Him. Will we be among those who cry out - crucify Him! Or among those who hail Him as King of kings and Lord of lords - who came to SAVE His people from sin? I hope that for all of us here ... we can confidently answer, YES! Jesus is my king..

And if you are among those today that profess Jesus as not just Saviour and FRIEND ... but KING and LORD over their lives.. SHOW IT. Crown Jesus as KING over your finance... crown Him as King over you education.. and your work... family... relationships.. CROWN Him as KING by OBEYING Him and submitting to Him IN EVERY area of your life. LEST you remain a mere FAN of Jesus...

Let's pray...

Read Psalm 37:7-11

Dear heavenly Father, another day of terror-making darkness, evil-doing madness, and life-taking sadness. **How long**, O Lord, how Lord before you send Jesus back to **eradicate** all evil? How long before the wicked will **be no more**? How **much** longer is “just a little while”?

It’s hard not to fret. It’s **hard** not to feel fearful and angry when women and children, the young and old are mercilessly slaughtered in the city of Paris; when restaurants, concert halls, and sports areas become the venue for the perversion of religion and the murder of your image bearers.

Father, we offer our prayer, not in self-righteous judgment, but as your weary children—**longing** for the Day when the knowledge of your glory will **fill** the earth as the waters cover the sea—when **perfect peace** will replace **every** expression of evil.

Until that Day, free us from all bitterness and a lust for revenge. Vengeance belongs **to you**, not to us. Make us warriors of peace and agents of hope. Our labors in the Lord are **never** in vain. The gospel of the kingdom **will** prevail. Defeated evil **will be** eradicated evil. The devil is **filled** with fury for he knows his time is **short**. Make it much shorter, Father, **much** shorter.

Grant us wisdom to know what loving mercy, doing justice, and walking humbly with you looks like in Paris, and in our **own** communities. Replace our frets and fears with faith and trust, and our rage and wrath with patience and courage. So very Amen we pray, in Jesus’ triumphant and grace-full name.