

“Jesus Has Authority to Forgive”
(Luke 5:12-26)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

So far: we've seen that Jesus has authority:

Over the devil –

He overcame him;

He can command him –

Over His own life –

No one could take it from Him,

Until He was ready to lay it down –

In the Word –

Those who heard Him realized

That no one ever spoke the way He speaks:

With such wisdom, power and clarity –

Over the demons –

They can't resist Him;

They're afraid of Him,

Because one day He will condemn them

And send them into the lake of fire for good –

Over sickness –

He commands disease

And it obeys –

Over the fish in the sea –

He commanded them to fill the nets,

And they did –

And over men –

He called His first four disciples,

And they immediately left everything

And began to follow Him.

B. Preview.

This morning,

We see an even clearer demonstration of who He is,

As He exercises authority over sin.

We'll look at two things:

First, His healing the leper;

And second, His healing the paralytic.

II. Sermon.

A. First, we see Him heal the leper.

Luke doesn't tell us

Exactly where this takes place:

Only that it's in one of the cities (v. 12) –

Mark tells us, it's one of the cities in Galilee (Mark 1:39-40).

While He was there

A man covered with leprosy saw Him:

Leprosy is a terrible disease

That was incurable in those days –

They didn't know what caused it,

But they knew it was infectious,
So they avoided touching anyone who had it –

Today we know that it's spread
From the cough or sneeze of an infected person,
Or multiple contacts with infected skin.

We know it progresses very slowly:
If you become infected,
You won't show any symptoms for five years,
Sometimes up to twenty,
Which makes it difficult to tell
Where the infection took place.

The bacteria targets different areas of the body:
It affects the skin –
Causing discoloration,
Ulcers that don't heal,
Large nodules on the body;
And in severe cases,
Deformity and disfigurement –
It literally rots the flesh away.

It affects the mucous membranes –
Causing nose congestion,
Nosebleeds,
Redness around the eyes,
And blindness –

And it affects the nerves –
As they become inflamed;
There is a burning sensation,
Then numbness,
Muscle weakness and eventually paralysis.

Leprosy in the Bible describes
A broader range of skin problems –
But it certainly includes
The disease we're familiar with today.

In the OT,
When a person was diagnosed,
They became social outcasts –

When Israel was in the wilderness,
They were put outside the camp
To avoid infecting others;

When they entered Palestine,
There were allowed to live in open cities,
But not cities with walls –
In that case, they had to remain outside –
Such as the four lepers outside Samaria
When it was besieged by the Arameans (2 Kings 7:3).

When they met someone on the street,
They were required to cry out, "Unclean!" –

So others would know to avoid them,
And not give them the customary greeting
That included an embrace.

Knowing this was the case,
We can understand why the man
Responded as he did when he saw Jesus,
And the significance of Jesus' response to him.

When he saw Jesus,
Instead of calling out, "Unclean,"
He fell on his face and begged for mercy:
"Lord, if you are willing,
You can make me clean" (v. 12).

He actually did more –
He expressed faith:
He believed Jesus could heal him.

And notice how Jesus responds:
He didn't simply tell him to go
And show himself to the priest
As He will do at a later time with the ten (Luke 17).

He stretched out His hand in compassion
And did what no one else would dare to have done:
He touched him, and said,
"I am willing; be cleansed" (v. 13),

And immediately he was healed.

Then He ordered him not to tell anyone

But to go and show himself to the priest –

The priest would examine him and pronounce him clean –

Then he was to offer the sacrifice the Lord required through Moses –

Why did Jesus want him to do this?

First, because that's what God required –

If he wanted to show his thankfulness,

He was to do it through his obedience –

But second, this would be a testimony to them –

Either to the priests or the people in general:

One they couldn't refute.

Apparently, the man didn't obey Jesus:

Mark, "But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere" (1:45).

Luke, "But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear *Him* and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray" (5:15-16).

The cleansing of this leper

Serves as a picture of our main point

And what we see next:

Leprosy does to the body

What sin does the soul:

But Jesus can make both whole again.

B. Next we see the healing of the paralytic.

Luke tells us

That one day when Jesus was teaching,

Among those who had gathered to listen

Were some Pharisees and teachers of the law (scribes)

From the villages of Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem.

We learn from the other Gospels

That this took place in Capernaum,

At Jesus' home (Mark 2:1),

Which was Peter's house.

On this particular occasion,

“The power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing” (5:17) –

We might wonder whether this power was always available –

Apparently it wasn't:

Where there was little faith,

There was little power –

When Jesus came to Nazareth,

Mark tells us, “He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He wondered at their unbelief” (Mark 6:5-6).

But where there was great faith,

There was great power:

When Jesus saw the faith of the centurion,

Who came to Jesus on behalf of his servant,

“He marveled and said to those who were following, ‘Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel’” (Matt. 8:10).

Then he said to the centurion, “‘Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed.’ And the servant was healed that *very* moment” (v. 13).

If we are to see the Lord work with great power,

We need to have a great/strong faith (James 1:5-8).

While Jesus was teaching,

Some men –

Mark tells us, there were four (2:3) –

Came carrying a paralytic –

They were bringing him to Jesus

That He might heal him.

When they couldn’t reach Him

Because of the crowd,

They climbed up on the roof,

Opened the tiles,

And lowered the man on the stretcher

In front of Jesus (v. 19).

When Jesus saw their faith –

Not just that of the four men,

But also of the paralytic –

He didn’t heal him –

At least not right way –

But said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you” (v. 20) –

He did this because He wanted to teach the crowd something.

The scribes and Pharisees immediately thought

That He had blasphemed:

“Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” (v. 21).

They were right about one thing:

Only God can forgive *any* offense

That’s committed against Him.

But they were wrong in thinking

That Jesus blasphemed:

He is the Son of God,

Who has this authority.

Jesus knew what they were thinking –

This is the question He wanted them to ask –

But rather than arguing over

Whether or not He had this authority,

He had determined to show them.

Jesus said to them, “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?” (v. 23).

It’s much easier to say the first

Because no one can really tell

Whether those sins have been forgiven –

But if you say “Get up and walk,”

Everyone will immediately know

Whether you have the authority to heal.

And so that they would know

That Jesus has authority to forgive,

“He said to the paralytic – ‘I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.’ Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. They were all struck with astonishment and *began* glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, ‘We have seen remarkable things today’” (vv. 24-26).

C. Why is this important?

Because sin would destroy us

If it weren't for Jesus.

When we came into the world,

We were guilty –

Enough for God to condemn us forever –

Paul, “Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men” (Rom. 5:18).

Every day we added to this guilt:

We never loved God as we should –

With our whole heart –

Even for a moment (Matt. 22:37),

And because of this,

We never obeyed Him as we should.

Sometimes we tend to think

We really weren't that bad –

But God –

Who sees the heart –

Could see the corruption in our souls:

To Him, we appeared as spiritual lepers;

And He would have treated us as lepers –
As outcasts for all eternity –
If it were not for His Son, Jesus.

Jesus is the reason the Father can forgive:

He obeyed –

To give us a perfect righteousness –

And He died –

To pay for our sins –

That's what the Table reminds us of this morning -

He's the only One who could have,

Because He is God.

Because of Him, though we were lepers,

He was willing to reach out and touch us in His mercy,

Take away our uncleanness

And make us acceptable in His Son –

Because, by His grace, we looked to Jesus.

If you've never done so,

Look to Jesus now,

Ask Him for His mercy:

Turn from your sins and trust Him,

And He will cleanse/save you. Amen.