

“Son of Man”
A Sermon by Rev. Frances Savill
Sunday November 20, 2022

Luke 5:17-26

When we read the Bible, who do we expect the Bible is about? The Bible is about God and God’s work in the world.

Luke’s gospel is primarily about Jesus, who Jesus is and what that means. How do we fit into the Biblical story? How do we fit, what’s our part? Our part is our response to the Biblical narrative. The Biblical narrative also shows us how all kinds of people respond to God, and in the gospel, how all kinds of people respond to Jesus.

So, as you read Luke 5, and go on to read the following chapters consider “Who is Jesus?”, what are the claims others make about him, and how does he describe himself.

Chapter 5 opens with Jesus on the shore of a lake teaching a large crowd, using a boat as a platform to speak from. And then Jesus tells the fishermen to let down their nets and there is the remarkable catch of fish. This is another example of Jesus teaching with authority. Jesus rules the sea creatures. The crowd responds with awe and wonder- astonished at the catch of fish. Simon Peter responds falling down at Jesus’ feet saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” (vs 8)

The implication is that Jesus is the real deal, he is a holy man of God, whose teaching is backed up with deeds of power. Before Jesus, Simon Peter sees himself as he is. Simon Peter responds to Jesus as Isaiah responded to being in the throne room of God; “Woe is me”. Encountering Jesus was the same kind of experience for Peter.

Jesus, I believe also sees the truth about Simon Peter, but Jesus sees not only who we are, but who we can be as we follow him. Jesus has a mission, and he invites unlikely characters like Simon Peter the fisherman to join him. In Simon Peter we see the response of a disciple – to leave everything and follow Jesus.

Jesus' next encounter is with a man with leprosy. Leprosy is a terrible disease. In Jesus' day having leprosy made you "unclean". The man pleads with Jesus saying, "Lord if you will, you can make me clean." Being "unclean" kept you from approaching God. You couldn't worship in the Temple, it puts a distance, because of your condition between you and God. Jesus has the authority, the power to declare and make people "clean."

The following story is about Jesus healing the paralytic, where we see Jesus' power to forgive sins. We often focus on the friends' faith, lowering their friend through the roof so that he could be healed by Jesus. And the faith of the friends is remarkable. But the focus of the narrative is on Jesus' ability to forgive sins.

The scribes and the Pharisees rightly state; "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (vs 21). And the answer is only God can forgive sins, and the Son of Man has been given authority on earth to forgive sins." And the proof of Jesus' claim, that he is The Son of Man (vs 24) is his healing of the paralytic, commanding him to rise, pick up his bed and go home. And the response of all the people was to glorify God. The response of the healed man was to glorify God.

The Son of Man is a title that Jesus very often gives himself. Others will call him Messiah or Christ, but he will often refer to himself as The Son of Man. That's a title that most of us aren't as familiar with. But it comes from the book of Daniel.

There is a wonderful Bible Project video on the Son of Man that I would encourage you to watch, I will provide the link with this message for you to watch it.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/son-of-man/>

You may have to watch it several times to get the full story – but what is important is Daniel has a vision of the throne room of God. And in this throne room God is seated on the throne, but there is another throne, where one was appointed to rule with God, and the throne is empty. Daniel is told that the Son of Man will take that throne and will reign with God.

Jesus is claiming that he is the one who is The Son of Man, the truly human one, who will defeat the serpent (the one we met first in the garden of Eden), and he will rule with God in the heavenly realms. We see that The Son of Man has authority to forgive sins, authority to make clean, and to heal. And all the glory goes to God.

One of the historic foundational documents of the Presbyterian Church is the Westminster confession of faith. And as people were learning the basic tenets of Christian faith, they would memorize the Catechism questions.

The first question was "What is man's chief end?" What is our main purpose in life? The answer was "To glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

Jesus was bringing glory to God with his preaching, with the healings, in bringing good news to the poor and sight to the blind, in proclaiming the year of the Lord's favour. Crowds were turning to God in worship and praise.

After this Vs 27 tells us that Jesus called a tax-collector to follow him. Levi made a great feast in his house. There was a whole host of tax-collectors and sinners gathered with Jesus. Reclining at a meal with people, going to someone's home, was a big deal. It signified acceptance and relationship. These occasions were always opportunities to gain or lose status.

Jesus certainly lost status in the eyes of the religious leaders. Jesus saw things differently. He described himself as a physician bringing health and wholeness to people who were sick. Jesus was leaven that could influence and change a whole batch. He was not any kind of Messiah they had expected.

The religious leaders questioned Jesus about fasting. Jesus described himself as the bridegroom. This was a different time... a new covenant time... a celebration time because Jesus had come. There would be time for fasting, when the bridegroom was taken from them.

Finally, this chapter closes with a very short parable. It's about cloth and making repairs and laying up new wine in new wine skins. The parable speaks about Jesus and the situation he's in. There is new and old. The new is the new message, Jesus' teaching, and disciples, new people called to the kingdom work.

And there is the old, the Pharisees and religious leaders who don't want anything to do with Jesus, his new teaching, who would certainly be characterized as people who say; "The old is good."

In the parable the new wine can't go in the old skins for both would be lost. Jesus' teaching, the good news will be carried by new leaders. And we certainly see this struggle – the Pharisees see Jesus as a threat, he is not acting as a Messiah should

– associating with tax collectors and sinners. He claims to be the Son of Man of Daniel’s vision, claiming to have the authority of God to heal, to make clean, to erase what separates us from God. He has the authority to forgive sins and bring new life.

Person after person encounters Jesus and they are changed. No one encounters Jesus and is left as they were. Crowds saw Jesus and glorified God. People in need came to him, and they were healed and brought back into nearness with God. Some were called by Jesus, and they left everything and followed him. There was no group that was despised by Jesus. There was no one he turned away.

Today is Christ the King Sunday. And through this chapter we see part of what it means that Jesus is our King. And we get to decide our response to Jesus’ claims.

Let us pray:

Jesus, you meet us through your word, by the power of your Holy Spirit and we have to decide how we will respond to you today. WE hear your voice inviting us to follow you. We see your acts of love and mercy, bringing healing to the broken, and new life to those estranged from you. You continue to call sinners and touch the unclean. We respond in love, glorifying God, leaving everything and following you. Amen.

Luke 5:17-26

¹⁷ One day while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem were sitting nearby, and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸ Just then some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, ¹⁹ but, finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. ²⁰ When he saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.” ²¹ Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, “Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ²² When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’? ²⁴ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the one who was paralyzed— “I say to you, stand up and take your stretcher and go to your home.” ²⁵ Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. ²⁶ Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen incredible things today.” ***This is the word of the Lord.***