

Luke 5:12-26

More than a Healing

Can you think of a time when you prayed to God for something?
But God's answer was not what you expected
But in the end was more than you could have imagined.

From young, Bethany Hamilton was a gifted athlete and surfer
She had just come second in the under 18 National Surf Championships
And at age 13 Bethany prayed with her mum
"God, I want my life to be more than just surfing. I want to honour you with my life. I don't know what that looks like, but help me figure it out."
A few weeks later while out in the surf
A shark tore a chunk out of her surfboard
And ripped off Bethany's right arm.
I'm sure she never expected this answer from God
When she prayed
How could God possibly use this in her life for her good?

In today's passage from Luke
Two people come to Jesus looking for something
But what they received was more than they asked for

This morning we're going to look at this passage Under 3 headings

Firstly Jesus is strong and kind

Secondly Jesus confronts our deepest need

And thirdly Jesus has authority to heal and to forgive

And in this passage we're also going to see what it means to have faith in Jesus

**Faith means coming to Jesus humbly
coming to Jesus honestly
and treating Jesus with honour**

Well firstly Jesus is strong and kind

In the first of two miracles we meet a man with leprosy
Verse 12

¹² While he was in one of the towns, a man was there who had leprosy all over him. He saw Jesus, fell facedown, and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

Yes this man wants healing from Jesus
And at first you could be mistaken
That all this man wants is to be healed from his skin disease
But it wasn't simply dealing with the disease that was hard
It was also the implications of being unclean according to the law
This is Leviticus chapter 13 from the Old Testament

⁴⁵ "The person who has a case of serious skin disease is to have his clothes torn and his hair hanging loose, and he must cover his mouth and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean!'" ⁴⁶ He will

remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He must live alone in a place outside the camp.

I can imagine then that life for this leper is both painful from the disease
But also terribly lonely
For this is what it meant to be unclean.
He was socially cut off from people and could not worship God with others
This leper was not meant to be in contact with anyone because
According to the law he could also make other people unclean if he touched them
And so he has every reason to feel shame in approaching Jesus
But he has bold faith
He knows Jesus *can* heal him but the question is whether Jesus is *willing* to heal him
And then what Jesus does next is unthinkable

Verse 13

¹³ Reaching out his hand, Jesus touched him, saying, "I am willing; be made clean," and immediately the leprosy left him.

Jesus actually touched him
He touches the untouchable
I wonder how many years it's been since this leper felt the touch of another human being
As he often does Jesus could have healed this man at the command of his voice
Sometimes Jesus heals remotely
Like with the centurion's dying servant
But such is his kindness that Jesus touches him instead
More than the leper could have asked or imagined
Jesus welcomes the unclean
And instead of Jesus becoming unclean
His very touch both heals and makes the leper clean
Jesus shows that he is both *willing and* able to make him clean.
Because Jesus is strong and kind

In verse 14

Jesus then tells the man not to tell anyone. Why?
Because he knew that the crowds would come to seek healing for sickness
And as we're going to see soon
Jesus had come for an even more important mission than healing the sick

Jesus then tells him to present himself to the priests
This was another instruction from Leviticus
This way, the priests could declare the leper ceremonially clean
Then he could rejoin the ranks of the public.
Again you see the kindness of Jesus to follow up this detail

Well wouldn't you know it – the healed leper could not contain himself
So he tells anyone and everyone
The crowds come and now Jesus himself has to withdraw
I don't want you to miss the irony here

The leper was once in the lonely deserted places
But now Jesus has traded places with him – he is the one in the deserted places

If Jesus is strong and kind
Faith means coming to Jesus humbly
I love that request of the leper
Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean
Firstly, he gives Jesus a title of honour - Lord
Jesus is not his servant but his Master
And it's a bold request but not a demand
He relies on Jesus' mercy "if you are willing"

We can learn from this leper
We should approach Jesus with humble dependence not arrogant demand
But some of us might feel that we are too guilty before God
Too ashamed, too filthy for God because of our weakness and failure
Or some of us might feel that God is distant from us
Capable of helping us but we actually wonder whether he wants to help us
Luke reminds us that Jesus is strong enough to meet us in our need
And kind enough to receive those who come to him humbly
This brings to our second point

Jesus confronts our deepest need

In the second healing miracle
The gospel writer Luke describes a ridiculous situation
Jesus is in a crowded house filled with people surrounding Jesus
And a group of men are desperate to help their friend
His legs don't work – he's paralysed
And the only thing they can think to do is to make a hole in the roof
So they can lower their friend down to Jesus on a mat using rope
Can you imagine being in that house?
Bits of roof start falling into the middle of the room
As sunshine starts pouring through the roof
And then seeing this paralysed man
Slowly descending until he is right in front of Jesus

Now think of all the things that Jesus could have said:
"That's a bit cheeky jumping in front of others, wait your turn"
"I hope you fix that roof before you leave"
"Your legs aren't working, no worries, we'll have you walking in no time"

The last thing that anyone present, would have expected Jesus to say was this

Verse 20

²⁰ Seeing their faith he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

"What are you talking about Jesus?"
"It's his legs that aren't working - the problem is his legs"
I'm sure there were people in that house that thought Jesus was stupid
Of course Jesus knows his problem is his legs
But sometimes the deepest need is not the most obvious need
Jesus is saying "no – the deeper problem is his heart"

He has a sinful heart before God
Now please note Jesus hasn't made a connection between his paralysis and his sin
As though his sin is somehow causing his paralysis
Jesus is just saying that the man's deepest need is not his need to walk
But his need for forgiveness from his sin

Jim Fixx was an American best-selling author of "The Complete book of Running"
Fixx started running at aged 35, overweight and a two pack a day smoker
10 years later and almost 30 kgs lighter he extolled the benefits of running
As a solution to health and longevity
So much so that Fixx ignored medical advice and chest pains for a few weeks
And he died from a massive heart attack while he was on his daily jog
Three of his arteries were severely blocked – 70%, 85% and 95% blocked.
It pays to get an honest diagnosis doesn't it?

Faith means coming to Jesus honestly.
Faith means letting Jesus confront our deepest need.
And boy we have many needs don't we?
Health needs like this paralysed man
Relational needs
Financial needs
Emotional needs
Mental needs
We spend a lot of energy trying to fix these needs
But beneath these needs is a much deeper need
And of course Jesus is not stupid, he knows our needs.
But according to Jesus
His honest diagnosis is the problem of our sinful hearts.
Right at the core of who we are
Our motives, our desires, our actions
Is our desire to love ourselves more than God.
We have not lived for the glory of God
In fact we all fall short of His glory
We have not worshipped God as our Creator
Instead we have worshipped created things
And so now we sit under God's judgement for our sin
And you see the reality is
Not being able to walk affects the rest of your life
But being a sinner before God means condemnation for all eternity
And so the most important thing Jesus can say to this man is not
"Your legs will work"
But those beautiful words: "Friend, your sins are forgiven"
Here is the honest diagnosis of Jesus
Here is your deepest need
Your need for forgiveness from God.

Both the leper and the friends of the paralysed man
Come to Jesus knowing they are needy
They don't come pretending to be okay
They come knowing they need the mercy of Jesus
And this kind of honesty is the beginning of genuine faith

We don't come to Jesus because we have scrubbed up our lives
And seem to have it all together
We come because we need help
So we don't need to pretend

Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear those words from Jesus said to you
"Friend, your sins are forgiven"
Only Jesus can do something about it
And this brings us to our third point

Jesus has authority to heal and forgive

While many people watching Jesus would have been surprised by what Jesus said.
Some in the room were offended by Jesus
The religious leaders had joined the dots
If sin is an offense against God
And Jesus is claiming to forgive sin
Then Jesus is claiming equal authority with God
That's why they accuse him of blasphemy
Jesus is making fun of God by saying that he is God's equal
That's what they're thinking
And Jesus knows their thoughts exactly
So he forces the point
And asks them which is easier
To forgive the sins of the man
Or to heal his legs?
Well in reality neither of these things is easy
But as we see in the book of Acts
Through the power of the Holy Spirit
Even the apostles could heal people and make them walk again
But to forgive sin, well that is only possible if you're God
And then you know what
Jesus then proceeds to do both
Jesus heals the man and forgives his sins
One is invisible – the forgiveness
And one is visible – the healing
But the paralysed man gets both - Two for the price of one
Because Jesus has God's authority to heal and to forgive

Verse 24

²⁴ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he told the paralyzed man, "I tell you: Get up, take your stretcher, and go home."

And quite astonishingly the man picks up his mat drops the mic
And walks home
As if that's what he did every other Tuesday
And he walks out of there with healing *and* forgiveness
Not bad huh?
And Jesus' point is "I can do one and I can do the other"

We come to God with all sorts of requests don't we
We come for healing

We come for better circumstances
We come for restored relationships
We come for freedom from anxiety

And Jesus cares about our needs
But Luke wants us to see something greater about Jesus
He is not just the one who can improve our circumstances
He is the Lord who has the authority over our deepest problem.
His ultimate mission is to bring forgiveness of sins
In fact that is the great display of his authority

This is John 10 verse 17

¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have *authority* to lay it down and *authority* to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

An empty cross and an empty tomb
Demonstrate the authority of Jesus
For on the cross Jesus dies to pay the penalty of our sin
But he is raised again to new life to show us that he has victory over sin.
And so the one prayer that God will always answer yes to
Is the prayer of confession of sin

This is 1 John 1

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Here is one of the great promises of the bible
If we pray for healing, God will not always answer that prayer in the way that we would like
But if we pray for forgiveness of our sins
With trust in the authority of Jesus alone
This prayer of confession will always be answered with a yes.
If you want those words from Jesus
“Friend your sins are forgiven” then confess your sin to God
And it doesn’t matter if your faith is clunky

Jesus responds to clunky faith
That’s what we see in these miracles
The faith of the paralysed man’s friends wasn’t perfect
And yet Jesus responded to it
They weren’t asking Jesus for forgiveness for their friend
And yet Jesus gave it to him

I love this verse from Ephesians 3
Right after the apostle Paul prays he says this in verse 20

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine

That is what Jesus is like
The paralysed man came for healing
And Jesus gave him not only healing but forgiveness as well
This is the God we worship
Not a stingy God but an abundantly generous God
A King who is willing to go the cross
To serve those who don't deserve his lavish grace
To him be glory indeed.

Faith means treating Jesus with the honour he deserves

We see this in verse 25

²⁵ Immediately he got up before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. ²⁶ Then everyone was astounded, and they were giving glory to God. And they were filled with awe and said, "We have seen incredible things today."

If Jesus truly is Lord with all authority
Then he deserves our worship
All glory and honour rightly goes to Jesus
Because he deserves it
All of life, all for Jesus

Just 4 weeks after losing her arm
Bethany Hamilton got back in the surf and learned to surf again with one arm
In three months she entered her first competition after her injury
She went on to become a professional surfer winning awards
But more importantly to her
Bethany used all the media attention to talk to people about Jesus
And what it means to overcome fear with faith
And what it looks like to have courage and purpose in trials
Her story was made into the movie "Soul Surfer"
And now Bethany Hamilton inspires millions of people to find their peace in God
And that was more than she could have ever asked for or imagined
When she prayed at age 13.

This is what she wrote on social media this year at Easter.

*To be of need is not celebrated in today's society. But rather the opposite. To be independent, self reliant, got it all together all the time...
But maybe to be in need is the shift we actually need...*

*We need His grace and the hope Jesus brings,
He is the one who makes a way.
This is what saves us.
This is what changes us.
Jesus only did good and that is why he is so loved and celebrated...*

*There is so much pain, hardship and confronting sin in this life
And it's a constant reminder of our need and our fragility.*

It's the grace and hope of Christ that leaves me hopeful in all times of trial...

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.
1 Peter 2:24*

Much love, Bethany