

August 26, 2018  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: Luke  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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## THE CHRIST DID EXTRAORDINARY THINGS Luke 5:12-26

In our text we read two stories about Jesus healing people who had fallen victim to disease. There are a lot of stories in the Gospel accounts of Jesus healing the diseased. And all the stories we read are nowhere near an exhaustive list of the number of people Jesus healed. As John wrote, *“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book” (John 20:30)*. Later in his Gospel John acknowledged, *“Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25)*.

Why was there so much disease in the world in Jesus’s day? On one hand, is it possible that disease was rampant because there was not the advanced medical knowledge we enjoy in our life times. On the other hand, it is possible that disease was no more rampant in the first century than it is in the twenty-first century worldwide. Which truth should lead us to ask why there is sickness, disease, and death at all? We know that the answer to that question is sin. When Adam rebelled against God and brought sin into the world, he brought death. Disease is part of the curse that leads to death.

That conclusion must drive us back to Jesus’s affirmation in the synagogue that He was on earth to bring to completion, the prophecy of Isaiah. Remember that Jesus applied the reading of Isaiah 61 to Himself. *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19)*.

We read about Jesus healing disease so often because He was demonstrating the deeper truth of what it meant for Him to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. Disease and sickness is the perfect illustration and full manifestation of sin. Jesus came to earth to offer the antidote to sin—salvation through faith in His shed blood as the price for sin. Jesus’s perfect life, innocent death, and affirming resurrection was the declaration of God’s grace—the proclamation of the year of His favor.

We know our Creator’s kindness, mercy, compassion and grace because He sent Jesus to reveal it. We know that God has authority to forgive our sins because He proved it through His Son Jesus. Jesus healing diseases was a perfect illustration of His authority to dismiss sin and all its effects. By His declaration that the trusting confessing sinner is made righteous, Jesus dismisses the power and penalty of sin from us now and promises us a new existence in a new body that will be free from all the effects of sin for eternity.

It baffles us who are born again through that faith, that others are not willing to admit their sin, admit that Jesus is the Savior from sin, and ask Him to forgive. Those people we know suffer from the same plight with which the Pharisees and teachers in Jesus’s day suffered—unbelief! They could not accept who Jesus was so that even extraordinary works did not convince them. If you trust Christ, rejoice. If you do not trust Christ, listen to the story and let the extraordinary convince you that you should.

### A Leper Healed (vv.12-16).

The leper requested the Lord’s will to be done. Not only was this man a leper, but Dr. Luke described him as being full of leprosy. *While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy (v.12a)*. The fellow showed up while Jesus was teaching and doing miracles in one of the cities in Galilee. That is what He said He came to do and was determined to do (Luke 4:43). He was proclaiming the grace of God.

In that setting this very leprous man showed up. This would have shocked the people. Lepers were outcasts who were required to warn people that not to come near because of their contagious

condition by shouting “Unclean, Unclean.” That reality should help us stop to consider the agony of leprosy.

Evidence of the disease has been found as far back as 600 B.C. in China, Egypt, and India. It was identified as a bacterial infection by a Norwegian scientist, G.H.A. Hansen in 1873. Since that time leprosy has been known as Hansen’s disease. It is a neurological disease that effects the nerve endings especially around the wrists, elbows, and knees. It is communicable through touch and breath. The disease does not so much eat away the flesh as was supposed by the ancients. Rather, because it killed the nerve endings, there was no feeling in the fingers, hands, feet, and the body parts were damaged when the victim unknowingly puts his hands in the fire, or hits his head on something, or drops heavy objects on his feet with no pain.

Lepers were obviously disfigured, obviously contagious, and, therefore, obviously segregated from the rest of society. They had to stay outside the city like the four lepers we meet in 2 Kings 7:3. Or like the ten lepers Luke will tell us about later (Luke 17:12). The Rabbis’ laws forbid these pitiable people to come within six feet of another person or within 150 feet of others if the wind was blowing. These rules applied especially to the lepers with advanced, identified cases.

Also, it is good for us to stop and consider the picture leprosy paints for us. Leprosy is used as a picture of sin in the Bible. In Jesus’s day, people concluded that leprosy was a sign of God’s curse on the individual. The effects of sin are indeed the curse of God, brought into the perfect creation by Adam’s rebellion. Like leprosy sin has disfigured us who God made in His image. Sin causes us to be segregated from God. We cannot approach the Holy God because of our contamination. We are outcast from God and destined to be separated from Him forever because of our sin.

In this story, the needy man came to Jesus and pled with Him. *And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean” (v.12b).* The people had to be shocked that this man dared to approach Jesus. No doubt from a distance of about six feet, this ugly victim of disease expressed faith. In fact, he expressed great faith. He did not demand that Jesus heal him. Rather, the leper acknowledged that he was fully convinced that Jesus could heal him. But, he left the decision of healing up to Christ.

That is how a sinner must come to Christ. We must come to Christ fully convinced that He alone has the power to dismiss our sins. We must come fully convinced that Christ can make us pure from that which mars the image of God. I must come to Christ fully convinced that it is Christ’s choice to save me or not. No human sinner is powerful enough to force the merciful Savior to do anything.

In response to the needy man’s request, Jesus accomplished the Father’s will (vv.13-16). He set the captive free with a caveat. Yes, it is true that Jesus healed the leper. *And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him (v.13).*

Maybe more shocking than the boldness of the leper to approach Jesus was Jesus reaching out to place His hand on the diseased man. The norm is that when a clean person touches a diseased person, the disease will make the clean person unclean. Instead of being infected with leprosy, the extraordinary happened: Christ’s purity cleansed the disease. This is the miracle that happens when we come to Christ confessing the fullness of our sin. Why would the pure, undefiled Christ even desire for us to come to Him? When we come to Christ, acknowledge our wretched condition, express faith that He can cleanse us, He reaches out with compassion and touches our diseased souls to make them whole.

Jesus came to set the captives free, to preach liberty, and to heal. He came to earth with all the authority of God over sin. He came to earth to win the right to cleanse us from sin. What a Wonderful Savior!

Having healed the leper, Jesus instructed him to go to the priests and show them the results. *And he charged him to tell no one, but “go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them” (v.14).* This was not simply a matter of showing up at the temple to show the religious leaders that he was okay now. Jesus sent the healed leper to the temple to engage in a very detailed and elaborate ceremony. It is described for us in Leviticus 14:1-32.

The law required the priest to go outside the camp to meet with the leper who claimed to be healed. After the priest made a positive inspection, the healed person would participate in a detailed process of sacrifices, odd applications of the blood, the killing of a dove, and

freeing of another dove and so on. Then there was an eight day waiting period, after which the healed person, still showing signs of healing, offered three lambs as a sacrifice for three separate offerings.

Notice that Jesus didn't set aside the Law but instructed the healed man to keep it. It didn't matter whether such odd laws made any more sense to the people than they do to us. It was the law God established through Moses, and it was still in effect until Jesus shed His blood to cover sin — of which the law was a picture. That is what Jesus meant when He vowed, "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them*" (Matthew 5:17).

Try to imagine how joyous the celebration was after the eighth day when the cleansed person was restored to fellowship with his family and the rest of society. The great result of this law was restoration to fellowship with the "clean" people. The great result of the Savior cleansing us from sin restored fellowship with our pure Creator, which is the intent for which He created humans in the first place. A residual result of the cleansing is our fellowship with other "spiritually cleansed" people (corporate worship).

The miracle attracted great crowds. More sick people than ever showed up. *But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities* (v.15). As one would expect, news that Jesus was healing diseased people would spread like wild fire. I can't imagine anyone who was sick or diseased not wanting to come to Jesus. Strange how physical healing is more to be desired than spiritual healing. No doubt that is because spiritually dead people can only think about the physical life, having no feelings toward spiritual life.

I wonder if in the continually growing onslaught of people, the disciples were formulating thoughts and plans about Jesus, the Messiah, gathering His army to throw off the bondage of Rome and setting up His kingdom.

In response to even larger sized crowds showing up, Jesus withdrew. *But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray* (v.16). His human nature would grow weary under such pressure. His divine nature would long for fellowship with the Father. Such fellowship was necessary to recharge His spiritual nature. If it was necessary for the Christ to withdraw and pray, how necessary is it for us? One of

my chief desires in life is to draw closer and closer to God in fellowship, to know Him more intimately, to seek out His presence in a real way every day. One of my chief desires for you is to do the same.

I am convinced that a genuine, intimate fellowship with God is the solution or antidote to a lot of our questionable issues, problems, and insecurities. I am sure that a problem faced by many professing Christians today is a sincere longing to know more about the Bible, to know more about God, but no hunger to know God personally and intimately. Unregenerate people can know more and more ABOUT God. We call that "theology." But God's children need to know the person of our Savior better, more deeply, more intimately.

### **A Lame Man Healed (vv.17-26).**

Jesus demonstrated the favor of the Lord. He was teaching teachers and the very important teachers listened in as Jesus taught. *On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem* (v.17a).

This is Luke's first mention of Pharisees. Notice that these experts on the Jewish religion came from every village in Galilee and Judea. But some of the chief religious leaders and teachers came from Jerusalem. Because Jesus's teaching was growing so popular, it was their responsibility to check out and approve or disapprove this Teacher. These were the authoritative theologians, the experts on the law. As Luke reveals throughout his "Good News," these people were the self-appointed authorities, but they were completely devoid of spiritual, divine authority.

In that setting, Luke revealed to us that *the power of the Lord was with him [Jesus] to heal* (v.17b). This statement almost seems random. Is this to say that at times the power to heal was not with the Lord? No. The statement sets the stage. It is a reminder that Jesus was exercising divine authority and power over diseases, the effects of sin.

Jesus was teaching. The important teachers were listening. And some men of great faith interrupted the class. Luke described the situation in verses eighteen through nineteen. *And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were*

*seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus (vv.18-19).*

Men with great faith tried to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus for healing. When they arrived at the house, they were confronted with the problem of not being able to get him to Jesus. What if these men had been your average Christian? They would have concluded, “Oh well, it is obviously not God’s will for us to bring our friend to Christ.” Or they could have said, “We will just have to wait for a better opportunity, because this just doesn’t look convenient.” That is precisely the way we reason about not inviting our coworker to come to church with us, or failing to tell the Good News of salvation. If it is not a convenient setting, we might even pray about a more opportune time instead of working through the inconvenience.

These men of faith worked through the inconvenience. They took their friend on his pallet up the outside staircase to the roof top. They began pulling up the grass or thatch, and then removing the stones until they created a hole big enough to let their friend down into the presence of Jesus. Imagine the reaction of the people and especially of the refined and pompous official teachers of Israel when the dust and debris started to fall from the ceiling. These guys were not going to allow anything or anyone to stand in the way of bringing their friend to Jesus.

If we really believed that Jesus could wash away the sins of our friends, would we not be just as determined to bring them to Jesus by telling them the Good News? Often God leaves certain sinners in our circles of influence so that we can let them down through the hole in the roof time and time again. The problem is that our sin-diseased friends have no faith when they see Jesus. That was not a problem in this story.

Jesus acknowledged the men’s faith. *And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you” (v.20).* Look closely at the text and read that Jesus saw **their** faith. Obviously, that has to refer to the incredible faith the friends of the paralyzed man demonstrated by working so hard to get him to Jesus so that He could

heal him. But the pronoun *their* also includes the faith of the needy man. How do we know that it wasn’t his idea to tear up the roof?

The official teachers took exception to Jesus’s kindness (vv.21-26). When Jesus showed compassion to care for the needy man, the religious officials questioned Jesus’s authority. They were right to conclude that only God can forgive sins. *And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (v.21).* The teachers’ conclusion that only God can forgive sin was exactly right.

That is just the point! When Jesus dismissed the man’s sins, He claimed to be God. For a mere man to claim to be God is blasphemy because He was not God. That was a sin punishable by death according to God’s law. *Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death (Leviticus 24:16).* But what if the apparently common man was actually God in the flesh? Then He was not blaspheming but proving the truth.

The teachers illustrated how it is possible to be theologically accurate but not regenerated by faith in Christ alone. It is likely that this is a true situation for multiplied thousands of people. They are the “many” Jesus described as taking the wide and easy road to heaven.

Jesus knew the teachers’ errant thoughts. *When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, “Why do you question in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’?” (vv.22-23).* Doubts and disputes in the heart eventually come to the surface for all to see. To help them see that He is God, Jesus equated healing from the effects of sin with healing from the principle of sin. Not everyone who Jesus healed physically was saved from sin. But often the two went together as in this case.

By this means Jesus demonstrated His authority. He showed that He had authority to forgive sins. *“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . ” (v.24a).* Oh! This is what Isaiah meant about Messiah demonstrating the year of God’s favor. Jesus did what He did to encourage sinners to believe that He is the Savior.

He commanded the paralyzed man to walk, and the healed man obeyed. Jesus *said to the man who was paralyzed – “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.” And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God (vv.24b-25)*. When we are healed, cleansed from our sins, three results are noticeable: 1) We obey Jesus; 2) The effects of sin no longer control us; 3) We glorify God. The change was undeniable.

God the Son revealed His authority over sin and God received glory. *And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today” (v.26)*. Being healed from disease by a simple word and touch from Jesus is extraordinary. Being wholly cleansed from the penalty, power and effects of sin by Jesus’s word is extraordinary. Observing God’s extraordinary works always causes His people to attribute glory to Him.

I am increasingly concerned about the lack of evidence of the extraordinary in the Church at large today. It appears to me that while there is a sincere desire to know more and more about God by knowing more and more about the Bible, there is little desire to know God intimately. This appears to be a strange marriage between ordinary theological pursuits and satisfaction with ordinary life in the world. When Jesus removes our sins, there is supposed to be a change that results in glory to God.

What we see instead is comfortableness with ordinary worldliness. I will be the first to acknowledge and even encourage some changes from one generation of Christians to the next generation. These things will and must happen. What concerns me is that there appears to be a desire to change the Standard Operating Procedure of Christendom to match the Standard Operating Procedure of the world, which I assume happens because there has been no change in the hearts of people who inhabit Christendom.

Again, the results of Christ healing disease, both spiritual and physical, historically are:

A desire to know and obey the Bible.

A desire for prayer.

A desire for true corporate worship.

A desire to tell the Good News.

Where these are missing, has there been any authoritative work of Christ that causes change?