

Luke 5 • (Part 1): 1-26 • A Lesson, a Leper and Jesus proves He is God

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Luke chapter 5. This morning, we're going to be covering several different events in the life and ministry of Jesus s, let's ask the Lord to open our hearts.

Heavenly Father, as we dig into your Word this morning, it's always our posture, our attitude, to ask you to incline our ear, to open our spiritual eyes, to cause us Lord, to have a greater responsiveness to your Word today.

We believe that your Word is life itself. It's food for our hearts and souls, and Lord we long to hear from You. So, would you speak to each person? Would you speak to each heart? Talk to us about the things that are most needful in our lives.

Speak to us, Lord of eternity, the things that matter, and then how to apply Your Word, Lord, to our daily lives. Thank You, Father. In Jesus' Name, amen.

Verse 1 of chapter 5,

“On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, (and that's referring to Simon Peter) he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat.” (ESV)

Stop there for just a minute please, if you would.

As the Word was spreading and people were hearing about more and more of what was happening in the ministry of Jesus, obviously crowds were gathering to such a point that they were pressing in on Jesus. And it got to the point where they were crowding in and crowding to Him so much that it was difficult for Him to probably be heard among the crowd or the people that were closest to Him.

And so Jesus, and I really love this, He got into one of the boats that was just sitting there along the shore, and He asked Peter to put Him out into the water just a short distance. And he used Peter's boat as a pulpit, which is really a tremendous idea.

Put a little distance between Himself and the crowds, enabling them to hear Him so much better. And He begins to speak and preach, and it says in verse 4 that,

“...when he had finished speaking, (Luke doesn't tell us about what was said in that particular message. It says that he turned to Simon and) he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” And it's interesting, Simon's response here.

“⁵ And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷ They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.”

Let's pause there for a moment.

Now, in just a little bit, in just a few verses forward we're going to see how Jesus is actually going to call these very men to be His disciples and especially Peter, James, and John. And knowing that these men are about to undergo a huge job description change, Jesus is working with them in a very significant way.

And it starts by telling Peter to put out into the deep and let down their nets to do some fishing, and I can just about imagine how Peter probably was thinking inside his head when Jesus said that, and even responds to Jesus by saying, well, Lord just want you to know, we've been doing this for a long time and we know fishing and we actually were fishing all night long and didn't catch anything.

Just want you to know... Have you ever done that thing with God when He asked you to do something you try to go, not sure you really understand the situation here, but let me just share with you what our experiences. But since You said so we'll go ahead and put the nets out.

Here's Peter, he's probably been raised on boats all of his life. He's an experienced man on the water and here comes this carpenter who proposes to tell him when it's a good time to go fishing. And I can almost see in my mind

that Peter's rolling his eyes as he turns away from Jesus and looks to his buddies.

He's like, all right guys, we're going to go out again. Seriously? Yeah. Yeah. That's why Peter said, Master, we've toiled all night. Didn't get anything, but, if you want us to do that, and you saw what happened.

And it's really not hard to figure out the lesson that is being conveyed here as Jesus asks them to take this little fishing exercise. It's actually pretty simple because it's not about fishing at all. The lesson is about life, and ministry, and following Jesus's Word even when it doesn't seem to make sense.

And the message is very simple. As you live in the flesh, meaning in the natural, you need to understand that in the power of your own strength you will come up empty, and that's exactly what had been happening all night long for the disciples as they were laboring in the boats.

But Jesus is communicating to Peter, and this is a message he won't get for a long time. But it's a message that ultimately he will understand. The message is, obey the Lord, follow His instructions, you can expect fruitfulness in your life, in your ministry.

In fact, such fruitfulness that you won't even be able to contain all of the blessings that I'm about to bring into your life. Jesus actually said this same thing in a different way. Here He's doing it in lesson form. Later on in His ministry, He will actually speak these words in a very clear sort of a way. Let me show you on the screen. It's recorded for us in John chapter 15 where Jesus said,

John 15:5 (NIV)

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me, and I in him, he will, bear much fruit. apart from me, you can do nothing.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me, (your Bible may even say abides in me) and I in him, he will, (and here's a promise) bear much fruit. (But then he also has to give this secondary idea that is just as important for you and I to hear, and that is) apart from me, you can do nothing.

What's beautiful about this is that He says it here in John 15, which I'm sure happened much later on in the public ministry of Jesus, but here He's showing Peter in lesson form, that the fruit that you and I bear in our lives is much more significant when we are abiding in the Lord.

And by the way, the fruit that He's referring to is not just limited to soul winning. Sometimes people will quote that passage as it relates to soul winning, and that seems to be the only application but we could be talking about fruitfulness in any aspect of life.

Fruitfulness in your search and desire to know God more. You abide in Him; it's going to be more fruitful. It could be fruitfulness in your marriage relationship. You abide in Christ; you're going to have a more fruitful marriage relationship. I guarantee it. He, forget what I say, He guarantees it. It's just, it goes without saying, but He said it anyway.

Remaining or abiding in Christ is the key to fruitfulness in all aspects of life. If there's an area of your life and you're not seeing fruitfulness, I would encourage you to just ask yourself the question, am I abiding in Christ am I connected to the Savior as it relates to this particular thing? Or am I doing things in my own ability? Am I doing things in the natural?

When people sometimes come and talk to me about their marriage, it's almost the same thing that Peter said to Jesus regarding their all night fishing expedition. We've been doing this. We've been pulling on the nets. We've been tugging and pulling and that was hard work by the way. I mean, these are big rope type nets and they had these lead weights or rocks that were on, that would cause them to sink and they could pull them up and get the fish, and so now it's loaded with fish and imagine how heavy that is, and they've been doing this all night long.

Nothing, nothing coming up. And isn't that just life for you and I sometimes? Isn't that what our marriages feel like sometimes? Or are there relationships or the things that we're doing and we just feel like we're laboring and we're pulling and we're, and nothing. And so the question you and I need to ask ourselves is, am I abiding in Christ? Am I remaining in Him? And that's what I love so much about this lesson as it is given to Peter. He probably would have, he would have done a different lesson for you.

Something that more applied specifically to the things that you do on a regular basis to help you understand the lesson. But this was a perfect way to illustrate it for Peter because it was the way I like to learn lessons. This was hands on, visible, you know. I'm a very tactile visual sort of a learner, and this is the way I would learn better too. And it was so powerful that Jesus used Peter's own profession to show him, Pete, from here on out, you need to understand something. You cannot rely on your own experience or your own understanding.

I know you've relied on it in the past, but this is precisely why Jesus asked Peter to go out after fishing all night long and getting nothing, because Peter needed to be shown that our natural experience cannot be relied on when it comes to following the Lord, and when He is at the helm of our lives it's a whole different dynamic now, and the things that you and I have learned and the experience that we've gathered in life can actually be a detriment to following the Lord. It's interesting because in our natural life in the culture in which we live, experience is huge. You're applying for a job, they want to know, do you have any experience?

When you're filling out your resume, or a job application you're doing your best to communicate with a prospective employer that you're the good person for the job because you have experience. I've done this before. I know what I'm doing, and that's so huge in the world in which we live, and then we suddenly are catapulted into this relationship with Jesus Christ where our experience is actually a detriment. Peter's like, Lord, we've been fishing all night. I know what I'm doing. You've been making chairs and tables.

I'm a fisherman, but okay. Have you ever given the Lord that kind of obedience? Okay. We'll try it your way, but I'm telling you, I know what I'm talking about. I know what I'm doing, and then we come up against that one passage that we all know and very few of us ever really lay hold of. Let me show it on the screen.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own (experience. That's your own) understanding. (Don't lean on that. Don't lean. You know why? It's not going to hold your weight. It's the idea of leaning on something that can't take the weight. It's just going to collapse and you're going to fall. And instead, we're supposed to acknowledge Him) ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, (And when Peter acknowledged the Lord, it was, I'm just, this is the way I see it) and he will make straight your paths."

His acknowledgement of the Lord was a, I don't know, resignation more than a true act of obedience at this particular level in Peter's life. We're to acknowledge the Lord. Not the way Peter did of saying. Now, listen, Lord, we were out all night long and it didn't do anything, but okay. No, our acknowledgement of the Lord is to acknowledge His Word and His ways above

and beyond anything we know or understand, and joyfully be willing to go His direction. Acknowledge the Lord in all of your ways, and then He will direct your paths. Right?

At this point, whenever I'm talking about these things usually somebody is forming a question in their mind that goes something like this, well, God gave us a brain, didn't He give us a brains to use it? And the answer is, yeah, He did, but He didn't give you a brain to question His Word. Nor did He give you a brain to second guess His directives. And that's what we do, and we do it in the name of, God gave me a brain, I'm supposed to use it, right? Yeah, but not like Peter did, not in that sense of saying, Lord, hello, fishermen here. I know what I'm doing, man.

That's not how He wants you and I to use our mind, and what's also interesting here in this passage is, this is how Peter responded after they got this huge catch of fish, which, by the way, they couldn't even haul it in they had to signal for their partners. That could have been James and John they were partners in fishing and it could have been them that said, hey, you guys give us a hand. We can't even bring it in, and it says that both boats were almost ready to sink. And you'll notice, and this is great, look at verse 8. I love - Peter's such a great lesson in just humanity, but it says in verse eight 8,

“But when Simon Peter saw (all of this stuff) it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.”

I want to focus for a little bit here on Peter's reaction, okay? You need to understand something or remember. This is not the first time Peter has seen a miracle. We saw in the last chapter that Jesus actually went to Peter's house, right? And when he got there, he found Peter's mother-in-law suffering from a very high fever, He healed her, she immediately got up and began to serve them, and then what happened after that? People started descending on Peter's house. All the people from the surrounding region started showing up at Pete's house.

Knock, knock, knock. Is Jesus there? Yeah, well, we got somebody sick here. And they started just, and so Peter's there. He's watching Jesus, touching the people, healing everyone who came and so forth.

He saw how Jesus healed all their sick, and so, this isn't new seeing this miraculous catch of fish. This is not Peter's first rodeo as it relates to miracles, and yet his reaction to this is significant because we get no other sense of his reaction to any of the other miracles Jesus had done up to this point, but this one, in this miracle, Peter drops to his knees, and he even says, Lord, leave me.

And I think it's important for us to notice here what his action is, because it's not a reaction of awe. We were talking about that here at the end of worship, help us Lord to be in awe of you. But this is not awe. This is fear. This is fear.

And that is why Jesus said, if you notice there at the end of verse 10, He said, "*do not be afraid.*" And by the way, the Greek literally means, stop being fearful. It's a statement that is meant to address and calm fear that is already in progress. Stop being fearful. And so you have to ask yourself the question, why was Peter afraid?

What about this made him afraid? He'd seen Jesus heal all these other people. He'd seen Jesus heal his mother-in-law. He wasn't afraid then. Why now? What was it about this situation that made him respond by dropping to his knees in fear? I'll tell you what. It's because this one was personal. Every miracle that Jesus had done up to this point was done for other people, to other people, even his mother-in-law, but this one was personal.

And the Lord is showing us here, just like he did Peter, that, as we said before, Pete, you can no longer rely on your personal experience, and He's basically telling Peter that I'm about to take you out of the driver's seat of your life, and I'm going to be in the driver's seat, and that ultimately places Peter in a position where he's out of control.

Out of the control of his life and that's what was happening to him, and that is a fearful thing to have happen in your life. Again, it's one thing to see Jesus come along and do some wonderful miracles in people's lives and we go, yeah.

And then Jesus does this miraculous thing that's a lesson to Peter, that says to him, Pete whatever you relied on in the past all the experience all the insight, all the knowledge that you've gained about life that you've been dealing with here in the past, it's not going to work anymore. And that's fearful. It's a fearful thing.

I think there's a lot of people who hold back on giving their life to Jesus because it's just that, giving your life over to somebody else. His direction, His control. We like being in control. It's our default setting. I like it. You like it. Why do you think people don't like to get into airplanes? You have zero control. People

would rather drive their car, which frankly is more dangerous, right? In terms of the stats. But why do people get into airplanes and suddenly take the white-knuckle flight? They're out of control.

Everything is just completely out of their control. Well, it's the same thing when you and I really begin to give our lives to Jesus Christ, and I think that Jesus is communicating to Peter right here at the get go. This is going to be a completely different arrangement here, Pete. This is a different relationship that we have going on. You've been a man who has been in control of his life and that's going to, and that's changing, because the whole idea of Lordship means, I'm in control.

Isn't it interesting that Jesus even referred, excuse me, Peter referred to Jesus when he obligingly said, okay, we'll put the boat back out. He referred to Him as Master. Okay, Master, we'll do it your way. If he really thought Jesus was his Master, he would have gladly gone. And then when the great big catch of fish happened, he would have been, yep, this is what happens when you put the Master in control. But he wasn't expecting any of that and the whole idea, or the reference to Master was just a name, a title.

Peter is learning here what it really means to make Jesus Master. In control. Lord of my life, and it's a different relationship and so I'm saying all this to encourage you to ask yourself the question, how are you responding to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Are you kicking, biting, bucking, like that unbroken, animal that does not want, no, you're not getting on my back. You do not take the reins of my life.

It's funny, as Christians we come to Jesus because we recognize our need of a Savior but then, as we begin to walk with Him, the whole issue of Lordship comes up, doesn't it?

Suddenly now, we've got to deal with this Lordship question. It's one thing to say, Jesus, thank you for dying for me on the cross, I accept what you did, wonderful. But then we started walking with the Lord and we're all happy and joyful. Oh, He saved me. He loves me. This is wonderful. Boom. And then I hit a wall. It's the wall of self where Jesus wants me to turn and go the other way, and now I have a question of Lordship that I have to deal with.

The question is, how are we going to do that? When Jesus is communicating to you and I, that we need to give our lives over to Him. I like what it says at the end of verse 12. I like their ultimate response. It's the very end. Or in verse 12, actually verse 11, I'm sorry.

“And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.”

That was their response. They left everything and followed him. Now verse 12,

“While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.¹³ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; (which literally means, I am willing) be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him.”

Can you imagine guys what it would have been like to be right there in the crowd to see this man with leprosy, who really wasn't even supposed to be in a crowd of people anyway. He was supposed to keep his distance from people because many of the forms of, there were forms of leprosy that were much more contagious, and so they were supposed to keep their distance.

And here's this man pressing through the crowd and he comes to Jesus falling on his face saying, Lord, if you're willing, I know that you can make me clean. Jesus says, I am willing. To see Jesus touch the man and to see his skin just clear up. Can you imagine? I can scarcely imagine what that would be like.

But I want to remind you about something here about this touch thing because Jesus, you and I both know Jesus didn't have to touch the guy. That wasn't necessary, as far as, to bring the healing, He could have just spoken a word. He could have just said, be healed.

There were many times, many times, when He just spoke a word and the person was healed. But Jesus was willing to do what no one else was willing to do for that man, and that was touch him. I wouldn't be surprised that as this man approached Jesus, that the crowd parted like the Red Sea, as he walked closer to the Lord.

Wouldn't be surprised at all if people saw this man and just went whoa, coming through. Cause this man is contagious, at least they believe, and he could very well have been. There were some, there was a form of leprosy that wasn't as contagious, but they probably didn't know what was really going on here and so here's a man who has been really doing without human touch for a long time because of the great fear, and it was out of the question to have that kind of human touch that you and I take so for granted and yet Jesus touched him and it's a powerful act of compassion from our Lord to this man.

And here's the point. Had there been any priests around that day, and there could have been, we don't know, Luke doesn't mention, but had there been some priests or religious leaders, certainly they would have immediately declared Jesus unclean just for having touched the man because ceremonially speaking, to touch an individual with an infectious skin disease was to render the toucher unclean, meaning that, you know they could not participate in the temple services and they had to wait a period of time.

They had to go through ceremonial washings and so forth, and not the least issue is they could potentially contract leprosy. That's the biggie there. I mean the unclean thing, that'll go away in 24 hours or so but this thing about catching leprosy, that's a big deal. You know what I mean? And so Jesus touched the man, but He didn't get leprosy. The man got the clean part that Jesus conveyed His vitality to the man, not the disease going back to Jesus and it's just a small picture, just a very small picture of what Jesus really came to do in dying on the cross for you and I he didn't just come to observe our sin.

He came to touch it. You know what I mean? He didn't just come to observe our suffering. He came to touch it. He didn't come to just observe our pain. He came to touch it. To be touched by it, and to overcome it. Just the way He healed this man.

So this is a picture. This is just a little snapshot picture of His ministry. I haven't come to avoid these things. This leper comes walking down and everybody's like, they're backing away. Jesus didn't back away. He reached down. This man's on the ground. He reached down and touched him. I didn't come to avoid this kind of a problem. I didn't come to avoid this disease. I didn't come to avoid your pain. I came to touch it and he touched it and changed it. And that is so important for you and I to see. Verse 14 goes on to tell us that,

“...he charged him to tell no one, but (instead he said) “go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.”

What Jesus is telling this man to do is what had been outlined in Leviticus, the 14th chapter. We won't take time to turn there. But in Leviticus 14, Moses declared through the Lord that these were the steps they were to take in the case of an individual being healed of an infectious skin disease. They were to go to the priest to be examined, and they were to go through this process of examination and ultimately if they were declared clean, they were to bring an offering, a special offering and there was ceremonies that went along with it and so forth, and it rarely ever was practiced because people just weren't, I mean,

you could go into remission just like with other diseases, but cleansed completely.

This was a ceremony that was very rarely if ever done, and so Jesus says to this man I want you to go to the priest as a proof to them or if you will a Testimony to them, that a genuine miracle has happened here. So that was an important step for the man to take. Anyway, verse 15,

“But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities.” (So the crowds are now on the increase, and it says in verse 16) *“But he would withdraw to desolate, (or as the NIV says, “lonely places,” or I think as the New King James says, “to the wilderness”) places and pray.”*

So as the crowds increased, Jesus's time getting away, spending time alone with His Father would also increase. You know, I was reading one of my commentaries and I love the statements that Harry Ironside wrote about this particular passage. Can I put this on the screen for you? Great quote concerning Jesus going away and praying.

“He who was God, He who heard the prayers of others, came down here as man and took the place of the dependent One and lifted His heart to the father in earnest prayer. It's a good thing for us all to retire into the wilderness and pray. As we enter more into the life of prayer, we will find renewed strength and courage for our daily tasks.” – H.A. Ironside

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We've been talking, we've mentioned it last week too. Why did Jesus take time to go and pray? We brought up last week just the fellowship aspect. But the fact is, Jesus came to show us what dependence on the Father looked like. He came to model it for us. What does it mean to be dependent on God? Jesus came, willingly setting aside certain aspects and rights of His person and He came to be dependent on the Father. He was dependent on the Father, God, the Son dependent upon God, the Father. Don't ask me to explain that I can't. But He came to do it so that you and I would see this model of what it means.

Here's God, the Son, spending huge blocks of time alone with His Father. Why? Because He's dependent on Him. Here's you and I thinking we can get by without praying hardly at all. Yeah, we pray before meals. Thank you Lord for this food. Don't you get tired of saying that prayer over and over again? And then we pray sometimes at night. A lot of times we fall asleep while we're praying. Sorry about that God, fell asleep right in the middle of bless Aunt Mary. So where is our dependence? Do we recognize it? Do we respond to it by spending more time in prayer? Verse 17,

“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. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸ 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,

¹⁹ 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. (that could have very well been Peter's house) ²⁰ “And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” ²¹ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, “Who is this who peaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Stop there for a moment. Let me explain that. The Jews believed that anyone who claimed to forgive sins was basically putting himself on an equal level with God, okay, because only God can declare forgiveness of sins ultimately, and so if a person is doing that, they're elevating themselves to the place of God and therefore they have committed blasphemy, which is a fast way of finding yourself under a pile of rocks related to how the Jews responded to that. Verse 22,

“When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, “Why do you question in your hearts?” (About this stuff) ²³ Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’?”

So Jesus comes back with a question to respond to the question that's going through their mind. Who is this man who arrogantly thinks He can forgive sins? So, Jesus comes back, and he says, why are you guys allowing these things to go on in your head?

Let me ask you a question, *“²³ Which is easier, to say, (to this man here lying on this mat) ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise and (take up your mat and go home) walk’?”*

Now see as American Christians, we're like, well, that's a no brainer. It's way easier to say your sins are forgiven because you can't, nobody can prove that. I can say to somebody, hey, your sins are forgiven.

Who's going to know whether they were or not. But if I say to the guy, rise up and take up your mat and go home and he just lies there. I have just exposed myself, right, as someone who does not have the authority to make that particular statement. That's the way we think. That's not the way the Jews thought.

You see, the Jews understood that both of these things were equally difficult. In fact, equally impossible to say, because one of them is blasphemy to say your sins are forgiven, and the other one is just ludicrousness.

It's just like, why in the world, right? So Jesus is basically presenting them with a question that is equally impossible on either side of the situation, and so the Jews would have said, had Jesus given them an opportunity to answer, they would have said neither of those things is easier because you've got to be God to do either one. So it's a ridiculous question. But that's exactly why Jesus posed it, and that's why He went on to say in verse 24, if you look with me there,

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”— (He turns to the man) he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, (notice that. 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.”

It's crazy. So you see, Jesus knew, Jesus, of course knew that He was about to show them this miracle, but what He wanted also to do was He wanted them to understand that this miracle validated His earlier declaration of forgiveness for the man. He says to the man, your sins are forgiven. You can't say that, only God can say that. Really? How about rise up and take up your mat and go home? Yeah, only God can say that too.

All right, let me show you something. Rise, take up your mat and go home. You get what's going on? Jesus is making a point. I love it how people once in a while they'll say, Jesus never once claimed to be God. Did you read the book? Did you read what happened right here? He made a statement that the people said, only God can make that, and they were right.

Apart from God's permission for you and I to say it only God can say it because only God can for ultimately forgive sins. I mean I can forgive people for things

they've done against me big Harry but when I, to say to someone you are forgiven by God only God can do that, right? Only God can do that. You can't do that. How about raising up this man from his crippled condition? Right, only God can do that too.

Rise up, take up your mat, go home. It happened. And notice Jesus said, I say to you, I say to you, personal authority. I say to you, rise up, pick up your mat, go home. And it happens just that way. So, do you understand? Later on, the religious leaders are going to come up to Jesus and they're going to just pound their fist and say, finally, tell us, who are You? And Jesus is going to, you know what He's going to say to them? I've been telling you all along, and you haven't been listening. What did He mean?

He's talking about stuff just like this! Where there's this conversation going on. Only God can do that! Watch this! You know. Now here's what's interesting. I want to talk about this forgiveness thing again, because you might be thinking, gee I've told people their sins are forgiven. That's okay. We actually have a commission as the Church, to do what Jesus did for that man as it relates to the declaring of forgiveness of sins. It is a commission that Jesus gave us. It's recorded in John 20. Let me put it on the screen for you. Goes like this.

John 20:23 (ESV)

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.

That's our commission. Now don't read that verse wrong because it might sound to you and I, like you and I have the freedom to arbitrarily say, you're forgiven, you're forgiven, not you. You're forgiven. You get out of here. No, that's not what's going on here.

The commission to proclaim forgiveness of sins is given to us in this passage with some very interesting grammatical construction and I'll spare you all of the details about verb tenses and stuff like that but essentially what Jesus was saying here is, those whose sins you have forgiven, or you forgive, have already been forgiven.

That's essentially the way this phrase goes. And He says, those whose sins you do not forgive have not been forgiven. In other words, it is a done deal related to heaven. As you declare it, it has been, they've been forgiven. And so it reminds

you and I that we don't have this arbitrary sort of power to just say, God forgives you, but not you. It's not arbitrary. We announce forgiveness to people, we don't dictate who gets forgiven. Does that make sense?

Because our announcement of people's forgiveness is predicated upon their response to the message of the Gospel, and how they respond to the Gospel makes the difference to how you and I respond to them as it relates to forgiveness. And we do this because we have a commission to do it. If I go out and I say to somebody, hey, Jesus died on the cross for your sins, and if you accept what He did on the cross, you will be forgiven and saved, and they say, pastor, I want very much to accept what Jesus did on the cross for me. Great. Let's pray.

Let's confess your sin, and let's invite Him into your life and you receive him as your Savior. Wonderful. So we go through that prayer. We get done with that prayer. I can look that person right in the eye and say, you are forgiven. Now the Jews would have stoned me for saying that. But see, we have a commission from the Savior to declare forgiveness of sins according to the response of the Gospel. And that's a, it's a beautiful thing. And the commission is repeated throughout the Word of God. Let me show you another passage from John chapter 3. You know this very well.

John 3:16-18 (ESV)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (but it goes on to say) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him (or puts their faith in Him) is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Right? The only Son of God. So you see this buttresses or underscores the commission that we've received to declare forgiveness of sins. We understand what it's all predicated upon. It's not a whim. It's the response to the Gospel.

You open your heart, you receive Jesus as your Savior, your sins are forgiven. You say to me, I reject what Jesus did. I don't even believe Jesus even ever existed and I reject everything that you're saying about this man. Then, your sins are not forgiven.

See, I mean, that'd be a pretty heady thing for me to say without this commission and this insight from the Word of God. But this is what you and I have been given. The response to the people, verse 26,

“And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today.”

Yes, they have. And have they heard what Jesus was actually saying, that He is God in human flesh and has that authority?