

The Power and Grace of Jesus

Matthew 9; Luke 5

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I invite you who are adults to be seated and I invite the children to go to their classes. I'm going to ask you to look around. If you're here for the first time prior to our Missions Week you're amazed at all the flags around the sanctuary. And that's because this church has ministries in many cities, many states and many nations throughout the world. But I got here this morning. I started noticing the flags of the countries I had been to, even for ministry purposes. So there's Argentina and Brazil and there's Greece and Korea, South Korea over there. And I would encourage you to look at the flags that you know and maybe pray for God's work in those places and see it as your work. You support it in prayer and in giving. And perhaps you have gone as well.

Today, we're looking at Luke 5. If you're a visitor here today, we're so happy you're here. We're doing scenes for the life of Jesus and because I'm not able to be with you every week right now I wanted to make it easy for guest speakers to step in. And so, any Pastor that might fill in here can speak on scenes from the life of Jesus. Right? So, this scene is one in which Jesus is both manifesting his power and his grace, both his power and his grace. And this passage, if you'd like to know what's coming, starts with God's power, Jesus' power through the Holy Spirit. That's part one. And then we see that real faith receives God's grace and power, and it fights through obstacles. That'll be the middle point. And then we're going to notice that when Jesus forgives in power, that calls forth a response. That'll be our focus today. So let me read Luke 5: 17-26:

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

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.^[a] 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. 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 speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ²² When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? ²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — he said to the man who was paralyzed—"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. ²⁶ And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."

May the Lord bless our understanding of this part of his word.

Let me ask you a question first today. Are you good at assessing your needs? I think the short answer is most of us are pretty good or kind of good, but we also fail to distinguish between felt needs and real needs and big needs and little needs.

I took a work test, I don't know, a year or two ago and everybody else was taking the test. So I took the test too. And I know about my work style, but I got a surprising piece of information on my work test. I didn't like it. It said, You have a difficult time distinguishing between important tasks and unimportant tasks. And I thought, Well, that's ridiculous. I certainly know how to tell the difference between an important task and an unimportant task. And then an hour later, I was just about to commit myself to a very minor, very time-consuming task. And I remembered the test and I was about to do the very thing I say I never do. I failed to distinguish.

And that's something that strikes all of us now. The good news is that Jesus understands our real needs and our felt needs. He understands that we might pick up part of what we need, but not the whole thing. And so, he often meets felt needs and the real need, the deepest need that we have that happens here. There's a man who sees a need.

He needs to be healed of his paralysis. His friends see the same thing. It's a real need and there's also a deeper need that Jesus perceives, and that is that he be forgiven. Let me just use a simple example. I've met any number of people over the years who have said something like this. People are hassling me, they grieve me, they don't give me the respect I deserve, and I deserve more respect and consideration.

And my voice should be more weighty in the world than it is that that's their perception. And that may be true, but it may be true that they don't get respect because they don't respect other people. And that's why people don't respect them, because they feel the disrespect kind of oozing out of them, or they're always fishing for a compliment or they're always trying to rise in the organization because people perceive that they push them down a little because their real need is to be more humble and to accept their role in life. And they think they need more respect, and they do. But their deepest need is to straighten up their attitude toward other people. And that's true of all of us at times. We have a need we see, and there's a deeper one.

Now, in the passage that I read to you, it's a very extraordinary day. It's a day of Jesus ministering with power. He's in a crowded house. It's a kind of an elite house. It doesn't say that, but it says they lowered the man through the tiles. That means most houses did not have tiles. They had thatched roofs. And so tiles means it's a big house, it's a villa. There's a lot of people there. It's an important man who owns the house and that's important because it means there are a lot of people in the house. It wasn't a little house that fits 14 people, but probably a big

house that fit a couple hundred people. And Jesus is teaching and he's healing. And this is one of those days. It's one of those days when there is power for Jesus to heal.

Now, I want to make one thing clear. What that means is that Jesus' life is not static. It's not just everything's the same every day. There are days when God manifested his power by the Spirit through Jesus in extraordinary ways, even as in your life. There are ordinary days and then there are great days when life is on the line. When you have a big decision right in front of you, this is the day, a vital day.

There are days like this over in chapter six, verse 19, just a chapter later, it says, One day people are trying to touch Jesus because power was coming out of him and healing them all. People said, Hey, it's one of those days, get near Jesus, you can be healed. This is one of those days. There's power in the Bible, especially in Luke, in Acts. When it says power, it means the power of God, The power of the spirit. It means the spirit of God is there moving in an extraordinary way. The house is full, people are being healed now. The house has other people in it. The House has Pharisees and teachers of the law. We sometimes call them scribes who came from all over Israel. They walked three days from Jerusalem. They were from Judea. It sounds a little bit ominous. This sounds like an inquisition. Who is this? This healer, this teacher? We're going to find out what's going on here. And they come on a day of power. It's the power that makes the weak, physically weak, strong again.

It's the power that forgives sins. It's the power that re-establishes people. It's the power that guided Jesus. In Luke, one, two, three and four, Jesus is led around by the Spirit. He's empowered at the beginning of his ministry. Luke, four says he's led by the Spirit to be tested by the evil one he is hearing by the voice of God and the Spirit of God.

You are my beloved son, whom I'm well pleased is growing to maturity. Back in chapter two by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is leading Jesus. Can I just say right away, if Jesus needed to be led and empowered by the Spirit, I'm thinking you and I do to. We want to do the right thing. We want to maybe discipline ourselves better, lay aside some sin, find more energy. It's the way of moralism to say, I need to do the law, I just need to do what God says. It's the way of faith. And to try on God - to say Lord, I need your power. I'm to pray right now. I'm going to ask you to strengthen me. By your grace, God is pressing a little bit more.

I was speaking on this passage at one time, not terribly long ago, a couple of years ago, and it was a time kind of like my time here. Right now. I'm a professor and I'm with you as much as I possibly can be. And I was also a professor and helping out as an interim pastor at another church and at the beginning of a season, that was going to be pretty rough. I said to my wife, you know, honey, if nothing goes wrong for the next three months, I think we can make it. I think we can barely make it if nothing goes wrong. You know what happened next? My wife said my shoulder is really hurting and it won't stop. I think I better go see a doctor. The doctor said, I can see why your shoulders hurting. You have bone spurs in your humerus. Not laughing, humerus. The bone called the humerus. You have bone spurs and those bone spurs have been tearing up

your bicep and your bicep tendon. They've torn your labrum and your rotator cuff and you're going to have surgery and you're going to be incapacitated for the next ten weeks completely. And then six more recovery. So much for if everything goes perfectly for the next few months. And maybe because I was reading this passage, I said, Lord, you better give me power to serve my wife, who, by the way, takes care of me in all kinds of ways. Now I've got to take care of her, help her to receive my care, help me to give care cheerfully, even when I'm tired. Give her the grace, Lord Jesus, closing her eyes when I wash the dishes incorrectly, Give her the grace to do something else when she watches me ironing only the front of my shirt. Give her the wisdom Lord, to just go upstairs when I'm vacuuming or mopping or something like that. We need your power to make it through the next few weeks or months.

Well, back to the story. Jesus is teaching and he's healing and there is power for him to heal. And the word spreads, people hear. And so there's a man who's paralyzed and he has some friends, praise God, he has good friends. And they say, hey, buddy, Jesus is healing. He's right over in Capernaum and let's go. We're going to take you there.

Maybe it was half a mile, maybe it was 15 miles up and down hills. We don't know. But by the time he gets there, the house is completely full. There's no way he's going to get into Jesus. But their resolve to get their friends to Jesus so we can be healed and they're stymied and they wonder what to do.

And let's just imagine there's four of them and somebody has the big idea. I know what we'll do and we're not going to get it through the door, knocking it through the window. But if we tear a hole in the roof and tie some ropes, I see some ropes right over there. If we just borrow those ropes and tear a hole in the roof and lower you down, he'll have to pay attention to that.

Now, you may say, how did that happen? So in that day, people did things on top of their roof in Israel. They would like have parties up there, kind of like a patio. They would sleep there on hot summer nights. And so there were external stairs to go up. And so this makes sense. And they go up because, you know, one person has the crazy idea, let's tear hole in the roof. And he thinks it's a terrible idea. No one will ever do that. But then the other people are embarrassed they didn't think of it. And so they say, well, I didn't think of it, but let's do it. And so somehow, somehow the group is doing it. Nothing's going to stop them. They want to get their friend to Jesus.

And there's an obstacle, and this is a pattern in the Gospels. I don't know if you know this, but in the Gospels there's often an obstacle that tests the people there. You might have heard a man called the "rich young ruler." Rich young ruler was young and rich and had a position of authority. And he walked up to Jesus one day and said, I want to follow you. Jesus said, okay, fine, sell all that you have and give it away and come follow me. It's the only time Jesus would say sell everything you have. He said it because that man was rich and he knew the man's heart was attached to his riches. So he said, You want to follow me? Start by dethroning your gods.

Sell it. Give it away. Follow me. He said, I can't do that. He loved his riches too much. That was the obstacle Jesus put in his path to see what would happen, to see if his faith was real.

Now there are other people. In fact, next time I'm with you, we'll look, Lord willing at a woman who wanted to get to Jesus, and she couldn't find her way to Jesus again because of a crowd. But she pressed through. She said, All I got to do is touch the hem of his garment and I'll be healed. And she was. She pressed through. Real faith presses through obstacles. It isn't easily thwarted or deterred.

And so, these men, because they have real faith in Jesus, the text says Jesus, seeing their faith addressed and so forth. So, they had faith, real faith. And so they go up and start tearing a hole in the roof.

Now, Briarwood is an impressive building. God has built this church in so many ways that I'm constantly impressed by. You know, I wander around between services, people just stop me. They tell me stories and they're so edifying about leaders past and service. And in the days passed and hope for the future. And one of the signs of that is people have given money to make a beautiful building. It's not the most important thing, but it counts. And I'm going to ask you to look up for a second and imagine that maybe through one of those little slots there, somebody is banging and crashing and debris starting to fall down in this section over here and you are going to scatter and go somewhere else. You don't want to get hit in the head and everybody's watching. Everything stops. Jesus is teaching and he's healing. But, you know, it's pretty dramatic when somebody is tearing a hole in the roof or doing something up there and eventually their plan becomes clear. You can look up, you can see them. Can you see the four of them up there? Look up there, you can see them. You see four heads up there. The others, there's some people up there. And then you see a stretcher coming down on ropes. And the plan begins to become clear. And here comes that paralytic being lowered down through the roof and the crowd gets quiet. There's still pieces of debris coming down. The dust motes are shimmering in the air. And now he is right in front of Jesus. Can you hear the ropes creak? Jesus saw their faith. He saw their faith, a faith that fights through obstacles. And he said, your sins are forgiven you. People said, What are you talking about? The forgiveness of sins right here, because the man needs to be forgiven. I want to pick that up but let's leave it right there for a minute.

I want to make sure we understand something. When Jesus saw their faith, he saw their faith in their action, that they were not thwarted by an obstacle. The obstacle meaning the crowd - real faith fights your obstacles.

Now it's almost mission's emphasis this week and I've got to tell you. Mission work is always work that fights through obstacles. Mission work is also work that makes people say sometimes, may God open a door. Now there's a reason for that. And many of these nations that we see represented by their flags and many of these nations, they're suspicious of Christianity. The nation is closed, but sometimes it opens up a little bit. Maybe there's a Christian somewhere in

some region of the country or somebody is open to new ideas and somehow it opens up. And so the missionaries will pray things like *May God open a door* -- That's a good prayer. And the Apostle Paul says something very much like that in chapter 16. And Paul is going to go to what we call Turkey today. But east the eastern direction, he was going to go that way and the Holy Spirit would not let him go there. He said, you got to go to Greece. This is the southeastern portion of Europe. I want the gospel to go to what we call Europe today. So who's compelled to go there? And he says, God opened a door for us to minister over in places like Philippon, Corinth and Athens. God opened the door. Sometimes Paul will pray. May you open a door, Lord, open a door for ministry. Open a door wide. But it's also true sometimes the door doesn't swing open. Sometimes you prove your faith by saying, we're just going to open a door. And sometimes you prove your faith by saying the door is closed. And I'm sure that any of you go through that door and I'm going to tear the door off the hinges. These people tore a hole in the roof because they were sure that God wanted them to bring their friend to Jesus.

Real faith says Lord, open the door. And real faith also says, I'm willing to tear the door off the hinges. Sometimes it's true in this church. It's true in the lives of most of you. Most of you will find a day when absolutely the door seems to be slammed in your face and you've got to persevere through it. That's the mark of faith. That's how we finish things in this world. You've got to think of your goals. Every meaningful goal that we'll ever face is going to present obstacles. You want to start a business? There are obstacles. Think of the founding fathers of America. You know that when the Founding Fathers decided to break free from Britain, you know that only about a third of the people in the colonies totally supported the effort. You know that, right? About one third said we're still English and another third said, I care about North Carolina or South Carolina or Georgia, but Massachusetts and New York, that's your problem up there. But they persevered in the task. That's the question. The rich young ruler did not persevere. The woman with a flow of blood instead of just going to touch Jesus, did persevere. Real faith perseveres.

Let's go back to this to this man. He's suspended in front of Jesus, and Jesus says to him, your sins are forgiven. And we read immediately that the Pharisees were troubled, irate, and they said he blasphemed. Now, why did they do that? Every reason to believe. Total stranger to Jesus. Right? They've never met before. How can Jesus say I forgive you? He's never done anything against Jesus. There's only one person who's offended by every sin. That's God. And when Jesus says, I forgive you, the Pharisees get it right away. Jesus is claiming to be God, not just a teacher, not a healer only, not just a man. He is a man, but he is God. God is the one who has the right to forgive all sins. Now humans can forgive sins if we wrong each other and we should. Priests could forgive sins, right? If they're offering a sacrifice in temple. But Jesus is not a priest. Their knowledge they don't know he's going to offer sacrifice of himself on the cross. So he's not a priest. It's man hasn't forgiven him. So he is saying, I identify with God. Who says I am? He. I am the one who blots out your transgressions.

I am the one who removes your sins. And they say blasphemers. Jesus, of course, knows this. He knows, by the way, that he's going to forgive sins and he's going to offer what the priests offer. Except better. He's not going to offer a sacrifice of animals. He's going to offer himself as a sacrifice for the cross. Jesus knows all these things.

He also knows what they're thinking. They're thinking he's a blasphemer. And Jesus asked them, Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Why are you entertaining these thoughts that I'm a blasphemer? And he asked him another question, which is easier to say *Your sins are forgiven*. That's four words. Or *get up and walk*. That's four words, which is easy to say. They're both just four words. And they're little words. We don't say much that are hard. Your sins are forgiven. Get up and walk. Very easy to say which one is easy to say. It's kind of easy to say your sins are forgiven because you can't really tell if it worked or not. Right? You can't be falsified. On the other hand, you can't be verified either to say, *get up and walk*. That's a little more risk. And that's what Jesus says. He says, I'm going to demonstrate to you that I have the authority that son of man has authority on Earth to forgive sins by saying get up and walk. Now, if this were a movie, it would be a long pause when you would wonder what would happen next.

Because what happens next determines if Jesus is God or if he's a blasphemer. We would say as Christians that the universe hangs in the balance at this moment. If Jesus is not who he says He is, the universe might as well fall apart. And maybe it would. Or if the man gets up and walks, we have a demonstration that Jesus is the one who has the right and the power and the authority to forgive sins.

And the text does not say there was a pregnant pause. The text says immediately the man got up and went home praising God. Right away we see Jesus authority and his power. He and his friends had faith. Jesus recognizes their faith, gives them what they want, and off they go. Now the crowd's are a different story. It says things like amazement sees them all.

It says they praise God, which means they recognize God should be praised and said, We've seen remarkable things today. We'd say today, that was amazing. I guess it also says over Matthew 9 that they praised God for giving such authority to men, meaning they didn't quite grasp what Jesus was. They said, amazing. Wow, that was quite a show.

There's a song that still gets played on the radio a little bit and it has a lyric. It's a kind of a song about Jesus. And the chorus goes like this: Jesus is just all right with me. Jesus is just all right. yeah. They labored over the last two words on that Jesus is all right. That's what a lot of people think.

Most people, even non-Christian people in America today would say Jesus was a great teacher, a great man, a wise man. I like to read the Sermon on the Mount, things of that nature. But it's not enough to be amazed. You have to commit like the men who lowered their friend through the roof about 300 years ago. It was an event that swept New England and New York called the Great Awakening.

Maybe you've heard of it. There was a period of time in our history, even before we became a nation, when there were a lot of churches that had gotten stale and moralistic and social in their nature. And then through the preaching of people like Jonathan Edwards, one of the great Christians of our country, there was a revival. They called it the Great Awakening at churches, that had very few conversions suddenly started to hear professions of faith and larger change of people repenting of their moralism. And once it hit Edward's church, it went to other churches sweeping everywhere. And it people got enthusiastic and they started to condemn other churches that didn't have awakenings. And they started to sort of express themselves too emotionally. And people said this isn't good. We don't like this. Too emotional. A little bit of criticism of moralism. We don't like this. And they said, Edwards, we all respect you. What do you think? He said, I agree that some people have gotten too emotional. I agree that some people have gotten critical. But this is from God.

Moralistic churches need to wake up. The churches have become social clubs and they need to wake up, and God has awakened the churches in this place, he said. Jesus says he was not for me. It's against me. You're either for or against. There's no in between. You can't say Jesus is all right and think that's fine with God. You can't say Jesus is a great teacher either for Jesus as He is in his fullness, in His deity, or you're not.

You're for or you're against. That's true for us as true everybody for everybody in this room. And I'm confident that the great majority of you have said, I'm with Jesus, and I hope every one of you says I'm with Jesus. I'm on his side as the one who has the power to forgive, since now, on that day, Jesus was tested.

Does he have the power to heal? Does he have the authority to forgive sins? The answer is yes, he does. And so his God and the man who came to be healed received God's salvation and received God's power. And they went home praising God and the rest were undecided. And you notice the crowd saw all the ministers of Jesus are in this mood often Jesus is good. We like him, He's exciting. But I'm not sure if I'm a follower. You know that many of the people who follow Jesus here and there said "Crucify him" later. So being well-disposed to Jesus is not the same thing as following him. Of course, it's also the Pharisees. They're a warning to us. They say he blasphemed. And after they said that in Jesus forgave sins of the man got up as proof.

What they should have said is, we're sorry, we repent, we understand who you are. And the text does not tell us that they were This passes. It's not say and they were solidified in their sins. But what we do see is the next couple of chapters, the Pharisees are angry with Jesus. They condemn him, they plot against him, they crumble against him because they don't take the evidence.

Friends, we need to take the evidence and believe and follow him. And one way to do that is by forgiving each other the way Jesus forgave that man. I don't know about you, but I'm one of those many people. Raise your hand if you agree with me. You don't have to raise your hand yet. I'm one of those many people who, at some point in my life have said, You know what? I'm

just never going to get angry again. Anybody else do that? I'm just said made a vow to yourself or to God I'm never getting angry again. But then your sleepless one night, if you got a baby, maybe you're sick, maybe you've got a worry. You wake up in the morning, get 2 hours of sleep, you're irritable. And then you somehow, another time, you miss a meal and you're not just hungry, you're hangry, right? So you lose your temper.

I read an account just a few days ago about a musician, but it has an odd name, very popular a few years ago, especially by few. Her name is Lourd and she's put out a couple of very popular albums. And so there's a debate. A woman was visiting her boyfriend and the boyfriend's roommate was there and they were debating whether her first album or second album was the best album she put out. And they're not debating a little. They're going at it and they just keep making the same point to get angrier and angrier and finally she snapped and said, This conversation is dumb. I don't want to have this conversation anymore. Let's do something different. And the roommate got up left, went to his room, slammed the door and never spoke to her again because she's toxic.

I don't know if you know this, but if you go to Twitter X or Instagram or Reddit or whatever, there are many articles about what to do when you meet a toxic person and the main counsel is cut them off. I have a couple quotations here, *there is no better self-care than cutting off people who are toxic for you*. Here's another quote *If someone hurt your feelings, you can get rid of them*. Here's the third one. Other people are not my problem. Forgive them? No, I'll cut them off. That's the way of the world. You offend me, I cut you off. That's our society today.

Jesus said, Love your enemies. Jesus said, forgive those who wronged you. Society right now says "hate your enemies and cut them off."

Now, not everybody says that. There's another approach. Another approach is to be resentful and kind of keep your distance and another approach is to grovel. You know, somebody says something that's perceived as insensitive or prejudicial -- an athlete or an entertainer politician. You could be cut off, but you could also go on an apology tour. I didn't realize how insensitive that was. I didn't know what I was saying. And I'm in training, I'm in sensitivity training, and I've donated money to this charity over here. So please, please, please forgive me. And if you grovel for six months, you may be forgiven.

That's another way we do it today. Jesus' way is better. He says your sins are forgiven. I have the right to tell you that I have the right to say those words because he knew I will earn the right to say those words on the cross. So I can say that to you. Your sins are forgiven, and we forgive others. And that doesn't mean we're great fools. You know, somebody borrows your car for an hour and they keep it for two and a half weeks and they say, please forgive me. You say I forgive you, but I want my car back. By the way, next time they ask to borrow your car for an hour, you're allowed to say no. Or if they're prone to ask you over and over to borrow your car, you might just hide your keys somewhere so they can't borrow your car for weeks again. But you forgive from the heart. You don't keep anger in your heart toward this person.

Let me just make sure we go back to our passage one more time. There's a passage that describes a day of power in Jesus' life. Power to heal, power to forgive. Power is coming forth. And some people said, I've got to get next to that power, that power of Christ. I'm going to find him and receive what I need and get even more those people who had real faith got everything they wanted and more. And then to the crowds who said, wow, but they weren't committed.

And then there's a Pharisees who said he blasphemed and did not say, I was wrong. We need to put ourselves in the story. I hope you put yourselves in the story in the right place, in the in the place of those who come to Jesus with an awareness of your need and an awareness that He might even know better than you now, a desire not just for one thing you want, but for his power in your life.

Power was present with Jesus that day, and with those five men, there was power present to heal. And I hope you also want the power of God today.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this marvelous moment that you've given us in the Gospel of Luke for that day when great things were happening, and your power, Lord Jesus and your deity and your mercy and grace were so evident. May we live in your power, in your grace, lives of faith. Now Lord, receive our praise that we offer to you in the next few minutes and then throughout our lives, as we leave this place. We ask you in Jesus' name, Amen.