

April 7, 2024

“Faith of the Persistent”
Lesson 1

Luke 5:17-26

Intro

Today begins the second unit of study in our spring quarter theme of “Examining Our Faith”. This month we will be considering things that can indicate “The Measure of Faith”, that show what faith looks like in practice. Our lesson comes from Luke 5, a story which is also recorded in Mark 2 and Matthew 9. In the story, some friends work together to help another friend get the help he needs from Jesus. The way they do this indicates their great faith that Jesus can indeed help their friend.

Read Luke 5:17-26

1. vs. 17: Jesus is teaching “one day”, witnessed by Pharisees and teachers of the law

This likely is not on a Sabbath, since nothing He does is called a violation of the Sabbath
No one accuses Him of this offense, so the day is likely any day except the Sabbath

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law are very strict in their interpretations

The Pharisees oppose Jesus almost every time he does or says something

These religious leaders have come from Judea and Jerusalem

They have walked approximately 80 miles to see Jesus in Galilee!

This was likely a 3-4 day journey, one way

This distance indicates they are determined to thoroughly check Jesus out

Jesus’ ability to heal the sick is a fulfillment of one of the Messianic prophecies

Jesus has quoted Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4, indicating that He is fulfilling those prophecies

2. vs. 18: Some men come carrying their friend on a stretcher

The man is paralyzed, showing he can do nothing to help himself here

These men are acting as friends should, selflessly helping one who needs their help

Mark’s gospel says there were 4 men; Luke’s version here doesn’t say a number

3. vs. 19: Verse 17 showed the determination of the Pharisees to investigate Jesus

This verse shows the determination of the men to help their friend

First-century houses in this region typically had flat roofs

There were various tasks and options for the use of this space

Exterior steps or ladders or both were present to allow access to the roof

Whether stairs or ladders, getting a man on a stretcher on the roof would be difficult

That the men did this shows their faith and commitment in this task

Lowering the man through the roof would have required ropes

This indicates serious advance preparation on the part of these friends

4. vs. 20: Jesus saw their faith

Jesus can see hearts and minds, where humans can only see exterior actions

He sees their hearts and their actions

He may say this to show the others the actions of faith in these men

The faith Jesus sees very likely refers to the faith of the paralyzed man as well

He was just as likely to believe that Jesus could help him and to seek Him out

Jesus calls the paralyzed man “friend”

Luke’s account uses this word from Greek

The word used in Matthew and Mark can be translated “son”

In either case, this word is a term of endearment and closeness

Jesus also announces that this man’s sins are forgiven

That likely wasn’t the first thing the man was seeking in coming to Jesus

It also wasn’t something the others present expected Jesus to do

This becomes evident in the following verses

However, it is consistently with Jesus that the inner spiritual is most important

That condition needs to be taken care of over the physical needs

5. vs. 21: Here the Pharisees present begin to question who Jesus is

Jesus has said in vs. 20 that the paralyzed man’s sins are forgiven

That leads them to say, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

They are partly right here; only sins against God can be forgiven by God

In the NT though, we are taught to forgive sins committed by another

They also ask a question which shows they understand what Jesus’ words are implying

“Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy?”

To claim to forgive sins is to claim to be God—which Jesus is

To forgive sins as God when you are not God is blasphemy

This is the “crime” which they accuse and convict Jesus of when crucified

This passage shows the first organized opposition to Jesus in Luke’s gospel

6. vs. 22: Jesus was able to see the faith of the paralyzed man and his friends

Here he is able to see the doubt in the thinking of the Pharisees

They have been thinking the thoughts in vs. 21; they don’t seem to be spoken aloud

Jesus asks them, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?”

This ability to read people’s thoughts and hearts shows Jesus to be God, and not human

Jesus asks a question of his audience, which he will use as the starting point for teaching

This technique was used often by Jesus throughout the gospels

7. vs. 23: Jesus asks the Pharisees a significant question

“Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’”

He has done one of them, telling the man his sins are forgiven

Both of these actions are beyond what a man can do; they are God actions

If Jesus can do one, then he can do the other as well

His ability to do either or both prove that He is God

8. vs. 24: Jesus takes the next step in developing His proof of authority

He will heal the paralyzed man, in addition to forgiving his sins

He tells them, “I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority...to forgive sins”

This is the reason the apostles were allowed to have healing powers

This action is a sign that the message being given is divine, not man-made

So Jesus tells the man, “Get up, take your mat and go home”

9. vs. 25: The verse begins with the word “immediately”

As soon as Jesus spoke the command to get up, the man was healed

Nowhere in this account did Jesus touch the man, though he does this at other times

Jesus’ word alone brings healing to this man

The man stood up “in front of them”—everyone saw the physical change that happened

In Biblical times, 2 or 3 witnesses were required to prove an event was true

Luke’s account shows that there were far more than 2-3 witnesses who saw this

This verse shows that Jesus had both the authority and the power of God

Authority is the right to do something

Power is the ability to do something

Jesus had and showed both these qualities when he healed the paralyzed man

The man heads home, walking, praising God for healing him

10:vs. 26: Several reactions are noted here

The witnesses are amazed, they praise God, and they are filled with awe

The verse says that “Everyone” was amazed—this suggests the Pharisees also

This is the only NT verse where amazement, praise to God, and fear occur together

These reactions indicate that everyone is still processing what has happened

They need some time to come to a conclusion

The last phrase has them saying, “We have seen remarkable things today”

They don’t acknowledge Jesus as God, but they don’t dismiss Him either

They seem to be in state of confused neutrality, not knowing what to think

Application: Today’s lesson is titled, “Faith of the Persistent”. The actions of the paralyzed man’s friends are at the center of this lesson. Who knows how long they have been carrying their friend around on his bed? When Jesus comes, they believe He can help their friend, and they find a way to get him close to Jesus. They put their faith into action. Consider how physically difficult and time-consuming it was to carry their friend, get him on the roof, tear a hole in the roof, and lower him down so he was right in front of Jesus. They could have done other things with their day. That is certainly true of us. We have a great deal more leisure time than a majority of the people who have lived before us. We are called to consider what it takes to be a genuine friend, and what we can do to assist a friend in need.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for the friends we have to help us in this life. We ask you to help us be in kind of friend who will carry our friend’s burdens when they need our help. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

