Questions on Luke 5vv12-26

Getting started

1. Please think about one of the biggest challenges you have faced in your life so far. How **willing** did you feel about facing that particular challenge, and what gave you confidence that you would be able to meet it, get through it and even thrive in the process?

*Today we’re continuing to watch Jesus ‘at work’, and will examine how he identified the real needs of 2 people brought to him, and what he was able to do to meet those needs, how he can meet our needs… Please read Luke 5vv12-26.*

Into the text

1. What do you know about the plight of lepers in Jesus’ day? [Look through Leviticus 13 and 14, especially 13v45 for some background]
2. How would you describe the way in which the leper approaches Jesus (v12) and Jesus’ attitude to him (v13)?
3. What does this miracle imply about the powers of Jesus? [ Numbers 12v10-16, 2 Kings 5]
4. What does Jesus instruction to the man to go to the priest reveal about him? [see eg Leviticus 13v1-8]
5. Turning to the healing of the paralytic (vv17-26), what would the crowds, the disciples, the man himself and the religious leaders have expected Jesus to say, given v17?
6. What do Jesus’ words in v20, imply about this man’s most pressing need?
7. Why do the religious leaders get so agitated by his response? (v21) Are they right to reason like that?
8. What is the answer to Jesus’ conundrum in v22?
9. What is the link between the claim Jesus made and the healing he then performed? (v24)
10. Imagine you had been in the crowd that observed this miracle, what do you think it would have made you conclude about Jesus?

Thinking it through

1. Imagine that the paralysed man was interviewed now in Heaven? Which was the most important miracle that Jesus performed for him that day? Why?
2. What is the most important miracle that Jesus has done for you to date? Have you heard and are still trusting his words ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven’?
3. As you think about your friends who don’t share your faith, or others around you, or people you read about in the newspapers, what does v20 reveal to be their biggest need?
4. Have you ever thought of yourself as being like one of the friends taking their mate to Jesus (v18). Given Jesus is no longer physically here with us, how can we do that this Easter?

Some prayer suggestions

* For Christians, the challenge of these incidents is to **trust and take**. Keep on trusting the Lord Jesus who ‘loves us, and has freed us from our sins by his blood’ (Rev 1v5). Keep on taking him to others, and supporting others who take him to the world…
* For those who aren’t yet Christians, the challenge is to see their real problem, and to see in Jesus one who offers to free them from it, and reconcile them to God.

**Luke 5vv12-26**

All age talk

I’d like to take you this morning to the **doctor’s surgery**… (Image of doctor’s practice)

I’m sure that most of us will have had to go there at some time in our life

You don’t feel very well, and off you go with mum or dad to the doctors!

There, the kind doctor will ask you some questions, examine you- maybe using one of these – a stethoscope [Prop], and once he or she has worked out what’s wrong, they may give you some medicine [Prop] to make you better, and pretty soon you’ll be well again

That happens each day- indeed about 27 million GP appointments in January in our country

Well today, we’re going to think about 2 men who were ill, and they went to see NOT a doctor, but Jesus. [Who’d like to be those people? Who Jesus?]

One of them had a terrible skin disease [image of man with leprosy – not too gruesome]. When people saw him, they ran away from him cos they were so worried about catching it from him. He had to live all on his own, and if he ever saw anyone he had to cry out ‘Unclean, Unclean’ and they ran away. How miserable his life must have been!

But Jesus DIDN’T run away from him. He touched him, and his skin was instantly cured. No medicine, no creams, Jesus touch brought instant and complete cleansing to his body. Goodness, he must have been happy!

The 2nd patient came to Jesus in a very different way. He couldn’t use his legs at all. He was paralysed, and brought to Jesus on a mat. But because there was such a crowd around Jesus, his friends couldn’t actually get him to Jesus. They could have just given up, but they didn’t. They had a cunning plan. They took their friend up to the roof of the house Jesus was in, and started sawing through the roof.

Imagine you were there, trying to listen to Jesus, but you heard tap tap tap above you, the sawing through of wood, and then suddenly above you was daylight, and there on his mat was this poor chap who couldn’t walk [prop kid on mat/ stretcher] brought right in front of Jesus

Now, boys and girls, what might you expect Jesus to say and do for this man?

(Think what he said to man with the skin disease)

Get up, walk, be healed

And yet the great surprise is that he doesn’t say that.

He says (speech bubble) ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven ‘

Isn’t that interesting? Jesus says that this man’s ‘sins’ are his biggest problem- even worse than having legs that don’t work.

Jesus would say to us, whatever our age, that our biggest problem is not our health, or how good we are at our lessons at school or work, not our money, or lack of it, but our sins.

‘Sins’ is a hard word for us to understand, so see if this helps. Boys and girls, just imagine that you have been told to go to your head teacher’s room, cos he wants to see you. When you arrive, you knock on the door, and go in. He’s not there, so you go in, and you decide to go and sit in his chair [Child sitting in an impressive chair in front of a desk], eat his biscuits and use his phone. The suddenly he comes in, and you know you’re in trouble!

Well sins are when we treat God in the way that child treated his headteacher. Not respecting him, not doing what he says, and treating his things as ours

The bad news is that ALL of us have sinned

The good news is that Jesus has come to forgive us our sins

I hope that all of us – whether in the Hall or in Church - will listen and think about this , and say a big sorry to God for our sins and a big thank you to Jesus for dealing with those sins for us

[Confession]

Sermon

On 6 May, this man [image of King Charles] will be facing the most important day of his life.

In front of a packed crowd at Westminster Abbey, and a global audience of billions, he will be asked whether he is willing to serve as our King. Since he’s been waiting for this moment for over 70 years, I think we’d be surprised if he said ‘No’ 😊. He’s ‘up’ for this big challenge, and we need to pray for him that God will grant him to faith, wisdom and energy to do it well.

It’s not just the King who faces big challenges. A friend of mine was asked to head up his accountancy firm’s business in the whole of Asia. That will keep him up in the night😊

Or I think of another couple who have 12 children- I can’t even think of what it must be like to parent a tribe like that well😊

Or I think of one of our newer members, Ian, who is abseiling down Arundel Castle in a fortnights time to raise funds for our local children’s hospital. Well done Ian for being up for that challenge, one that gives me the collywobbles just imagining it😊

Well, this morning we’re going to think about the way Jesus approaches the most difficult tasks imaginable.

* How to **cleanse** us human beings from the sin that dwells in all our hearts, and separates us from a Holy God;
* How to **reunite** us humans deeply and permanently and joyfully with God

These are huge tasks – far more intricate than bringing peace between countries like Ukraine and Russia. This is a global task, an eternal one.

What I hope we’ll see today is that Jesus is both WILLING and ABLE to perform this great task, one that should being us reassurance and joy in our hearts.

Let’s see how the two incidents in our passage show us that Jesus is up for this challenge and gloriously able to perform it successfully

Do turn to our passage- Luke 5 (xxxx) – of your Bibles, and let’s look first at Jesus’ dealing with the leper in vv12-16

Leprosy (please repeat the image of the leper from the all age slot) was a **horrible condition**

Not only was it embarrassing cos you looked pretty unsightly;

Not only was it uncomfortable , with all the itching sores;

It was also highly contagious, and that I’m sure lay behind the strict regulations about serious skin infections in the OT book of Leviticus

Ch 13 and 14 of that book lay down rules about the role of the priest to certify whether the person was still infectious or clean.

If infectious, the person had to live outside the camp where his or her fellow believers lived, and if they came into contact with anyone , they had to shout out ‘unclean, unclean’ so as to warn the other of the risk they posed.

Can you imagine many more horrible conditions – embarrassing, uncomfortable and isolating.

It must have led many sufferers to a deep despair since in the whole OT period, there are only 2 incidents where a leper is healed, that’s Miriam and Naaman, and on both those occasions it was clear that God was at work to bring this healing.

So, here in v12 we have a leper approaching Jesus.[Image of leper prostate before Jesus, on bottom of screen] We can perhaps imagine the scene with the crowd around Jesus thinning out with parents shielding their kids, and everyone running for cover.

The leper himself must realise that his action in approaching this holy man was bold, and so he comes to Jesus on his knees, face down, begging for mercy. There’s none of the self confidence of a respectable man like Nicodemus here, he knows he needs to come to Jesus on his knees.

On his knees, for sure, but there’s a lovely confidence here that he expresses about Jesus’ power, (Speech bubble above from the leper’s mouth

‘Lord, IF you are willing,

you can make me clean.’)

Is then Jesus willing – that’s the big question

And look at some of the most wonderful words in the whole Bible, there in v13.

Jesus touches this poor guy – perhaps the first human touch he’d had in years and said

(Replace words in speech bubble with

‘I AM willing

Be clean’

And **immediately** the leprosy left this man. No antibiotics. No creams were necessary. The power of Jesus was so total that one of the nastiest diseases known to humanity was removed with just 2 words – ‘Be clean’

And this incident is really helpful for us today, for it reveals to us at least 2 characteristics of Jesus, his love and his power

Perhaps you sometimes wonder whether Jesus really loves you, especially when you are painfully conscious of your failures to live for him, and are a bit overwhelmed by the pressures you face in life.

Remember the tender touch of Jesus upon this man’s ravaged body – he cared for him enough to reach out to him, assuring him of his willingness to make him clean

Perhaps you doubt the power of Jesus to address your main problems and challenges. Remember the immediate cleansing that came to this man.

Remember that practical concern Jesus showed to get his cleansing authenticated by the priest so that the man could re- enter the community of faith.

**‘I AM WILLING’** says Jesus to do all that you need to be cleansed – cleansed for this man from the curse of leprosy, a cleansing that points forward to the cleansing Jesus wants to bring to our souls from the impurity of sin. That’s what we learn from the way Jesus dealt with this man…

Well, let’s turn to the 2nd man whose life was touched by Jesus, we see him in vv17-26. We’re not given his name, or which village he came from. All we are told about him is that he was paralysed.

That surely makes us realise how difficult his life must have been. He couldn’t walk anywhere. He was totally dependent on others to move him around. He is unlikely to have been able to hold down a job, and without any benefits structure, he would have relied on the charity of his family and his village.

He had nothing, humanly speaking, but he DID have some good friends. Friends who had heard about the extraordinary powers of Jesus, and wanted to bring their mate to him to be cured

Good friends. Resourceful friends, so when they saw that it was hard to get their friend to Jesus, they thought ‘outside the box’. They went up on the roof and mole like, bored down through the roof and then gently lowered their friend on his mat before the feet of Jesus

It must have been quite a moment – and we can perhaps imagine the hopefulness in the man’s eyes as he gazes up at Jesus (Image of paralysed man on floor before Jesus)

Jesus opens his mouth and says [speech bubble: ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven.’]

Just imagine what was going through the minds of everyone in the house that day

Doubtless the owner of the house wanted to go and ring Direct Line to register the damage to the house

The man on the mat would have looked a bit disappointed

Jesus disciples would have been surprised – ‘Oh no,’ they have thought ‘Jesus has had a senior moment! Maybe he’s mixed up this guy with one of those scummy tax collectors in the street?’

‘Jesus- it’s his pins - not his sins - that are the problem 😊’

We don’t know for sure about the reaction of the householder or the paralysed man or Jesus’ disciples, we can only guess..

What we do know is the reaction of the religious leaders who’ve swooped in from across the country to observe Jesus at close quarters to see what they make of him

And v21 records **their** reaction to Jesus’ words. They are appalled because it seems to them the height of arrogance for any man, however powerful, to claim to forgive sins. That is not anything we can do, only God can.

And in a sense – you know – they are quite right….

Imagine that this morning you came into church in a bit of a stew saying ‘Mark, I bumped into that new Rolls Royce in the church car park.’ And how would it be if I said ‘Don’t worry, I forgive you’ Well it would be totally wrong for me to do that since the only person who can forgive you your clumsiness is the owner of the Roller, and that ain’t me!’

That’s the point the religious big wigs are making. ‘Sins’ are first and foremost an offence against God, so only he can forgive them. For a human to claim to be God is a terrible offence, a blasphemy against God

So **how** does Jesus react to their charge against him?

Does he ‘put up hands’ and say ‘Ah yes, you’ve got me there- sorry for my delusions of grandeur. Please accept my apologies..’

NO! Jesus responds to their criticism with a question. He asks them to answer this question. [Speech bubble- ‘Is it easier to say to someone ‘Your sins are forgiven’ OR ‘Get up and walk’?]

I wonder what **you’d** say to that question…

On the one hand it must surely be easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven’ because there’s no way anyone can really know whether our sins have really been forgiven. It’s as clear as the nose on your face whether an instruction to Get up and walk’ has been successful cos they get up and walk.

On the other hand, it’s not possible really for any mere human being to forgive anyone their sins, since this is God’s business whereas doctors can do extraordinarily clever things to bring a degree of healing to our bodies!

It’s a bit of a teaser, a conundrum

I guess the honest answer is that NEITHER are easy.

It’s impossible for a mere mortal either to bring instant and complete healing of or bodies and forgiveness of our sins.

Only God can really bring these things about is how the religious bigwigs should have replied

So look then with me at a really important verse v 26

Jesus says

‘But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.’

Jesus is saying that he’s about to do something that will demonstrate once for all that he IS that character described in the OT, one like a Son of Man, whom God will appoint as his ruler over all people for all eternity. This character will be God and therefore able even to forgive people their sins.

So , Jesus now turns back to the paralysed man and says to him ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’

As with the leper earlier , there must have been a pause, a gasp, as people waited to see whether Jesus could pull off what he’d claimed or whether he’d end up looking very foolish indeed!

But see what happens – v25 Immediately he stood up (image of paralysed man now standing) and is able to go back to his family praising God..

The people who witnessed this miracle also were amazed and praised God saying ‘We have seen remarkable things today.’

Yes they really had!

And the point of this miracle is that it further demonstrate Jesus amazing authority.

He’s not some stage magician able to do a few clever tricks.

He really is God in flesh, and his miracles prove conclusively that he is able to bring us complete forgiveness of our sins – sins past, sins present and sins we’ll commit next week, next month, next year.

He is able to save us from the power of sin, and grant unto us total forgiveness, a new vibrant relationship with God as one of his precious children, and a rock solid confidence about our future in Heaven.

Indeed, we can perhaps put together the healings of the leper and the paralysed man in this way:-

[Image of Jesus] says to us through the leper [Speech bubble to LHS of Jesus ‘I am willing’ to cleanse you]. And through the paralysed man, Jesus says to us [Speech bubble to RHS of Jesus ‘I am able’ to forgive you]

Together these two healings are so helpful for our faith. They teach us that we CAN trust Jesus totally. He loves us, and lays his hand tenderly upon us, saying ‘I am willing’ to cleanse you from all your impurities. His power to heal even a paralysed man shows that his claim to forgive us is not hot air, but marvellously true

As we come up to the Communion table in a few minutes, we can come with total confidence that all that separated us from God is now dealt with, and we can approach God with faith, peace , joy and hope.

We can leave through those glass doors commissioned to be like those friends who carried their mate to Jesus.

It’s a wonderful theme for those of us who are already followers of Jesus

But it’s also a glorious theme for those who are presently just looking at the character and claims of Jesus. Together the leper and paralysed man, who have been enjoying sweet communion with Jesus in Heaven for the last 2000 years- speak to us

You can have joys even deeper than clean skin and limbs that work. You can approach with confidence the God who made you for himself. Jesus says to you ‘I am willing’ to do that for you, and ‘I am able’ to make it happen.

[Prayer]