

**Sermon Title: "With Jesus, Expect the Unexpected" Series: "Good News" A Sermon Series Through Luke
Pastor Dave Sattler November 1, 2015 Text: Luke 5:12-26, Jesus Heals a Leper & a Paralytic**

Sources: NIV Life App Bible; Commentaries by Bock, Green, & Wright; Study Guide by Lucado; J.R.R. Tolkien; The Spice Girls.

Review & Introduction:

- Good morning, everyone. I'm Dave Sattler, continuing our Series through Luke, "Good News."
- And it's spreading throughout the nation of Israel.
- A man from Nazareth is teaching -- outdoors, in synagogues, & gathering places.
- **<Slide>** And, unexpected things are 'shaking down': miracles, deliverances, people getting healed.
- Scriptures taught and 1st Century Jews believed "healing would accompany messianic days."
- Could it be, Messiah?! And He's attracting crowds ... of spectators and followers.
- Just last week this carpenter-turned-miracle-worker visited fishermen on the Sea of Galilee.
- Exercising power over nature, He gave them the greatest catch of their lives.
- Yet in an instant, their livelihoods meant nothing to them anymore.
- Surprisingly, Simon Peter, James, & John "left everything and followed [Jesus.]" (5:11)
- **<Slide>** ILL - One thing I've learned in my journey with Jesus? **Expect the Unexpected.**
 - When I pray for what I think I really need, Jesus answers with something else.
 - When I have it all planned out, Jesus tosses in a 'wrench,' that throws off my timing.
 - Just when I think I've got Him figured, He reveals yet another facet of His character.
 - Or, right when I'm ready to pack it in, Jesus shows up. Quite surprisingly.
 - And leads me in an entirely unexpected direction.
- **<Slide>** ILL - I love the scene in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit ... when that motley crew of dwarves & hobbits are facing their fears -- about to embark on their unexpected journey.
 - And an impetuous dwarf turns to a nervous hobbit and says ...
 - Q: "You will have to manage without pocket-handkerchiefs and a good many other things, before you get to the journey's end." - Dwalin, in The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey.
- APP - Not unlike our journey with Jesus. Never easy. It challenges our attachments to things.
- And. Never boring. With Jesus, unexpected stuff happens all the time!
- **<Slide>** Which leads us to today's passage. Please turn to Luke Ch 5:12-26 on your electronic device or p 835-36 in the blue Bibles in the seat-rack in front of you.
- Our author is a physician, story-teller, & theologian. Introducing many diverse and interesting characters -- we'll meet a few more today -- he offers important details about their lives.
- Dr Luke is concerned his audience sees how Jesus interacts with every sort of person.
- Here in Luke 5, it's clear a big part of Jesus' salvation work is healing.
- He's come to release people from the physical ailments that plague their lives.
- <READ Luke 5:12-26> Prayer: "God, control me by Your Spirit. Move me out' the way."

Narrative Outline:

<Slide> Miracle 1, Scene 1: Unclean! (5:12).

- Jesus is teaching in a town when a man riddled with skin problems comes along.
- His "leprosy" is foremost a social disease.
- ILL - Now I don't want claim to know how this man feels, but I too have had my own skin issues.
 - As a teenager, I hid in my room fretting over the physical and social pain caused by acne.
 - Recently I have battled eczema and experienced much of God's healing!
 - But, there have been times when I've felt embarrassed, like hiding ... when going out in public means awkward looks, questions, comments. When shaking hands just hurts.
- So what is this man doing in town? People are petrified of him. His sickness marginalizes him.
- If his family hasn't disowned him, the man likely rarely sees them.
- Even if they leave him food outside their door now and then, they certainly never stick around when he comes to pick it up. Likely in the middle of the night. When no one else is out.
- And for good reason. What he has is highly contagious. There's no cure for it in the ancient world.
- He is quarantined with other lepers in their own colony safe distance away.

- And, having leprosy, he's required by Jewish law to announce, "Unclean! Unclean!" every time he comes around other people who do not also have it. However, no mention of that here.
- To approach Jesus "covered" with disease would have taken tremendous courage.
- And to believe Jesus could heal him?! Huge faith.
- Shameless, the man falls to the ground and begs, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."
- I love how he asks. His request exhibits a humble dependence on Jesus.
- But also deference -- without demand, open to the will of Jesus above his own.
- APP - Important, God doesn't always promise to give us exactly what we're asking for.
- Seeing the whole picture, God's will is often something other.
- And it's good to approach God open-handed with that in mind.

<Slide> **Miracle 1, Scene 2: Touch (5:13-14)**

- Like AIDS/HIV in the 1980's & 90's or Ebola in Africa today, lots of terror surrounded leprosy.
- Lepers were society's 'untouchables.'
- ILL - Think for moment of the sheer power of human touch:
 - A handshake, a Hi-5, hug, kiss, an embrace.
 - These regular gestures form the basis of our communication and relationships.
 - A psychologist in the 1960's did a study on friends in different parts of the world.
 - Observing as they sat together in a cafe, he noted that in England, friends typically touched each other 0 times in an hour. In the USA, it was 2 times. But in France, the number shot up to 110 times. And in Puerto Rico, friends generally touched each other 180 times per hour! - Sidney Jourard Research, c.1960
 - Scientists assert, Q: "Touch provides its own language of compassion, a language that is essential to what it means to be human." - Dacher Keltner, Greater Good, c.2010.
 - The infamous Spice Girls even weighed in on this in their c.1997 hit song,
 - Q: "Stop right Now, Thank you very much, I need somebody with the human touch."
 - And I believe it was Michelangelo who said, Q: "To touch can be to give life."
 - So much life-giving love is conveyed through simple human touch.
- Likely no one has touched him in years. When Jesus, undeterred, "reaches out & touches the man."
- This causes Jesus to become 'ceremonially unclean' and disqualified from religious practice for a time. Not only that, Jesus risks contracting the infectious disease Himself!
- By violating Jewish Law, was Jesus here ushering in a whole new way of thinking?
- The widely-held notion was that 'sacred' mustn't touch 'unclean' or it becomes contaminated.
- Now, here, when 'holy' touches 'unholy,' the 'unclean' is made 'clean' again!
- With an unexpected touch, Jesus' healing power 'infected' the man. His love and acceptance flowed through that leper like a cold drink on a hot day. "Immediately the leprosy left him."
- Set free from the illness that ravaged his body and ostracized him from society!

<Slide> **Jesus often Withdrew & Prayed (5:15-16)**

- Rise in popularity threatens to sidetrack Jesus from His mission. How does He respond?
- "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." (16) Luke notes this several times.
- We can't pass this over. Even Jesus needed to steal away to rest, to re-charge, to spend time alone with His Father -- to be reminded of who He was (a dearly loved Son) and what He'd come to do.
- Jesus gets away. Strengthens Himself for the road ahead, so He has something to offer to people.

<Slide> **Miracle 2, Scene 1: Watching (5:17)**

- Word's "spread" all the way to Jerusalem. Perhaps the leper has told his healing story to a priest.
- Here's the first mention of organized opposition to Jesus -- a theme common in the rest of Luke.
- 'Better check it out!' A contingent of "Pharisees and teachers of the law" were now watching Jesus' every move. These guys acted like the 'temple-police.' It was their job to protect Jewish religious tradition being threatened by another 'lunatic' who had people flocking to Him in Galilee.
- So they came from near and far ... to find this guy, to pressure Him, to 'clean up the mess!'

<Slide> Miracle 2, Scene 2: Barriers (5:18-19)

- While Jesus was teaching "some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat."
- Think about the barriers this man faced.
- There weren't social programs or income assistance for the disabled in Bible times.
- The paralyzed were often abandoned by family -- discarded, left to beg for daily bread.
- Making matters worse, "because of the crowd," there was no way for this man to get to Jesus.
- Nevertheless, his friends were persistent. Perhaps they too had recently experienced the touch of this miracle-healer. Nothing could stop them from delivering their friend to Jesus.

<Slide> Miracle 2, Scene 3: Roof Caves In (5:20-24a)

- Then, the roof caves in and "Jesus sees their faith." Reality is: Jesus is always 'sniffing out' faith, looking to act on even the smallest bit of trust. Remarkable the impact of the friends' faith.
- Jesus' response? Unexpected. Immediately He 'humanizes' the man ... calls him 'friend' in a way disabled people rarely would have encountered in that day. Then he says, "your sins are forgiven."
- How do the friends react? 'Uh Jesus, that's not what we came here for! Can't you see? Our friend is crippled, You can make him walk again. C'mon, Jesus! That's why we busted this roof down.'
- While Jesus has bigger ideas: 'You ask for healing but see the more pressing need: forgiveness of sins. Paralysis may alienate you from people. But sin separates you from God.'
- Then, an interruption. Rumbblings in the crowd, 'Only God can forgive sins, and the way God does it is through the temple sacrifice system we've been running for 100's of years.' Jesus knows their thoughts -- 'Who does He think He is?!' -- and engages the 'watch-dogs' with a question:
 - "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'"
- No clear answer. Logic suggests it's easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' because that's an internal thing. No one can see if it's actually happened.
- At the same time, only God has authority to forgive sins, so not too many qualify to do that job!

<Slide> Miracle 2, Scene 4: Get Up! (5:24b-26)

- Saying, "Get up and walk" isn't easy either. So Jesus does the hard thing: displays His power to heal, to also prove He has the authority to do the even harder thing: **forgive people's sins**.
- Of course, this meant Jesus was putting Himself in the place of God, which is blasphemy, punishable by death, and would ultimately put Jesus on trial for His life.
- APP - As He still is: Where do you put Jesus? This same Jesus of Nazareth stands on trial today: Was/is He ... a liar, a lunatic, or, Lord of all? A good teacher, a wise prophet, or, God Himself?
- This is still the question. What will you do with Jesus?
- Then, "immediately he stood up in front of them."
- Set free from paralysis. Released to "go home" again. Healed. The image of this man now able to walk is but another beautiful picture of what Jesus does when He saves us. We are liberated!
- Amazed, most conclude this about the identity of Jesus: here is God in the midst of us!
- Having witnessed, with Jesus, another unexpected event, "Everyone ... gave praise to God."
- The purpose of divine healing? God receives the glory!

Conclusions: Let's conclude with a few application points from the narrative today.

1. <Slide> Jesus Has the Authority to Forgive Sins.

- This timeless truth is often lost on us.
- Few live today with the conscious feeling or weight of our own sinfulness before God.
- The highly-valued modern idea that 'humans are basically good' blocks us from seeing our need.
- Even the man in our story must have balked at Jesus' first words, to forgive his sins.
- Q: 'That's not what I came here for.' 'But that's what you so desperately need,' Jesus says.
- Long before this, the prophet Zechariah envisioned Messiah coming ...
 - To do something we could never do for ourselves.
 - Q: "On that day a fountain will be opened ... to cleanse them from their sin." - Cf. Zechariah 13:1.
 - This same Jesus would go to a Roman cross, and willingly lay His life down to pay the punishment for our sins, to set us free from our slavery to sin, and make new life possible!
- Truth is: without Jesus, there is no forgiveness of sins. And no pathway forward for any of us.

- APP - Perhaps today you're living with a heavy sense that you're a sinner.
- Maybe you've even hid behind that, 'played that card,' believed Jesus would never accept you.
- And you've kept your distance. Continued living with your sin. Even become comfortable in it.
- Jesus, Who forgives all matter of sin, is calling you today. Come to Him. For forgiveness.
- APP - Or maybe you've been shaken from your pride a bit recently -- from believing you don't really need God. You might need other stuff, but surely not God.
- And God longs to bring you back to that wonderful place where you see:
 - You're a sinner in need of a Saviour AND Jesus loves you more than you could ever imagine!
- Cf. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will **forgive us our sins** and purify us from all unrighteousness." This is what makes the bad news, 'I'm a sinner,' such good news. Jesus forgives hopeless sinners. Like you, and me.

2. <Slide> Our Faith Impacts Others.

- I think it's intentional the first 3 specific healing miracles in Luke's Gospel involve:
 - 1) Peter's mother-in-law -- a woman, 2) a leper, and 3) a paralytic.
- Jesus is presented as Q: "both able and willing to cross conventional boundaries ... to bring the good news." - Green, p 238. Oh, how I love this! Could be, because of circumstance, you feel on the margins of society today. Know this: Jesus always has time for the 'outsider.'
- He "touches" an untouchable and calls a disabled outcast, "Friend."
- This is what Jesus does. And, this is what we, His people, are to do too.
- ILL - You've likely heard the recent story of Dr Kent Brantly, American missionary to Africa.
 - In 2014, Brantly somehow contracted the often-fatal Ebola and nearly died.
 - Prior to that, out of faithfulness to God's call, rather than return home, he chose to stay in Liberia, a disease 'warzone' to continue to offer compassionate care to dying people.
 - I wonder how much the people he treated appreciated Dr Brantly's touch.
- BQ: Are we willing to risk going to the hard places in our world to bring the healing touch of Jesus?
- We're called as Christ-followers to go beyond our natural reach: to the homeless, the drunk, the elderly, the new immigrant, the disabled, the sick & dying. Every person is worth it.
- When Jesus looks at someone He sees a person of value -- nothing less. So should we.
- APP - Like the friends in our story, our faith can have profound affect on family, friends, & neighbours. Let's be looking for opportunities to 'deliver them' to Jesus. It's often in times of unexpected loss: divorce, financial hardship, sickness, when people are most open.
- We can't actually turn peoples' hearts on to Jesus (that's the Holy Spirit's job), but we can point others in His direction. Sometimes it even requires 'roof-breaking' measures.
- ILL - Not long ago, a woman in our church boldly invited her non-Christian friend,
 - A young mom with cancer, to come to church to be prayed for. It was beautiful.
 - Along with a few others, we laid hands on her and prayed for the healing of Jesus.

3. <Slide> Jesus Has the Power to Heal.

- ILL - This great doctrine is part of our denomination's earliest roots.
 - From his study of Scripture and experience of the Lord's touch, A.B. Simpson believed in "Christ our Healer" and founded our movement with this as one of our core beliefs:
 - Q: "Provision is made in the redemptive work of Jesus for healing of the body. Prayer for the sick is a privilege for the Church in this present age." - C&MA Statement of Faith, Article 8.
 - Said Simpson, Q: "One touch of Christ is worth a lifetime of struggling." - A.B. Simpson.
- Now, I'm all for science and medicine. These are great gifts God does use to heal our bodies.
- At the same time, I believe nothing beats the power of Jesus to heal, displayed at the cross.
- Cf. Isaiah 53:5 says: "By His stripes, we are healed."
- APP - Today, you may have a friend God is calling you to bring to Jesus for healing.
- APP - Or, perhaps you are carrying a sickness or disease you've never brought to Jesus.
- APP - Or, you've brought it before and Jesus is calling, 'Bring it to Me again!'
- Today. Come to Him. Jesus can move mountains. He is mighty to save. Amen.