

Forgives
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Luke 5:17–26

During His ministry on earth, Jesus was greatly misunderstood by most people.

They could see He was a powerful preacher and a supernatural healer, but they missed the greatest gift He had to offer them. Sadly, today, though He is the most well known figure in human history, most still don't understand who Jesus really is and what He offers to people.

Big Idea: Because He is the eternal Son of God, Jesus has authority to forgive sins. He paid a terrible price on the cross so we can receive that forgiveness.

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. 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." (ESV)

- This morning we circle back to some verses we “flew over” last week.
- In advertising we talk about the “consumer journey.” You become interested, you do your research, you make a purchase, and finally you experience that product or service and hopefully tell others.
- The “consumer journey” always begins with the need for “awareness.” During His earthly ministry Jesus never needed an “awareness campaign” because word of mouth about Him spread like wildfire.
- Though many were talking about His teaching and His miracles, they really didn’t understand His real mission and His true identity.
- In this account, Jesus used compassion and confrontation to provide confirmation of His authority as the Son of God and Savior of the world.
- Our first hint of this is in Dr. Luke’s comment in verse 17: “*And the Lord’s power to heal was in him.*” Luke wanted to make clear to his readers that every miracle Jesus did was divine power in action.
- Along with those seeking healing and help, some religious leaders were in attendance. Who were these “Pharisees and teachers of the law?”
- “More than just recorders of scripture, they were the equivalent of religious lawyers who taught and ruled on scriptural issues.”ⁱ
- From our perspective in 2021 we might ask: What right did these men have to be checking up on Jesus? Wiersbe: “*They had every right to do this since it was the responsibility of the elders to prevent false prophets from leading the people astray (Deut. 13; 18:15–22).*”ⁱⁱ
- Wiersbe goes on to explain, “*The great desire of the scribes and Pharisees was to understand and magnify God’s Law and apply it in their daily lives.*” [That sounds pretty commendable, right?] “*However, the movement soon became quite legalistic and its leaders laid so many burdens on the people that it was impossible to “serve the Lord with gladness” (Ps. 100:2). Furthermore, many of the Pharisees were hypocrites and did not practice what they preached (see Matt. 15:1–20; 23:1–36). In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), Jesus exposed the*

*shallowness of pharisaical religion. He explained that true righteousness is a matter of the heart and not external religious practices alone.*ⁱⁱⁱ

- These religious leaders of Israel corrupted a good thing (magnifying and applying God's law) turning it into a manipulative exercise for power that didn't relieve people of guilt but heaped more guilt on them.
- In other words, *"If we keep them feeling guilty they will do what we say!"*
- By contrast, Jesus came to remove guilt and sin and to offer forgiveness.
- Let's shift to the four friends carrying the man on his pallet. You just have to LOVE their loyalty to their friend and their determination to get him help.
- They personified the attitude, *"If you can't get through the door then climb over, go around, or tunnel under."* In their case it was dig through the roof!
- Imagine the reaction of the owner of the home when these characters started tearing up the tiles on the roof to lower their friend. *"This is why we can't have nice things!"* It's interesting that scripture never says that the homeowner was upset. We can speculate that one glance from Jesus told the owner, *"Don't sweat it, we'll repair the roof, this is more important."*
- Why would these friends have been so outrageously bold to do this?
- It's clear these men TRUSTED Jesus to heal their friend. You don't tear up someone's roof unless you TRULY BELIEVE Jesus will come through.
- Verse 20 says Jesus confirmed their trust: "Seeing their faith, Jesus..."
- That is the point in the story where things take an unexpected turn.
- How we expect Jesus to finish that sentence? *"Seeing their faith he said, 'Friend ---you're healed!'"* Right? That's not what Jesus said.
- Jesus used this moment to shift people from simple awareness about His ministry to the reality of why He came to earth.

- He was ready to proclaim in clear terms He was not just a compassionate and gifted rabbi, but also the Son of God Who brings forgiveness of sins.
- Verse 21: The religious leaders gasped: *“Who does he think he is? That’s blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!”*^{iv}
- Only God can forgive sins – correct. Is He saying He is God – correct!
- Jesus: *“Why do you question? Which is easier? I’ll prove I have the authority to forgive sins by doing the thing you can see, rise and walk!”*
- Verse 26: ²⁶ Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, “We have seen amazing things today!”^v
- As we read this account, WE should also be “gripped with wonder and awe.” We too should “praise God” for these “amazing things;” for the “amazing grace” that brings us forgiveness of sins. That’s exactly what I pray each of us clings to as we wrap up this study in Luke 5.
- Listen to these familiar promises of scripture about forgiveness in Christ:

Psalm 103:11–12 (ESV) ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Isaiah 43:25 (ESV) ²⁵ “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Micah 7:19 (ESV) ¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

Hebrews 8:12 (ESV) ¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- The “characters” in this drama provide us with a wealth of teaching:

- The paralyzed man is a picture of humanity paralyzed by sin and in desperate need of relief. He found that relief at Jesus' feet.
- The determined friends teach us the value of going to any lengths necessary to get loved ones and friends to Jesus.
- The congregation who refused to make way for the man on the stretcher warn us not to get so focused on "doing church" that we miss the real mission of reaching those in need of Jesus.
- The skeptical, paranoid, and power-hungry religious elite prove that self-righteousness can become blindness to who Jesus really is.
- While all those are valid lessons, the "takeaway" I hope we leave with today is a renewed and vivid picture of the forgiveness of God in Christ.

Here is a "word picture" about God's forgiveness. Imagine yourself chained to a wheelbarrow and forced to push it through life. With every sin, every violation of God's law, a brick is placed in the wheelbarrow and an iron cover is locked over it so you cannot dump any of them out. Let's call that wheelbarrow full of sin, "guilt." You have no choice but to push or pull that load every step you take. To make matters worse, the more you struggle the more bricks of sin show up in the wheelbarrow; bricks that were put there by YOU! As you get weaker the load gets heavier. Finally, when you can't muster the strength to push even one more inch you cry to God for help. That's when you notice that Jesus has been walking beside you waiting for you to ask for relief. You tell Him about this crazy situation and admit that you can't stop adding bricks to the load. You beg Him to do something - anything. He unlocks the chain and begins pushing your sin-filled wheelbarrow of guilt up the hill. What a relief that Jesus is now bearing that load, but you can still see those bricks and the feelings of guilt creep back in. Then Jesus does something interesting. He takes that wheelbarrow to the edge of a cliff and pushes it over into the sea. Those bricks of sin are gone and the guilt is gone. You can't see them and Jesus has chosen not to see them either. As you and He walk on you still pick up a brick every few steps (they seem irresistible!) but Jesus says, "Give me that," and He casts it over the cliff and into the sea.

- That simple story makes a point about how we receive God's forgiveness and the great relief we should feel if we have, but it's not the full picture.
- We need to remember what is free to us was unbelievably costly to Jesus.

Oswald Chambers makes this clear: *“Beware of the pleasant view... God is so kind and loving that of course He will forgive us. That sentiment has no place whatever in the New Testament. The only ground on which God can forgive us is the tremendous tragedy of the Cross of Christ; to put forgiveness on any other ground is unconscious blasphemy. The only ground on which God can forgive sin and reinstate us in His favour is through the Cross of Christ, and in no other way. Forgiveness, which is so easy for us to accept, cost the agony of Calvary.”*^{vi}

- He bore every sin of every human as He hung on the cross. He suffered and died to pay the required price that no human could pay. We call that the “atonement.”
- Because “the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive,” we no longer have to be paralyzed by sin. In His mercy and grace, Jesus says *“Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!”* Your sins are forgotten, the guilt is gone, the debt has been paid, “it is finished.”
- Let's glorify God for His forgiveness in Christ.

ⁱ Explore the Bible Leader's Guide – Lifeway 2021

ⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 1, p. 187).

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 1, p. 187). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 1, p. 187). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Lk 5:21). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^v Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Lk 5:25–26). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vi} Chambers, O. (1986). [My utmost for his highest: Selections for the year](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Oswald Chambers Publications; Marshall Pickering.