

The Gospel According to Luke
November 11, 2018
Reading: Mark 3:7-12

Sermon #22
Luke 6:17-19

Appeal of Jesus

Ministry of Jesus

We have been working our way through the Gospel of Luke. This morning we have come to a short paragraph of 3 verses. These verses are simple, reading Luke 6, verses 17 to 19, “**And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.**” This short passage is an overview of one of the many gatherings of people to hear and be healed by Jesus.

I love the Scriptures from beginning to end, but the four gospels are of special interest to me because they give us the story of the life of Jesus. One can read about the glory of God, the attributes of God, the great works of God and read the very words of God in the Old Testament. However, God becomes even more real to me as he is revealed in Jesus Christ in the gospels. For me the triune God is more intimate, clear, profound and understandable through Jesus than can be found in the Old Testament. God appears on earth as the Messiah, the Christ, God in human flesh as recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In the New Testament and especially the gospels we discover God in all his glory and perfection of love, mercy, grace, truth and righteousness demonstrated in and by Jesus Christ. The Old Testament prepared people for the coming of Christ, the New Testament

reveals Christ and prepares us for his 2nd coming. Christ is revealed in the short paragraph I just read out of Luke. I hope this morning that from these 3 verses you will see the wonder of Jesus. These 3 verses are a simple summary and do not contain the divine words of Jesus, but it does contain the wonder of the gospel of Jesus.

Now remember, Luke's gospel was written to reveal and prove that Jesus is the Messiah, God incarnate, the Lord and Savior. Luke's gospel account is meant to prove that Jesus is God and as God he came into the world to preach the forgiveness of sins to all who would repent and believe. He came to establish his eternal rule over the souls of men and women who would put their trust in him. He came to destroy the power of Satan loosening his grip on the world and utterly destroying him when Jesus returns. At the end of history Jesus will create a new heaven and a new earth where there is no sin forever. Carefully, systematically, Luke presents the life of Jesus to give us overwhelming proof that he is God, He is Lord and Savior over peoples souls who submit and believe. Luke started his gospel with the testimony of heavenly angels, to Zacharias and Elizabeth and then more testimony from heavenly angels to Joseph and Mary. Luke followed the testimony of those four people with the testimony of Simeon and Anna in the temple who affirmed that the child was indeed the promised Messiah. Next came the testimony of the amazing virgin conception; a young girl becomes pregnant without a man by the power of the Holy Spirit and this demonstrates the deity of Jesus Christ at his conception. At the birth of Christ Luke writes of the testimony of angels who gathered in the heavens above the field where the shepherds were and announced to them that the Son of God had been born. The shepherds confirm Jesus as the Christ when they ventured out and saw the child Jesus.

Luke continues to show who Jesus is when at the age of twelve Jesus teaches in the temple and people are again amazed by the knowledge of a boy. We know by this time he is completely aware he is the Son of God. Luke records the beginning of Jesus' ministry to show the world he is the Messiah with the descending Holy Spirit who comes down upon Him at His baptism in an affirmation of His absolute holiness and added to this the testimony of the voice from heaven, the voice of God the Father who says to Jesus, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22) Testimony after testimony is recorded as Luke continues to build his case that Jesus is the Christ. John the Baptist, the last prophet of the Old Testament declares that Jesus is the Messiah and has come to take away the sins of the world. To verify John was correct Luke gives the genealogy of Jesus demonstrating that he was the King as the descendant of David and of the royal lineage. Further he was the descendant of Abraham, Shem and Noah and Adam. Jesus is the 2nd Adam who came to atone for sin.

Luke carefully builds the story of who Jesus is and it is built upon the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the miraculous events testified to by many witnesses, then there is the historical evidence and to these Luke adds the divine character of Jesus seen by thousands in his wisdom, knowledge and teaching. Luke then adds to all these evidences Jesus' power over demons, nature and even power over life and death – only God can accomplish these. In 1972 Josh McDowell wrote the book *Evidence That Demands A Verdict* and in 1998 Lee Strobel wrote *The Case for Christ*. As good as these books are, they are only a modern approach that was established by Luke. Luke built the story of Jesus as the Christ upon witnesses, facts and fulfilled prophecy. Like any good author and historian who unfolds the story they know they need to take breaks from the fast paced laying out of so many facts to give their readers a moment to catch their

breath and take it all in. Luke does this well. Before Jesus chose the 12 he took time, all night to pray to God the Father and then he acts.

Beginning in verse 20 Luke begins to move quickly again, giving his concise version of the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes, but first he takes a moment to let his readers catch their breath and absorb. This pause is the 4th in these first 6 chapters allowing readers to catch their breath. As readers of these few verses we see two points to take notice of. First we observe the popularity of Jesus and second, the power of Jesus.

Popularity of Jesus

It appears to me that Luke wanted people to see how popular Jesus had become. As far as I know no one had ever been this popular in Israel. Verse 17 says, “[And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon.](#)” How many people were following Jesus? How many makes a “[great crowd](#)”? Well I am glad you asked. In comparison at the beginning of John chapter 6 one reads that a “large crowd” had gathered to hear Jesus and were hungry – no one had any food but one boy with “[five barley loaves and two fish.](#)” (John 6:9) We read that this “large crowd” consisted of 5,000 men. There were mostly likely as many women and thousands of children. So there may have been as many as 15 to 20,000 people, which is a crowd larger than many towns in Israel outside of Jerusalem. So Jesus’ popularity was bigger than anything Israel had ever seen. At the beginning of each day the crowds sought out Jesus – a mass of people pressing to get near, wanting to hear him, wanting to touch him – pushing and jockeying for position. This had to wear at times on Jesus. Earlier in chapter 5, verses 15 and 16 we read, “[Now even more the report about](#)

him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. ¹⁶ But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.” At night Jesus could withdraw.

I remember when we lived overseas and no one on the island had red hair. The women would press in to touch my two daughter’s hair and to stroke it. My daughters did not mind, but there were times when night came they would tell Joyce and me how sore their scalps were from all the touching. This was the attention from dozens of women. Thousands followed Jesus. So at night he would retreat away from the crowds to pray, to have some “down time” and to focus on teaching and bonding with the 12.

Who was in this “great crowd”? It says they were disciples. Verse 17 says he descended with the apostles to a level place and there a “great crowd” of disciples gathered. Disciples are students of Jesus - those who are listening and learning. They were waiting for Jesus to begin teaching. We know that the tradition was for rabbis to sit as they taught, Jesus as the rabbi of rabbis also sat to teach. But he is not sitting; he is standing because he is healing the sick, the crippled and the mentally disabled. In addition he is casting out demons by the authority given to him by his Father. How long did the healing and casting out demons go on? Well, I am glad you asked. We discussed a little while ago that in John chapter 6 a “great crowd” was somewhere between 15 to 20 thousand people, and this was the size of the crowd made up of disciples. But verse 17, goes on to say there was also a “great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon.” A “great multitude” appears to be larger than a “great crowd” So more than 15 to 20 thousand. Since the “great multitude” are those who are not disciples. It is those who are curious unbelievers, enemies of Jesus, those desiring to be healing and on and on. This means the total of those

following Jesus between the “[great crowd](#)” and the “[great multitude](#)” was maybe 40,000 to 50,000 and they came from all over Israel, from 100 to 150 miles away. People also came from beyond Israel, they came from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon.

This is an interesting fact that Luke has inserted because Tyre and Sidon are in Phoenicia, which is north and west of Galilee on the border of the Mediterranean Sea in what is modern Lebanon. Tyre once was a great city before God pronounced judgment on it in Isaiah 23 and that judgment came. Now they are a couple of fishing towns populated by pagans. The Phoenicians were primarily mariners. They were responsible for colonization of the Mediterranean area but they were Gentiles, they were pagans and were known for idolatry. Luke wants his readers to understand that the appeal of Jesus didn't have any limits, from the common man to the religiously literate, to the pagans - his teaching drew them all. So as we read in Matthew 13 there are thousands of people who represent both the wheat and tares. Before Jesus can begin teaching in what we call the Sermon on the Mount he heals and casts out demons for hundreds if not thousands. Verse 19 says, “[for power came out from him Jesus and healed them all.](#)” Just think about how long it took to heal them all?

So this throng following Jesus was made up of 3 groups. First there was the inner circle of the 12 who would become preachers of the gospel and plant Jesus' church. Second, the “[great crowd](#)” of disciples, those who were listening and learning as Jesus taught. The third, the “[great multitude](#)” consisted of the curious who were attracted by Jesus' power.

Remember early in Jesus' ministry we read he was in Jerusalem during the Passover and he attracted great crowds. The Apostle John tells us, “[many believed](#)

in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.” (John 2:23-25) Many believed because of the miracles but they did not have saving faith, they did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah. John recorded what Jesus said was needed for salvation, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32) One cannot just believe in Jesus’ miracles, but must believe in him as the Messiah or the Christ as revealed in the Word of God. So there is the “great crowd”, the disciples, the learners and listeners but until they believe in Jesus as the Messiah their faith will not be enough to save. Then there is the “great multitude” who see the man as miracle worker and they want to be healed or they are curious, for them Jesus is like a magician but they are not believers.

Power of Jesus

The popularity of Jesus was the result of the power of Jesus. There are 3 things I want to bring out about Jesus’ power because Luke has placed them here for us to consider. First in verse 18 we read many “came to hear him.” This was the prime directive of his ministry – teaching and bringing the divine truth of God to their minds. Jesus was after their minds because truth begins in the mind. One must have knowledge of truth as the foundation for salvation. A miracle cannot save, a healing cannot save, the casting out of a demon cannot save. What saves is knowing the truth and believing in the truth. The battle, the spiritual battle is not fought primarily against demons. Spiritual battle is not the getting demons out of people. Spiritual battle is getting truth into the minds of people. Jesus was a preacher and teacher of truth, truth that began by penetrating the mind. The focus of Jesus’ ministry was his teaching and his preaching. What was it he preached?

He was preaching the good news, the good news of forgiveness, the good news of salvation, the good news of eternal life, the good news of hope, the good news of eternal peace and joy and the good news of heaven. Jesus preached God's Word, the good news everywhere he went. He gave the good news that God would forgive the poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed, the spiritually bankrupt, the destitute and the repentant. This was the most essential ministry Jesus had. If you want to be like Jesus, don't try to do miracles but teach the truth – teach God's Word. Truth is the priority. Jesus did the miracles to validate that he was the Son of God and preached the truth. Jesus' teaching was unlike anyone who had ever taught before or since. Jesus was the truth of God, he was God incarnate; perfect control of every thought, perfect knowledge of every reality, perfect use of language, perfect use of emotion, perfect use of logic and reason, so Jesus was clear, concise, convicting, penetrating, captivating and profound all at the same time. Jesus preached the kingdom truth and forgiveness and how people could be forgiven and enter the kingdom if they would believe in Him and cry out to God for forgiveness and salvation.

Let me be clear, my beloved, it is Jesus who is still the Teacher. It is my job to pass on to you what he taught and not teach things new and not of God. Paul warned Timothy to be aware saying, [“If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and **understands nothing.**”](#) (1 Timothy 6:3-4) It is important your understand this! If any preacher or teacher presents anything that does not agree with the Word of God he is conceited, thinking more highly of himself than the standard, than the Word of God and he knows nothing. A preacher's job, my job is simply to help you understand God's

eternal truth and what it means to live as followers of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus 1st demonstration of power was His perfect mind that taught penetrating truth to people's minds. The 2nd demonstration of divine power was physical. Jesus had power of the physical realm of this world. He had power over the mind and the body. Verse 18 says people came to hear him and be taught by him, but that he also healed them. In fact in verse 19 it says Jesus healed everyone, he healed "all" of those there – this great throng of people of 40 to 50 thousand! That is amazing! Only God can create – Jesus' miracles created – if a person had an eye that was blind, Jesus made that eye see – to see him as the Son of God. If one had an ear that did not hear, Jesus gave them an ear that could hear – hear the truth of God. If one had a leg that was deformed or paralyzed, Jesus made the leg new and they could walk – hopefully they walked in the path of righteousness. Jesus who created the universe demonstrated his power over the earth and the people he put on the earth. This power proved that Jesus was God because he had the power that only God possesses and that means everything he taught was truth.

The 3rd demonstration of Jesus' divine power was his power over the spirit of man. One problem we encounter in the scriptures and is still encountered today is that unbelievers are not protected by God and do not have the power of his Holy Spirit within them. Demonic spirits can possess them. Verse 18 says those people "who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured." It is difficult enough in life to live with parts of one's body that does not function properly – eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear – limbs that will not walk or reach, but how much more terrifying to have one's mind possessed by an evil spirit. Luke has recorded Jesus casting out demons in earlier chapters of a person here and a person there, but here

Jesus is casting out demons on a wholesale level – hundreds – it is almost beyond my ability to comprehend. Jesus was doing a mass spiritual cleansing.

Closing – Final Thoughts

What does this short passage in Luke mean to you and me?

First that Jesus is God because only God can do what Jesus did. Second, I believe this is a preview of heaven and proves Jesus is Lord of heaven. Do we not long for heaven? I long for the day when I will have a clear, perfect and pure mind because I am in the presence of Jesus and fully know eternal truth. I long for the day I will no longer be tempted by sin. I long for the day when my knees no longer hurt and are not made out of titanium. I long for the day when I am no longer tempted by the evil one and he has been cast into the fiery lake forever. This is what salvation is and what Jesus gives me here on earth and completes when I enter his presence.

Jesus taught the truth to the great multitudes, healed their bodies and dealt with their sick spirits because he is a God of compassion, of love, of mercy and of grace. No wonder the people were pressing in to touch him. We cannot touch Jesus physically, but when we give our lives to Jesus he reaches out and touches us and places his Spirit in us – is this not better than being able to touch him physically?

Who is Jesus? He is God because he is the only One in all human history that has done the things only God can do and this short passage proves he is God. Then what does God deserve from you and me? For us to possess mere curiosity like those of the “great multitude”? No. For us to have a desire to learn from a great historical teacher like those of the “great crowd” who were disciples? No,

these are incomplete. First we are to surrender our very lives and souls to him. Then we are to be his apostles, his messengers to the world of the good news of salvation. What do the people in the world, in America, in New Mexico and in the East Mountains need to hear today? Simple, they need to hear the eternal truth of God. Everything else will one day burn. It is you and me who are to take this truth to others. Will we be obedient or disobedient? You have had a little training in God's Word this morning – now go into the world and declare the good news of Jesus! Amen!