

## The Son of Man Must Suffer

November 11th, 2012

Luke 9:18-22

*"<sup>18</sup>Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" <sup>19</sup>And they answered, "John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen." <sup>20</sup>Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God." <sup>21</sup>And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, <sup>22</sup>saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.""*

We began this series through the gospel according to Luke nearly a year ago, and this is our 38th sermon in the series. During that time we've seen many snapshots of the beauty of this man, Jesus. And it's possible that in all those individual snapshots of greatness and beauty, that we might miss the big picture. If we imagine Luke's gospel as a mosaic (a big picture made up of lots of very tiny ones), it is possible to get so enamored by the smaller pictures that we fail to step back and survey the beauty of the larger work of art that Luke is creating.

This text in particular is a good place to step back and survey the larger picture, because it is a turning point (I would probably say, *the* turning point) in Luke. It centers on the question Jesus poses twice in this passage. I'll read verses 18-27 this morning, but we'll focus our attention today on verses 18-22, and come back and deal with verses 23-27 next week. So follow along with me and note the question Jesus asks twice in this passage. (*Read Text and Pray*)

### **An Urgent Question**

The text (at least the first part of it) revolves around a question, and it's a question that we've seen before in our study of Luke: who is this Jesus? When Jesus told the paralytic His sins were forgiven, the Pharisees questioned, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" When a "sinful woman of the city" came

to Jesus and Jesus assured her that her sins were forgiven, those who were at the table with Him said, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?"

When Jesus calmed the storm in Luke 8, His disciples said to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even winds and water, and they obey Him?" Earlier in this chapter, Herod heard reports of all that was happening throughout Galilee and said, "Who is this about whom I hear such things?"

Now the question comes from the very lips of Jesus: "Who do the crowds say that I am?... But who do you say that I am?" Who is this Jesus? This is the urgent question of the book of Luke. And no one was without an opinion: "<sup>19</sup>And they answered, "John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen." There were many different opinions, but no one was apathetic. Everyone was talking about this Man. Everyone had an idea, an interpretation, an explanation.

Though we sit here today, 2,000 years removed from that debate, the life, the actions, the teachings of Jesus continue to ignite debate about His identity, and all thoughtful people will be a part of that debate. I say that because it's widely accepted – by Christians and non-Christians – that 2,000 years ago Jesus of Nazareth died an agonizing, shameful death by crucifixion. He spent only three years in the public eye. He never wrote a book, never appeared in a movie or TV show, never held a political office (a good thing to remember this week especially), never attended college, never traveled more than a few hundred miles from home, and died both poor and homeless. Yet today He is the most famous person in all of human history. Time is split in half by His appearing!

Imagine having all world history in your mind, and you make up two lists: on one you have the most influential people who have ever lived. On the other you have all the people who have claimed to be God.

How much overlap do you have? Just Jesus. That's something, isn't it? You can't just pass this guy off as a "good man"? What good man says that he has all authority over heaven and earth, that if you won't have Him as King you'll be slaughtered before Him and cut into pieces, that to be His disciple, you need to hate mother or wife or child and renounce your life, that if you believe in Him you'll never see death? Wouldn't anyone who said that sort of thing be institutionalized! Yet more books have been written about this man than anyone in the history of the world.

And so I believe all that underscores the urgency of this question: who is this Jesus? "But you, who do you say that I am?" This is the most important question in the world, because Jesus is the most important person in the universe. Not only the Word of God, but also the direction of human history, make that clear. Aren't the greatness of His claims and the impact of His life on world history incentive enough for you take this seriously and be *sure* about your answer to this question: who do you say that He is?

And lest those of you who are convinced of Peter's answer to this massive question think that the last ten minutes aren't for you, let the urgency of this question remind you of your calling in the world. We're not here ultimately to debate abortion, or gay marriage, or evolution with people. We're not here to "winsomely convince Americans to share our moral convictions about marriage, sex, the sanctity of life, and a range of moral issues." We are here to press upon people (lovingly, patiently, respectfully) this question: who is Jesus? And to live in such a way that demonstrates what we believe about Him.

## **Jesus is God's Christ**

Back to Jesus' question, and Peter's answer to that question. What accounts for the impact of the life of Jesus on human history, despite the shocking, seemingly irrational claims that He made? The answer is

that Jesus is no ordinary human, no "good moral teacher". The answer to this urgent question comes from the lips of Peter: "<sup>20</sup>Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God.'" We know Jesus approves of this answer by what Matthew records for us in response to Peter's answer: "<sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."

Jesus is the Christ of God. Now we need to dwell on this word Christ a bit, because it's not Jesus' last name. It's not as though Joseph Christ married Mary, and they became the Christ family, and then they gave birth to their first son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Messiah, which means "anointed one". Among the Jewish people, kings (and prophets and priests as well) were anointed with oil as a kind of coronation. But along the way in Israel's history, there were hints that one day God would send the greatest prophet, the highest priest, the mightiest King of all, One who would establish a Kingdom that would endure forever. So their hopes began to terminate on this coming One, whom they called the Messiah, the Christ.

Jesus affirms this divine identity by calling Himself the Son of Man (v.21). When we hear that title, we often think that Jesus is saying that He is a human being. But this title means more than that. People with Jewish backgrounds and hopes would have recognized the term from the book of Daniel:

*"<sup>13</sup>I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. <sup>14</sup>And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."*

Everything Luke has written in these first 8+ chapters is meant to show us that Jesus is in fact this divine King, the King to end all kings, the

King who would put everything right. The angels have announced it (2:11), the demons have acknowledged it (4:39), Jesus has taught about it (4:18). He has commanded the unclean spirits, and they have obeyed Him. He has rebuked fever, and various diseases.

He has brought in a miraculous catch of fish and multiplied bread for thousands. He has made the paralytic walk, and the leper cleansed, and the dead raised with a simple word of command. He has calmed the storm and the raging sea. He has shown in every sphere of life that He is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and He shall reign forevermore! Jesus is God's Christ.

### **A Stunning Twist**

With that background, you can sort of get a sense of how shocking, how disturbing and puzzling it must have been, for Jesus to respond to Peter's confession as He did: Peter's confession is exactly right, but Jesus wants them to keep silent about it: "<sup>21</sup>And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.'"

This makes absolutely no sense! Imagine if on Tuesday, Obama stood up for his acceptance speech, with all the passion and enthusiasm that filled that environment, and said, "It's going to go bad for us, folks. The economy is going to get worse. The war on terror is going to go downhill fast, they're going to get me, and I'm going to suffer and be killed." That would be shocking, but not nearly as shocking as these words coming from the mouth of Jesus. The Messiah was supposed to defeat evil and injustice and make everything right in the world, forever. How could He defeat evil by suffering and dying?

But Jesus says, this is how it must be: "<sup>22</sup>The Son of Man *must* suffer many things..." I think that's an indication (which we know clearly from other Scripture, John 10:18) that Jesus is planning to die. His

suffering will not be an accident, an unforeseen surprise and interruption to His Messianic plan, but a part of the plan. Why would that have to be? Why would the Christ, the Messiah, God's anointed King, need to die?

Jesus does not tell us here at this point. In fact, though Jesus will begin repeat this troubling statement about His coming suffering a few more times, it is not until Luke 22 that there is any hint of why Jesus is going to suffer and die. And that reason takes us to our remembrance of Jesus' death through the Communion Table. As Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples on the eve of His death, Luke tells us:

*"<sup>19</sup>And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>20</sup>And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."*

Jesus' shed blood in His suffering and death is about the New Covenant being fulfilled in Him. And a few verses later: "<sup>37</sup>For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." Jesus quotes from Isaiah 53 and says that it's written about Him:

*"<sup>3</sup>He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup>Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup>But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.*

*<sup>6</sup>All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all...<sup>11</sup>Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities...he poured out his soul to death and **was numbered with the transgressors**; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."*

Jesus came as God's Christ, the Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, to overthrow all of God's enemies and establish His righteous rule of justice and peace. But you and I have broken the laws of God's Kingdom -- we all, like sheep, have gone astray from serving and worshiping God as King -- and therefore we needed someone to come and bear the penalty for our iniquity, if we were ever to enter this eternal Kingdom.

That is why Jesus said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things..." As God's Christ, Jesus is the conquering King who would triumph over evil; but His conquer -- in order for us to share in it -- needed to come through weakness and suffering, and defeat and death. That happened on the hill of Calvary, where Jesus substituted Himself for rebels to God's throne like you and me, so that we could be forgiven and brought near to God as beloved children and citizens of His eternal Kingdom of love, peace and joy.

But it did not end in death: "The Son of Man must suffer many things...*and on the third day be raised.*" The Kingdom would not be very joyful with a dead King, but Jesus is not dead anymore. He put death to death by His resurrection, the firstfruits of a coming resurrection harvest that all who repent and believe will share in.

The disciples were stunned by Jesus' announcement, because they were looking for a political takeover and the destruction of their governing authorities. They failed to realize that their greatest enemy wasn't their surrounding culture, but their own sin. Maybe that's a reminder a lot of evangelicals need this week. Our deliverer did not come Tuesday, and he won't be coming in 2016. He is coming at a time we do not know, but His victory is as certain as His grave is empty. What we need this week is not political laments. We need deep, abiding, all-conquering, sin-destroying gospel joy. This and this alone is the hope of the world.

The Son of Man suffered, died and rose again to secure it for all who believe. Let's remember His broken body and shed blood as we share in the Lord's Supper together.