

# Sermon Text for November 19, 2023

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*II Kings 5:9-11, Matthew 9:1-8*

*The authority of Jesus*

In just one short week so much has happened around here. I was made especially aware of it because of the construction that was taking place outside of the church which seemed like all week long. As they are putting in the water main in Strasburg it had an impact on our church. We had Presbytery on Tuesday and it went off without a hitch in spite of the traffic that was pretty bad getting to the church as over 100 people were making their way here.

Our Preschool was impacted as parents had to maneuver through the construction and make sure they weren't trapped inside the parking lot as a trench was dug right outside of our driveway. But what was impactful were the workers and how they were able to see people streaming to this church every single day, and sure it caused some disarray and it was bothersome, but for them to see this church alive with tens and even hundreds of people coming through this parking lot every single day was impactful.

You know that saying that you can measure the impact of your church on the community by asking the question what would happen if tomorrow you were no longer around, would anyone notice? We can answer that question with a resounding yes! This community relies upon our church and this church is in many ways the heartbeat of the community. But is our primary purpose to be a hub and social center where people come and go? Is our purpose to impress those workers who see the activity and have the good favor of our neighbors, is that our purpose?

While it is important, it is not our purpose. We exist as a church to bring people to a loving relationship to Jesus. The programs we have serve a necessary and healing role for people and the community, without a doubt, but if people are not coming to know Jesus and to want to be a disciple and want to follow him more closely, then we are missing our mark, no matter how many people walk through these doors.

Our Scriptures today point to the primary purpose of why we have the Bible, of why Jesus healed and taught, and it was so that people would see His authority over sin and as a result follow him because he has forgiven us of our sin. Let's read.

## **READ**

Our first Scripture is a well-known Scripture of King Naaman who needs to be healed and he asks a prophet of God to heal him and the prophet tells him to follow a certain protocol which the king thinks is ridiculous, and why can't he be healed on his own terms. We see the authority of the king butting up against the authority of God. He is angry because the power of God was being displayed in a way that was not of benefit to Naaman, and to his agenda. His agenda included that his country would be proclaimed the best in the world which could be proven if he were healed by washing in one of the major rivers of his country, instead of this

pidly stream from a different country called the Jordan. Naaman had the power and the authority to dictate these things in his life, and so he wanted that same power in his healing.

The question by whose authority will you be healed, Naaman, is it on your own authority, which you have, or is it on God's authority over which you have no power. Naaman was able to say in every aspect of his life I have authority over everything, I am able to call the shots for my life and for my nation, so I should be able to call the shots on how I am healed and what my future will look like. God says no, only I have that authority.

We are used to thinking that there are certain areas of our life that we should be able to control and no one else, not even God, has a say in it. We come to church on Sunday in order to get our fill of God, and then the rest of the week we control what goes on. We see that in our finances. I earned it so I get to choose how I use it, it is, after all mine. That is not what our approach should be. God can take it all away from us at any moment. All of our earnings are a gift from God which God allows and over which God has authority. When I preach on stewardship and we preach on tithing, it is in order to remind us that God has authority over even our money. God has given you whatever finances you may in order to meet your needs but it comes with a responsibility to give to the work of God in a way that allows us to recognize the authority of God even over that.

The same can be said of our sexual relationships, wow, Bob, you've never really talked about this before. Getting a little personal aren't we? We may believe that God doesn't have much, if anything to say about that. God's authority stops in the bedroom and doesn't cover how our intimacy is experienced in our marriages and/or in our singleness. He wants us to enjoy each other fully as husband and wife which is why he states that our bodies are not our own but that of our spouses, if there is the respect and the honoring of each other. If there is not, then it can become manipulative and even abusive. God has a say in that.

Some of us may even say that God doesn't have a say in how we raise our family and how we interact with our kids or with our spouses. That's completely up to us and God doesn't really get involved in that, or I don't let God get involved in that. Or our work, that is something that I go to and God isn't involved. It is something that I do and it is under my own authority and it is no one else's business. God does care, he does want us to work and that work is a calling from God, no matter what it is. As we retire he wants us to do so with dignity and even that is under his authority. If we separate God from those areas, he will not make himself known.

Naaman demanded to be healed a certain way because he had authority that he was no willing to give up and cede to God. God's authority manifested in how he is told to be healed. He had to succumb to God's authority ultimately.

In our New Testament lesson we see the authority of Jesus manifesting itself over all areas of our life, from our bodies that need to be healed, to even our sin which needs to be forgiven. This is the primary reason why Jesus came, he tells those in attendance today, so that he can demonstrate that he has authority over sin.

Our journey with Jesus in this Gospel of righteousness has taken us to many different places, but in each place we see Jesus' authority. We see his authority in teaching on the sermon on the mount. We see his authority over our bodies as he heals when he comes down from the Mount of Beatitudes. We see his authority over nature as he calms the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

Today we clearly see his authority over sin. And this authority, the authority over sin, is the principle reason for why Jesus came in the first place. His teachings, his healings, his calming of the seas were demonstrations of his authority, but he didn't come just to teach, and to heal and to rule over nature, he came so that our sins would be forgiven, this was his primary mission and we see it directly today in the Gospel of Righteousness.

We see our story today also in Mark and in Luke but with details that are much more familiar to us. Remember the story of the friends who cut a hole in the roof and lower their friend in front of Jesus in a crowded house? Well, that is this story, but without the crowded house and the roof being torn apart. Jesus is back in his hometown, Capernaum, where this takes place and these friends of the paralytic remain constant in all of the stories, it is their faith that Jesus sees. Look at vs.2, when Jesus sees their faith, not the faith of the paralytic, but the faith of those bringing him to Jesus.

Sometimes we need our friends to bring us to the Savior. Often when our own faith is faltering, we must allow ourselves to be carried by the faith of others. There are times in our own lives when we just can't see the authority of God so we have to rely upon our community of faith to take us there. Faith is strongest when it is a corporate activity, not simply a private exercise. How many times in your life have you experienced the authority of Jesus in a setting with other believers. That should remind us of how important it is for us to bring people along to this setting, to worship, so that they can also experience the living Christ. This is why we do this.

When Jesus is confronted with the paralytic man he immediately tells him that his sins are forgiven, which if you were in that room, would not seem to be his primary need. Can you just heal me and I'll deal with my own sins, or at least heal me first and then take away my sins. But Jesus knew that those in the room would object to him saying that he, Jesus, had forgiven him his sins. The religious leaders call it blasphemy. But Jesus takes that and twice we read in this Scripture that the reason and the purpose of the healing was so that people would see the authority of Jesus over our sin.

Who has the authority to forgive sin? Only God. We see God demonstrate his desire to forgive our sin all the way back in Exodus 34:6-7. Here Jesus is saying that he has authority over evil and over sin. He demonstrates that today by giving an active example. Anyone can say your sins are forgiven and there is really no way to prove whether they have been forgiven or not. It doesn't really have any impact because I don't know if my sins are forgiven just because you said so until judgment day. But I will know if you say that I am healed by what happens to my body. There is a way to demonstrate that I am healed and that is by standing up,

taking my bed, and going home. If I can do that, then I have proof that I am healed. And if you say that I am healed and I am, then I am much more likely to believe you that my sins are forgiven if you tell me that too.

If Jesus has power over paralysis isn't that proof enough that he has authority over the sins of a person? Genesis 3 where Adam and Eve are kicked out of the garden after their sin reminds us of the biblical perspective that sickness and suffering, like death itself, trace back to the entry of sin into the world. In this sense, all sickness is caused by sin. But we know how the world works. Most sinning does not receive its due punishment in the present time. We see and we experience the righteous suffering and the wicked prospering.

The point of this narrative is that the problem of sin is a fundamental problem of humanity that Jesus has come to counteract. When we hold on to anything in our lives and don't allow Jesus to have authority over it, like our finances, our sex lives, our work, our family, our patriotism, when we don't allow the authority of Jesus to take over, then sin is inevitable and will manifest itself more powerfully than we are able to control.

Forgiveness of sin is by far the greatest gift Jesus has brought in his ministry. This is compared to healings which were signs to the one who can forgive. The primary mission of Jesus is to overcome sin on the cross. Isaiah 53 throughout reminds us that the one who suffered, the one who died, the sin bearer is also the disease curer. The authority of Jesus stands at the center of this passage so that we can receive in all areas of our life. Amen.