

# The House with the Hole

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm going to pray the call it for the day, which Dan is going to pray again later, but it's really well suited for today's reading. So if you want to, you can follow along with me on this, but I just thought let's let's hear this a couple of times this morning.

So let's pray. Oh, God, who declares your almighty power most principally in showing mercy and pity. Mercifully grant us such a measure of your grace that we running the way of your commandments.

Now, as we listen to your message brought to bear in our life by obtaining your gracious promises, be made partakers of your heavenly treasure through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. Well, now I want to start off with, you know, a kind of a would you rather scenario. I don't know if you're familiar with those, but my children really like them.

And so I'm just going to ask you two questions. And the first one is this. Would you rather risk the Zika virus and have a free pass to the 2016 Summer Olympics or stay at home and watch the 2016 Rio Olympics safe from your home and the Zika virus?

[ 1 : 12 ] Okay. Did a lot of research on the next one from the resident alien, I mean teenager in my household. She gave me this one. So would you rather have the neck of a giraffe or the trunk of an elephant?

Thanks, Elise. Well, now Jesus doesn't pose a would you rather scenario, but he poses a what is easier one, which is very similar, don't you think?

Turn with me to Luke chapter 5 verse 17 and look at verse 23 with me as you're turning there. All right.

Jesus says this, which is easier to say your sins are forgiven you or to say rise and walk? What do you think? It's a pretty searching question, isn't it?

And it has a right and a wrong answer, but we'll get to that later. Now, last week we learned of a man by the name of Zacchaeus or Zach and about the house of salvation.

[ 2 : 15 ] Management and money didn't buy the chief tax collector, love or salvation. And we learned that the big theme of Luke's gospel in that passage was that the son of man, that is Jesus, came to seek and to save those who were lost.

And we're all lost and alienated from our Lord. We're not just missing or disconnected or wandering around, but intentionally rebel and betray our creator, our Lord, our Redeemer.

And this week the title of the sermon is the house of forgiveness. And Luke, in his gospel, tells us that salvation of the world is not only for, but through the lost sheep of Israel by Jesus Christ.

And so the theme is still the son of man came to seek and to save those who are lost. But where last week was about salvation, this week is about forgiveness. And the key verse in this week is verse 24.

Look with me. That you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. That's the key verse. So what's the context of this?

[ 3 : 28 ] Well, it's taking place in a town called Judea. And probably in maybe Peter's mother's house or Peter's house or some even think maybe Jesus's house. But what's happening there?

Jesus is fulfilling his mission through teaching. And people are really impressed. They're quite wowed by what's going on, except, of course, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the teachers of the law.

And what are they doing? Well, look with me at verse 17. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. What are they doing?

They're just sitting there. And that's not good. These experts are scowlers and scrutinizers. They're judges and self-righteous. These experts have no sense of wonder on the one hand or humility on the other.

But the sick and the sinners know they need more than information. They need salvation and grace and mercy. They have this sense of wonder and humility. They have heart needs and eternal ones as well.

[ 4 : 31 ] So I'm going to look at two dimensions of our Lord this morning. And the first is the power of the Lord. And the second one is the priority of the Lord. And so the first, the Lord's power, which is something that we encounter.

Jesus is teaching and it's very powerful. Luke records earlier in chapter 4 these words. That the people were astonished at his teaching. For his word possessed authority.

In other words, they weren't used to this. His teaching wasn't just honest and true and relevant. But it was authoritative and persuasive. It was impactful and unique.

Jesus' ministry is not only in word, but also in deed. So look at verse 17 again with me. Just down a little bit, the second half of it. Right?

The Pharisees and the teachers of the laws were sitting there. And who would come from every village in Galilee and Judea from Jerusalem? And the power of the Lord was with him to heal.

[ 5 : 36 ] So this is also something that's very unique with respect to Jesus. In Jesus' ministry already, he's exercised some demons. He's healed a leper. And it's not just that actions speak louder than words as some think.

But neither is Jesus' ministry all words and no action. Jesus' teaching draws a crowd.

That day, there were people standing both inside the house probably and outside the house.

Some men brought a paralyzed man on a bed to Jesus. And Luke reports this. And behold, some men bringing on men on a bed who was paralyzed.

And they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus. They went to great lengths, I'm sorry, to seek Jesus.

[ 6 : 38 ] The paralytic and his friends were in dire straits. They had a great need. And no one goes to those great lengths otherwise. And there was a kind of a sermon interruption like no other.

And Jesus knows that. Who could help but notice? But when the man is lowered from the rooftop, Jesus doesn't go into some kind of medical professional mode. He doesn't ask when and where and how and what or why.

Do you think that he might actually do that? Since the power of the Lord was on him to heal. But Jesus possesses a different kind of power.

Authority, knowledge, insight. The paralytic and friends thought they came to seek and to see Jesus. But Luke tells us that Jesus was a seeker and a seer as well.

Look with me at verse 20. And when Jesus saw their faith, when he saw their faith. Now you would think that since Jesus had the power of the Lord to heal, that Jesus would get on with that.

[ 7 : 49 ] But when he saw their faith, he didn't do what everyone expected. And he still doesn't do what everyone expects, does he? And do you find that the Lord is sometimes like that in your own life?

Does Jesus operate just like you expect when you were sick, acute or chronic? Does Christ get on with your program for him when you need a better job?

Or spouse? Or a different one? Does the Son of Man participate with your timeline for child rearing? Or house buying?

And does the Son of Man affirm your aspirations for retirement? Or death? Well, we have no idea what the paralytic and his friends thought.

But we know that the biblical experts thought. They're full of questions because of what Jesus says and does. And I must admit, I can identify with them a little bit. Look with me what Jesus then anticipates and what the Pharisees and Sadducees say.

[ 8 : 56 ] They say, Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? Well, as far as the Pharisees are concerned, it's exam time and they have questions.

But what if they made this exam about true and false? Right? Let's think of it. True and false. Jesus speaks blasphemies. False. Jesus forgives sins alone.

True. Right? There are 50%. Unfortunately, they've failed in this. But Jesus, notice, he's not afraid and he starts a conflict, a quandary, a fight.

He kind of provokes. He prods quite a bit, doesn't he? And it's a power struggle for sure. With the one who will show forth power and authority and the right to forgive.

And what is this forgiveness? Forgiveness is kind of a healing of the broken, the sick, the sin-saturated soul. Of men and women and boys and girls.

[ 10 : 03 ] It's Jesus' forgiveness. That's what it is. So that's about his power, his authority, his right to forgive. Yes, to heal too. But let's now look a little bit more closely at this forgiveness.

Jesus, while he had the power to forgive, he also knows that he has a priority to do that. And this teaching and healing of Jesus isn't just to show his power.

It's to show his priority. There seems to be an order of forgiveness before he frees the patient and friends of this physical paralysis.

And so the religious experts had some questions, as we know. But they weren't just theoretical. And Jesus perceived their thoughts and answered them.

Do you notice what Jesus says? He says, When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, Why do you question in your heart? Do you notice the location of their questions?

[ 11 : 06 ] Deep within their hearts, they're questioning him. They were deep-seated and needed questions of the heart. Not just ideas or concepts, but ones of the will and the desires and the affections and the aspirations deep in their hearts.

But Jesus had a question of his own. Verse 23, Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Rise and walk.

Well, I wonder if the religious experts, the hypocrites, thought when he said that. It doesn't look like they had too much time to answer the question. And I think it's easier to say, Rise and walk.

That is, it's easier to prove. Though it is hard to practice. But it is harder to say, Your sins are forgiven. Hard to prove.

And also, hard to practice. In fact, only God can say it in the way that Jesus did. You and I can forgive offenses of someone else, can't we, personally?

[ 12 : 13 ] But, only God can forgive our sinful state, our sinful nature, including both our wills and our actions. So, what is forgiveness? It's canceled, deleted, forgotten rejection of God's word and his way in our life.

Let me say that again. What is forgiveness? It's the canceled, deleted, forgotten rejection of God's word, his work, his will, and our life. Paralyzed in our ability to please the Lord because of our sin, through God's grace and mercy and kindness, the power of sin is made impotent.

No one but God can forgive like this. Well, more important than anything else, Jesus doesn't then just kind of capitulate to the paralytic's presenting needs, the friends, and neither does he the religious experts as well and his actions that will follow.

But, just as Jesus pronounced forgiveness, he then pronounces healing. And as complete as the forgiveness is, so too is the healing in this man.

But don't forget the priority. Don't forget the order. Verse 24, here's what Jesus says. This is the key. That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

[ 13 : 39 ] That is why that's the explanation for Jesus' movement, what it is that he actually does in this man. There are two key words here. Look at this. The first one in that verse is but.

It might be actually so that. That's the purpose. The purpose of healing is to show the priority of forgiveness. And then the second word that's really important is know or realize or convince or persuade or prove.

Healing serves this knowledge that we have of God that he's the one who has the right and the power or the authority to forgive sins. And this priority to do it first.

And that is above all to forgive those who have sinned against him. Well now, paralysis is I think a picture and a bit of a sign of what sin does to us.

But healing is also a picture and a sign of what forgiveness means to us. And we can't glorify and serve the Lord in the paralysis of our sin.

[ 14 : 41 ] big forgiveness and continued forgiveness are required from us. For us, rather.

Otherwise, we like the Pharisees are just left sitting there. Well, let me return to the would you rather scenario in closing then.

what if we were to bring the paralytic actually here today with us? Bring him just right down here and ask him a kind of a question, a would you rather question.

Would you rather, interesting, this man's kind of nameless, we don't know his name, but knowing what you do now, would you rather know that your sins are forgiven or to get up, take your mat, and go home?

What do you think he'd say? Fortunately, Jesus did both, right? He both forgave the man's sins and he healed him.

[ 15 : 41 ] But in this, we see Jesus' power and authority to forgive sins and to heal. And the priority is first to forgive and always is for him. And sometimes, sometimes he'll heal too.

This all happens in what we now know as this house of forgiveness, these friends of his who dared to lower him down into the presence, into the life of Jesus Christ so that they might realize, I think, later, that it's the cross of Christ that crosses out our sin, frees us up to serve him in his kingdom because he's forgiven us of that great offense that we have against him.

And then we, like them in the end, we can say that we've seen extraordinary things today, this day, and glorify him forever. I speak to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.