

Series: The Gospel of Luke – Jesus: the God man
Preached @ ECCB by Grant Peers on 11th December, 2011

Scripture: Luke 9:37-45

MAJESTY ABOVE - RECAP (37)

The strong links with the OT continue into this passage. Jesus comes down the mountain, and just like Moses faces the reality of sin, so does Jesus. On the mountain Jesus is transfigured – his body shines like the sun, for a moment his human veil is drawn back and we see the reality of who he is as the God-man. His majesty is shown to us up on the mountain.

But as he arrives at ground level we are about to see his majesty again!

AN ONLY SON (38)

A man in the crowd cries out for Christ's help. Just like Jairus and the widow at Nain, this father's ONLY son is desperately in need. To us this situation does not seem as dire as it would have been for this man. It is not that children are not important or valuable to us – but in his culture they were an indication of: (1) spiritual blessing. Remember poor Elizabeth who had been barren. And when she eventually had the son she says, 'the Lord has taken away my disgrace among the people' (1:25). So there was strong spiritual and cultural stuff happening here. (2) Now I know this sounds weird, but children were an insurance policy. They had no old age homes, care facilities, or medical aid. No, you changed your kid's nappies when they were young and they repaid the favour when you were old! (3) lastly it was a legacy issue – you left your wealth and your name to someone.

So infant mortality was high – like only 40% of people would live past the age of 20. So if you wanted two adult kids you need to have 5 babies. So you can understand the father's desperation for an only son.

AN OPPRESSED SON (39)

I think Luke wants us to emotionally identify with this situation, For those of you who are fathers and grandfathers and I suppose parents. We are really helped by looking at the parallel accounts in Matthew 17 and Mark 9. If you put the three synoptic accounts together this is the picture you get:

A unclean, unholy, unhelpful, destructive demon spirit would take the boy and throw his body into the fire. Sometimes it would throw him into water – both with the intention of destroying him and killing him. That is what Satan does – he comes to steal kill and destroy (John 10:10). The boy is going into the equivalent of epileptic seizures and his body is taken over by the demon. *We were camping two months ago and Ben tripped near our fire and almost fell in – he just singed his hair! Then my wife was paranoid around the fire. I am paranoid around pools – I*

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just can't imagine anything worse than a drowning. Imagine what it was like for this father – continually wracked with fear; he would not leave the child alone for a moment!

In Mark it tells us that the spirit made him deaf and mute and he has been like this since infancy! He was deaf; he was dumb; he was covered in scars; he lived in an aquarium-like existence; he was being destroyed. And the father comes as says, “Jesus, please this is my only son.”

DISCIPLES ARE POWERLESS (40)

The disciples are powerless to do anything for the boy - which is interesting because at the beginning of chapter 9 Jesus gives them authority to drive out demons and sends them out – and they do! But now they can't! Why? Again the Luke account is shorter but Mark adds the explanation that Jesus gives – “this cannot be driven out by anything but prayer” and in Matthew Jesus explains that it was because they have “so little faith”.

So there is a connection between prayer and faith, and being able to do stuff for Jesus. The implication is that their actions came from faith in themselves – they thought: “we've got this one covered; been there done that before”. Jesus basically says, ‘So you thought you could go out and do ministry, cast out demons in my name and you didn't even talk to me, without leaning on my strength.’

So here is the question: “**how much of your life is like that?**” You think (or your actions betray your thoughts):

- I don't need to pray about who to do my job; about safety while driving; protection for my children; the decisions, activities and actions that are my daily life.
- I've been doing this for so long; I'm skilled, equipped, proficient, wise, insightful
- I can take care of this

Jesus says: apart from me you can do nothing; nothing meaningful for God; nothing glorifying to God; nothing that really serves him (anything that doesn't proceed from faith is self-service). I just love how human the disciples are – their faithlessness and prayerlessness developed in a week!

JESUS IS ANNOYED (41)

It does not say the words but reading the situation: Jesus is upset! The rebuke that Jesus gives is for the crowd, but specifically for the disciples. Jesus just calls them out in front of everyone – that's uncomfortable! In Matthew Jesus says, “how long do I have to put up with you!”

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So the point is that there is a righteous way to be annoyed (cause Jesus never sinned). Not like this: Jesus got annoyed, I get annoyed, I'm like Jesus! The point is that there is a holy and righteous way to get upset when people who profess to know, love and serve God but don't listen, don't pray, don't serve, don't obey and so other people suffer. Now before your minds run to the person that you are already thinking of: man that person is so annoying! Let me ask you a hard question: **how annoyed is Jesus with you?**

If we're reading the story right – Jesus is annoyed with people who don't trust him, who don't pray, who don't depend, who don't talk to him, who turn on autopilot and think cruise-control is the most glorifying thing to God since sliced bread. This is the way it plays out all too often in our lives: we 'handle' things ourselves and end up in a mess; we just live our lives and when things fall apart we talk to him as a last resort or even we accuse God of not being good! But God is good and it should be our first priority to talk to and depend on him.

MAJESTY BELOW (42-45)

In the healing we just see the lavish grace of God and his love and restoration. And the crowd is completely mesmerised by the power that was at work. The answer is not in the father or the disciples but in Jesus. And note: the healing is not partial, it is complete – the Lord restores the Boy's mind, hearing, speech, body, boyhood, and hope¹. Just like the magnificence of Jesus was seen on the mountain so now it is shown again.

But Jesus is at pains to explain to them the purpose of his majesty. After Peter's declaration "you are the Messiah of God" he tells them about his betrayal and death. On the mountain of transfiguration Moses and Elijah discuss (and it was obviously overheard) Jesus departure = death. At the foot of the mountain, after this awesome miracle Jesus again says: my purpose here on earth is to suffer and dies for the sins of mankind so that they may be bought into a relationship with God.

The cross was the shame of the world, but the glory of God. He shows his uncalculating love and grace, but at the same time is perfect and just judgement against our sin. He saves and he condemns in love! If you are not a Christian and you're here this morning – can I ask you: doesn't it boggle your mind that God would send his Son to die. Either he is a cosmic tyrant or he is the most loving and gracious God who deserves all our worship love and adoration.

¹ R Kent Hughes, Luke: that you may know the truth: Vol1

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MORE SURE TESTIMONY (45)

We're coming up to a natural break in Luke. Luke 9:51 – the rest of Luke is going to deal with Jesus journey to the cross and him teaching us what it means to be disciples in light of the cross. This is the last sermon I will preach in Luke this year (next week Nick is doing the morning service). And we'll start next year off with a different series.

But I would like to end this section of Luke with powerful challenge. Over the last couple of weeks we have heard some pretty amazing stories: calm storm, casting out our legion of demons, heal a 12-year-sick woman, raise Jairus' daughter, feeding the 5000, the transfiguration, healing the demon possessed kid. And if you're anything like me, in your humanity, you say, 'if only I could have been there – even for one of the events'; or even to be one of the shepherds who saw the chorus of angels; or to have witnessed the events that surrounded Christ's birth.

You say, 'If I had been *there* then there would be nothing to stop me in ministry; if I had experienced that it would be life changing; that would make all the difference to my faith. No listen to 2Peter 1:16-21 as Peter reflects on his experiences many years later.

2Peter 1:16-21 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

He says, 'I was at his baptism, I was on the mountain with Moses and Elijah, I saw Jesus' body change to glorious light, my testimony is trustworthy.' And we think, 'If I heard God speak – then all my doubts would go away.'

19 And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

We have something more sure... More sure than what? Than seeing the things that Peter saw. We have something that is better for us than an experience. What is it? It is the prophetic word. Every word that has been recorded for us in the Bible was recorded as the Holy Spirit carried the authors (or speakers) along. The light that we need is not an experience. What you need is to listen to the Word of God.

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The Holy Spirit has given us something that is more beneficial and more helpful and more valuable than an experience in a moment in time. It is not like a momentary light of glory at an event; it is a lamp that you carry with you that permanently lights your way. We have the Word! The light is in here! The Holy Spirit indwells our hearts; he illuminates the Word to our understanding.

Christ brings new life to our hearts not by his miracles, but because of the message of his death and resurrection; Christ guides us in this life not by his miracles but by the truth and grace we find