

“HE WAS . . . HUMAN”

(Luke 9:51)

4.7.19

INTRODUCTION

Over the next three weeks (and four services), we are going to be looking at Easter through different filters of Christ’s life. Next Sunday (Palm Sunday), we will be looking at Jesus as King. On Maundy Thursday, we will be looking at Jesus as Slave. And, on Easter Sunday, that amazing day, we will be looking at Jesus as Risen. Today, we start it off by looking at Jesus as Human. He was the Son of God who also, simultaneously, lived as the Son of Man.

One of the reasons I am using this approach is that, at the same time that this is the most important and powerful story in the history of the human race, this is also a story full of quiet subtleties — some moments that, though very quiet, in fact almost silent, they contribute so much to our understanding of all that Jesus went through — solely for the purpose of offering us the gift of forgiveness of our sins. Today will be a great example of that, as we are going to worship the humanity of Christ’s life by means of one verse — a verse found less than halfway through the book of Luke. Let’s go there now!

TEXT (LUKE 9:51)

As the time approached for Him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out (set His face firmly, to turn resolutely in a certain direction) for Jerusalem — Luke 9:51. To “set one’s face” was a Hebrew expression for firmness of purpose in spite of danger: *Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame — Isaiah 50:7.* Christ’s ability to continue to move forward with the purpose of His life knowing the inevitability of the cross is founded in the same reality that Isaiah observed: “Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced.” Simon Peter made the same observation in First Peter, in a reference we have looked at before: *[Jesus] entrusted Himself to Him (referring to God His Father) who judges justly — I Peter 2:23b.* And why not? He obeyed His Father without exception; it was the greatest desire of His heart. As He Himself noted: *“I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught Me. The one who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do what pleases Him” — Jesus Christ, John 8:28b-29.* He knew His Father was completely and constantly with Him; therefore, He could go to Jerusalem with that confidence and assurance of His Father’s accompaniment every step of the way.

In fact, Jesus had always known that His life was purposed by and for His Father’s plans. As early as a 12-year-old child, He knew He had been set apart for God’s special work. When He disappeared from Mary and Joseph following the Passover celebration in Jerusalem, and they finally found Him after much searching, He calmly and respectfully told them: *“Why were you searching for Me? . . . Didn’t you know I had to be in My Father’s house (literally, “be about My Father’s business”)?” — Jesus Christ, Luke 2:49.* Even before He had called His first disciples, He was telling people: *“I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent” — Jesus Christ, Luke 4:43.* But Jesus also knew more; as His time with His disciples continued, He began to fill them in on a fuller, much more intimidating aspect of God’s plan: *“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” — Jesus Christ, Luke 9:22.*

But here was the hook: While Jesus as completely God knew the path He was to travel, He was going to be making that journey as completely man. The suffering, the ridicule, the rejection was all going to be experienced as a man — as a complete-in-every-way human being.

Christ's Humanity:

Born to human parents, with a human descent: Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38

Was a baby: Luke 2:6-38 (circumcised at the eighth day: Luke 2:21-23)

Was a child: Matthew 2:1-23

And the Child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him — Luke 2:40.

Was a boy: Luke 2:41-52 (twelve years old when at the temple for Passover: Luke 2:41-51)

Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man — Luke 2:52.

Had human siblings: Mark 6:3 (He was the big brother in His family)

Called a man, both by Himself and by others: John 8:40, 10:31-33

Had a body, which could be handled and touched: John 1:14; II Peter 1:16-18; I John 1:1-3:

The Word became flesh (God became human) and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth — John 1:14.

[W]e did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain — I Peter 1:16-18.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard — I John 1:1-3a.

Had a soul: Matthew 26:38/Mark 14:34

Had a spirit: Matthew 26:41, 27:50; Mark 2:8-10; John 11:33, 13:21

Became hungry: Matthew 4:2, 21:18

Ate food: Matthew 9:10; Luke 24:36-43

Became thirsty: John 4:7, 19:28

Drank: Matthew 11:18-19; Mark 14:23; Luke 5:27-30

Became tired (weary): John 4:4-6

Became tired (sleepy):

That day when evening came, He said to His disciples, "Let us go over to the other side (of the Sea of Galilee)." Leaving the crowd behind, they took Him along, just as He was, in the boat. There were also other boats with Him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" — Mark 4:35-38.

Tried to escape the crowds: Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42, 5:15-16

Wept: Luke 19:41; John 11:35

Was tempted: Matthew 4:1-11

Was ignorant of the future: Matthew 24:36

Suffered: Isaiah 52:14, 53:1-12; Matthew 26:67, 27:26b-31; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63-65

Died: Matthew 27:45-50; Mark 15:33-37; Luke 23:44-46; John 19:28-30

Emotions:

Joy — at pleasing His Father:

“If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” — Jesus Christ, John 15:10-11.

Exhaustion — from the demands of ministry:

[B]ecause so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, (Jesus) said to them, “Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place — Mark 6:31-32.

Anger (Distress) — at the hypocrisy of the religious establishment:

Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger . . . deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts — Mark 3:4-5a. Some commentaries suggest that His anger at this deliberate rejection of who and what He was bothered Jesus so much that He literally growled under His breath, so great was His offense at their attitudes.

Sorrow — at the ravages of sin:

As (Jesus) approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace — Luke 19:41-42a.

Jesus wept — John 11:35.

Compassion — for the lost and downtrodden:

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd — Matthew 9:35-36.

Frustration (Amazement) — at slow learners and their lack of faith

(Jesus) could not do any miracles there [Nazareth], except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith — Mark 6:5-6a.

Amazement — for the unexpected grasping of who He is: ***When Jesus heard (the centurion’s response to Him), He was amazed and said to those following Him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith” — Matthew 8:10.***

Agony — at impending suffering:

“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour” — Jesus Christ, John 12:27.

[B]eing in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground — Luke 22:44. There is a rare condition called “hematidrosis,” in which a person literally sweats blood when under extreme stress.

During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission — Hebrews 5:7.

Empathy — for the pain of others:

When Jesus saw His mother there (at the cross), and the disciple whom He loved [John] standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,” and to the

disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took (Mary) into his home — John 19:26-27.

Forgiveness — in the face of betrayal:

Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of Me . . . But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee” — Matthew 26:31a, 32

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” — Jesus Christ, Luke 22:31-32.

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” — Jesus Christ, while hanging on the cross, Luke 23:34.

Indignant — at people being blocked from being with Him:

People were bringing little children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And He took the children in His arms, placed His hands on them and blessed them — Mark 10:13-16.

And that’s what’s so amazing about this verse: He “set out” for Jerusalem as fully God, completely knowing what lay ahead for Him, but making that journey as fully man. Every moment of suffering and torment He was going to experience as fully man. What a statement of love — both for the plan of the Father and for the salvation of us. And this is what was in store for Him.

And think about this: Luke, the writer of this verse, is understood to have gotten his information from countless interviews of the people who had actually experienced these moments — which would have included letters and transcripts from people of the time as well as interviews from people who had seen Jesus during His ministry. Luke was not there himself to have seen the things he wrote about in his gospel, so he is often sharing impacts of what the people around Christ were experiencing. And this verse paints a wonderfully graphic portrait of a determined Savior who was absolutely committed to completing His mission — regardless of circumstances, regardless of pain, regardless of life, regardless of anything save His Father’s purpose for His life. That look upon “setting His face” must have been an amazing thing to see and, decades after the moment, the memory was still burned into the minds of those who shared this moment with look — and, of course, that same determination carried our Messiah through all the remainder of His days on earth.

Now all that being said, we are still left with the question: Why did Jesus have to become one of us? Why did He have to be human? A couple of reasons:

First, He had to become us to SAVE us. Remember when Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment by a teacher of the law? His answer: ***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” — Jesus Christ, Mark 12:30.*** In other words, we are commanded to love with all our emotional strength, all our spiritual strength, all our intellectual/mental strength, and all our physical strength. But sin had completely corrupted our ability to love the Lord to any degree in any of those areas. So, for us to be saved to be able to do God that completely, Jesus had to become human in all those ways: emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically. Two thousand years ago, He did exactly

that. To save us completely, He had to become us completely. So, Jesus took on a human body to save us physically. He took on a human mind to be able to save us mentally and intellectually. He took on a human heart, with all its emotions, to save us emotionally. As John Calvin noted: “Christ has put on our feelings along with our flesh.” And He took on a human will and spirit, to save us spiritually and to heal our broken wills. He became us completely to save us completely. Anything less, and we couldn’t be fully redeemed. Anything less human, and His substitution would not have been valid. As Gregory of Nazianzus, a theologian from the fourth century said so well: “That which He has not assumed He has not healed.”

Second, He had to become us to MINISTER to us. As the writer of Hebrews said: *Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels He helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason He had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted — Hebrews 2:14-18.* And His conclusion? *[S]ince we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet He did not sin — Hebrews 4:14-15.*

CONCLUSION

Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Rome: *For just as through the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous — Paul, Romans 5:19.* And as he shared with the church at Corinth: *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God — Paul, II Corinthians 5:21.* In other words, He became us to live for us. He became us to die for us. He rose from the dead to live with us. Everything we needed to be reconciled with God, Jesus Christ provided — by loving us so much He traded all that He had for all that we needed. Let’s pray!