

February 24, 2019
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Luke
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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AUTHORITY OVER HIS OWN DEATH

Luke 9:18-22; 28-36

Benjamin Franklin is credited with saying, “In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” We’re not surprised that a politician offered an opinion about taxes. And yet it is remotely possible that even taxes are not certain. We know from experience that the amount or rate for taxes is never certain. But death? That’s certain. In that sense, we are all heading toward the same end in life. Of course there is the positive aspect of death in that it doesn’t get worse every time Congress is in session.

Death is so certain that many of us already own burial plots in cemeteries and some have even prepaid their funeral expenses. Pat and I bought plots in a cemetery when we were in our twenties because we were pretty certain that one day we will need them. And I’m glad we did because the cemetery we chose has continually raised the price of the plots, the vaults, and their services blaming it on the rising cost of living. Doesn’t that seem a bit odd?

Though death is certain, we do not normally have the privilege of controlling it. Sure there is the problem of suicide and physician assisted suicide, or “death with dignity” as the promoters of euthanasia errantly call it. But in the natural, normal, ebb and flow of life, we do not have the authority to determine when we will die or how we will die. And we certainly do not have the authority to change the laws of nature and come back to life after we die!

Jesus, God the Son, possessed that kind of authority. His peers were astonished when they heard Him teach with divine or heavenly authority. They were shocked when they watched Him heal all manner of diseases, cast out demons, control weather, and even raise the dead. But the greatest display of Christ’s authority was when He

quietly allowed the greatest fools in history to kill Him, and then after three days He got up and walked out of the tomb. That kind of authority is so astonishing that it is unacceptable to many. Such doubters feel compelled to explain Christ’s resurrection away by all kinds of fantastic theories.

The apostles should not have been surprised to learn that Jesus came out of the grave. Several times He had promised them that He would do that very thing. Our text records one of those times when Jesus clearly promised to come out of the grave. A few verses later (vv.28-36), we read about the incredible experience three apostles had as they were eyewitnesses to a display of Christ’s glory. He whose glory prohibits gazing, who meets and talks with long-dead saints from the past, must possess pretty amazing authority. And best of all, He who has the authority to get up from the dead and walk out of the tomb has promised that because He lives, we who love Him and follow Him will live with Him. I like that kind of authority.

The Son of Man Will be Killed and Raised (vv.18-22).

The Christ asked an important question (vv.18-20). According to verse eighteen, He asked the question in the context of Him praying. *Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him (v.18a)*. But notice that the text states that Jesus prayed alone. What were the disciples doing at that time? They were sleeping. Based on other evidence, we might get the idea that this was a typical practice for the disciples. Mark recorded that Jesus would resort to lonely prayer early in the morning while the disciples were still asleep (Mark 1:35). Sometimes Jesus prayed all night while the disciples slept (Luke 6:12).

At the height of crisis in Jesus’s life, He prayed and the disciples slept. It was in the Garden of Gethsemane context that we read, *And he came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners” (Mark 14:41)*. The disciples were sleeping at that most critical time in spite of the fact that Jesus already woke them once and told them to pray that they not enter temptation. It is no wonder that Jesus told Peter that He had

prayed for him, because it does not appear that Peter spent much time praying for himself (Luke 22:32).

Here is an interesting point. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). In response to their request, Jesus gave them a rough outline for prayer that we call the “Lord’s Prayer” though more accurately it is the “Disciples’ Prayer.” But more important than that outline, Jesus taught the disciples to pray by His example. In so doing, He gave a very good lesson for parents and husbands to learn and practice. Parents, don’t tell your children to pray – show them how. Husband don’t tell your wife to pray – show her how. The sad reality is that we probably need to conclude more accurately, wives don’t tell your husbands to pray but show them how.

In that setting of prayer, Jesus posed the question of the day. *And he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” (v.18b).* Jesus asked this question while He and the disciples were in Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13-20). That town and area was a setting of abject paganism. All around were carvings, idols, and temples to pagan deities. It is also likely that at that time there was a temple dedicated to emperor worship. Who was Jesus compared to such useless, wicked deities?

Maybe fresh on the disciples’ minds was the curiosity described in our previous study. We learned, *Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. Herod said, “John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him (Luke 9:7-9).*

By posing this question about the disciples’ conclusions, Jesus was not taking a survey. Nor did He really wonder what the crowds thought. Jesus certainly was not searching for a compliment like we weak humans do. The Master initiated the opportunity for the followers to express faith in truth.

The apostles answered the question. First they gave some of the wrong answers. *And they answered, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen” (v.19).* Herod thought Jesus was John the Immerser risen from the dead. I know the text uses the noun that serves as a title and calls

John the Baptist. But because that title seems to irk some of my dear Presbyterian brothers, I’ll choose the less denominational term. Some other people thought Jesus was Elijah risen from the dead because the last Old Testament prophet, Malachi, had promised that God will send Elijah on the great day when the Lord restores Israel (Malachi 4:5). Or maybe Jesus was one of the other Old Testament prophets.

I find it ironic that all of these opinions of the “crowd” center on resurrection. Jesus would be the only prophet risen from the dead in bodily form until the great day of the Lord when His two witnesses will be killed and raised again.

Finally Jesus zeroed in on the apostles’ conclusions which brought out the only right answer. *Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God” (v.20).* Who should know the right answer to the question better than the twelve closest followers who were with Jesus every day? Out of all the people of the world, the Good Shepherd’s “sheep” hear His voice and know Him (John 10:14). And when offered the opportunity to walk away like other fickle followers did, the apostles said, *“We have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:69).* This same knowledge, this same confident relationship with Christ, is what all believers experience. We should be like the people in the city of Sychar who *said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).*

The deep assurance that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, God in the flesh, comes not through logical reasoning, but through the miracle of God’s grace. Jesus explained it by teaching, *“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matthew 11:27).* And yet because we are weak in the flesh, we often do not know Him as we should. *Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” (John 14:9).*

You can know all the right words and titles for Jesus, like *“The Christ of God”* or *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”*

(*Matthew 16:16*). But do you know Jesus Christ intimately because He is your personal Christ, Savior from sin, Master, and Owner? Do you know Him well because you read His love letters daily, and because you talk to Him continually throughout the day?

Jesus the Son of Man revealed to those believing apostles that He was in control of His future. They had just confessed to the most important truth in eternity, and Jesus told them to keep the truth secret! *And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one (v.21)*. This was quite stern instruction as the two words **charged** and **commanded** indicate.

Why would Jesus of Nazareth not desire for His representatives to tell the good news that He was the promised Messiah? Part of the reason for silence might be because the Israelites as a whole had a twisted view of Messiah. They were looking for the king who would raise an army, throw Rome out of Israel, and reestablish the nation of God. That was Nathanael's response when he met Jesus the first time. *Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49)*. Jesus had already avoided the crowds trying to force Him to be king at least once if not multiple times. *Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself (John 6:15)*.

Another part of the reason for silence was that it would have been easy at that point in Jesus's ministry to declare the wrong thing. The apostles had already gone out and represented Christ's authority and power in healing the sick and casting out demons. But the great work of the Christ was not to heal and provide food.

In time the truth will be clearly revealed. Having told the apostles to stay silent about the truth that He was the Christ, Jesus explained that second reason *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"(v.22)*. The great purpose of the Christ was to offer Himself as the sacrifice to cover the guilt of confessed sin and to prove His sacrifice valid by rising from the grave. After that happened, the apostles would receive the Holy Spirit affirmation and commission and would spend their lives preaching that Jesus of Nazareth is the Anointed One sent from heaven to be the sinner's Savior.

After He completed the full work of redemption, the truth would be known and declared. Jesus had already told the nay-sayers that such would be the case. *So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me" (John 8:28)*. Jesus possessed all the authority of the Christ sent to pay redemption's price. The great news is that He accomplished what the Father sent Him to do.

The Son of Man is the Son of God (vv.28-36).

God the Son took special servants with Him to pray. They were three choice servants. *Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray (v.28)*. This took place about a week (Mark wrote that it was six days) after the great confession about Jesus's authority as the Christ. Again, we find Jesus and the disciples in the setting of a prayer meeting. We would like to think that the text means that Jesus and Peter, James, and John were all going to the mountain top to pray together. By now we probably know what was going to happen. Jesus was going to pray and the choice servants were going to sleep.

Why only Peter, James, and John? These three apostles were often found with Jesus while the other nine were not. They accompanied Him into the house when Jesus raised Jairus's daughter from the dead. Jesus took these three apostles deeper into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Peter, James, and John would become the key servants of the Lord in establishing His Church. They seemed to be pillars of the Church (Galatians 2:9). According to God's law, a fact was established by the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). These three (and sometimes Andrew) were eyewitnesses to all of Jesus's displays of power and authority.

Jesus prayed while the servants slept. And while they slept, God the Father revealed the Son's glory. *And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white (v.29)*. Again, Jesus was alone praying. While He prayed, a miracle occurred. Jesus's physical body experienced a metamorphosis (the exact word Matthew used to describe it). Matthew wrote, "*And*

he was transfigured [metamorphoo] before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light” (Matthew 17:2). What was it like? Try looking directly into the sun and you will quickly discover how brilliant God the Son’s divine nature shown. You will also discover how impossible it is to gaze on the purity of God. Even His clothing was emitting brilliant light. Suddenly, Jesus of Nazareth, who for all intents looked just like Peter, James, and John, pulled back the curtain and revealed a small glimpse of who He really is.

And along with the glory, God the Father sent other servants to encourage the Son. Servants from the past actually met with Jesus. *And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah (v.30).* These were two real saints from the past appearing in their glorified bodies. Not just holograms like some pastors appear at the multi-campus churches on Sunday morning. The actual Moses and Elijah met with Jesus in a body like He would inherit in a few months.

Why those two? Maybe Moses came because he was the law giver, who was the forerunner of the promised prophet. He had promised, *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers – it is to him you shall listen” (Deuteronomy 18:15).* Maybe Elijah came because he would appear in type foretelling Messiah’s arrival the first time (John the Baptist) and possibly in reality preceding Messiah’s second appearance (one of the two witnesses in Revelation 11).

Moses and Elijah encouraged the Son. They *appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem (v.31).* What a wonderful way to talk about Christ’s finished work. He lived a short lifetime on earth for one reason – to pay the penalty for sin. Once He had “finished the job” in Jerusalem, He was going home. Did the old saints encourage Jesus the man, God the Son, to finish well?

The Son needed encouragers because the choice servants slept. *Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep (v.32).* Let’s be sympathetic. These men were very busy, inundated by crowds, walking all over Galilee every day, and rowing or sailing boats back and forth across the sea. We can understand why they were tired and wanted to sleep. Jesus who was fully man and tempted in every way we are, was busier than they were, and had to be just as

tired if not more tired. But being fully God, He understood the importance of prayer.

Why is it necessary for us to find prayer important only after we become submerged in chaos? It is probably because we really can’t see the chaos of spiritual battle going on around us as vividly as we should. If we understood that we are often one step from falling into the horrible pit of sin that Satan has laid for us, we would be more like Jesus the prayer warrior than Peter the sleeper.

God the Son is authority – listen to Him. Peter the mere human had a great idea. Having finally awakened from their sweet dreams, Peter and the other disciples witnessed Christ’s glory. *But when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him (v.32b).* They had seen evidences, symptoms of His glory in His teaching, healing, exorcism, and resurrecting power. It was like seeing the reflections of the sun in the moon, the shadows cast by objects in the sun’s rays. But know they were looking full at the Son in His full strength.

And how shocking was it to see Moses and Elijah in their glorified bodies. Did they know who the guys were? It is doubtful Moses was holding the law tablets and Elijah was wrapped in his famous mantel.

In response to the phenomenal experience, Peter suggested building memorials. *And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah”– not knowing what he said (v.33).* As the astonishing scene began to dissipate, Peter spoke, which surprised no one.

Peter was one of those saints like we know who always has to have a comment. It is a personality quirk. Sometimes those saints actually say something useful – but not always. Peter suggested building tabernacles, like the one in Israel’s history, where people could come and experience the glory of God the Son and His two friends. He was wrong because no saints, even if they have glorified bodies, are equal with Jesus. He was wrong because it was not time to bathe in Christ’s glory yet. He was wrong because Jesus was on earth not to establish the kingdom of Israel but to open the way into the Kingdom of Heaven. He was wrong because once again he was suggesting that Jesus skip the cross, suffering, and death stuff. Nor

are we surprised to read the Holy Spirit's explanation for Peter's suggestion: *not knowing what he said*.

The clear instruction from God taught the apostles to listen to the Son. They should have been primed to learn because God's authority is frightening. *As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud (v.34)*. They did not enter into the cloud of God's glory. Rather, the glory of God enveloped them. We should long to be drawn so deeply into God's glory even though it is a scary condition to weak, fleshly humans.

And finally the apostles learned that God's authority resides in the Son. *And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" (v.35)*. God spoke. Granted, God's words seem to be directed specifically at talkative Peter, but they are fitting for all of us. God affirmed that Jesus, the man from Nazareth, is God the Son, the Chosen One (Christ). Listen to Him. If you are not reading your Bible, you are disobeying God's expressed will in this matter.

The disciples submitted to Christ's authority. *And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen (v.36)*. Life returned to normal. The apostles obeyed God's command *And they kept silent* in order to hear Jesus. And they did not tell the story about this miracle until they were authorized by the Holy Spirit's filling to be Christ's preachers.

God in the flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, was destined to die. That was because He was the Christ, the Chosen One, come from heaven to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross. He was destined to rise again as proof that His sacrifice was accepted. But through the process, He was in control, under the Father's care and direction. He accomplished the task the Father sent Him to do that we might be freed from the penalty and power of sin and free to enjoy fellowship with Him as we hear Him speak through His Word.