

A Supernatural Jesus

John 20:19-31

The Second Sunday of Easter, April 3, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Christianity would fall without a supernatural Jesus.

I suppose it seems obvious to say that, but there are some “Christians” who try to get by without a supernatural Jesus. But even in the beginning the apostles knew that without a supernatural Jesus Christianity would fail. The apostle writes in 1 Corinthians 15, “If Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sins.”

Why would that be true? It has to do with the nature of the incarnation. When God becomes human and presents Himself, Jesus of Nazareth, there are certain problems that He must solve, especially when it comes to the absolution.

The account of the paralyzed man puts this forward most clearly. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s gospels stands recorded the account of men bringing a paralyzed man to Jesus for healing. Jesus tells the paralyzed man that his sins are forgiven. Laying aside for the moment why Jesus chooses to absolve the man first rather than heal him, the Pharisees and others who heard Jesus forgive the man think to themselves that Jesus is blaspheming. They think to themselves that no one can forgive sins except God alone.

Now that Jesus has become incarnate, He looks like any other human being. While He shares in our human nature, He looks like us and acts like us and talks like us. It is not evident that He is God. And furthermore when the Pharisees question whether or not He should be forgiving sins when only God can do it, Jesus does not tell them, “Everything is cool. I’m God. It is ok for me to say this.” And even if He did say such a thing, they would have demanded proof that He was God. A man cannot simply go around claiming to be God. He had better say some things and do some things to back up that claim or they will stone Him for blasphemy or we moderns will dismiss Him as one who should be on the funny farm or in an insane asylum.

And so Jesus heals the guy. For us our Lord is proving His divinity and His authority to forgive sins. But the point that Jesus makes when He heals the paralyzed man has nothing to do with His divinity. He is proving that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He is proving that He, no matter what He looks like and in spite of His genuine humanity, has the authority to forgive sins. He has authority to bestow peace and all of the other blessings of God. As the catechism says, “Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”

No matter how you slice it Jesus performed a miracle to prove that He had the authority to forgive sins. You need a supernatural Jesus or there is no forgiveness of sins. You need a risen from the dead Jesus or there is no peace bestowed.

So Jesus has the authority to forgive sins on behalf of God. Jesus has the authority to bestow peace on behalf of God. He has such authority because of the nail marks and the spear mark in His body, and because He rose from the dead.

Jesus may bestow salvation. We have a supernatural Jesus.

Then Jesus tells His disciples. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.

We know that the Father has sent Jesus because Jesus has done the works that the Father does. He has performed miracles. On one occasion Jesus told people, “If you do not believe in Me on My account, believe in the works themselves.” In other words, if you do not believe in Me because of what I

say, believe in Me because of the miracles that I perform. Jesus therefore presents the Father's works as His own works. Therefore when He forgives sins and bestows peace, He does so on behalf of the Father.

It is this supernatural Jesus who bestows forgiveness and grants peace that sends you out just as the Father sent Him out. The Father sent Him out to forgive sins and bestow peace, therefore Jesus has sent you out with His own authority to forgive sins and bestow peace. Without a supernatural Jesus you have no authority to bestow any forgiveness. You have no authority to bestow any peace. But we have a supernatural Jesus. He rose from the dead. Therefore the risen from the dead man sends you with His authority to forgive sins and to bestow peace, then you may forgive and bestow peace. And when you forgive they are forgiven in the sight of God. You are not simply forgiving on your own authority. You are forgiving on His. It is not simply that you forgive them. It is that God forgives them. You have such authority wherever it is that Jesus sends you.

And where has Jesus sent you? He has sent you into your vocations.

This is why I as the pastor of the congregation have the authority on behalf of God to absolve you of your sins. The reason that I have the authority to forgive you is because the One who rose from the dead sent me to you to do precisely that. And so I announce forgiveness. I preach. I baptize. I administer the sacrament of the altar.

Now here is where Satan often tempts laypeople to become narrow minded. Satan tempts us to draw the false conclusion that if pastor is sent to bestow forgiveness on behalf of God, then I cannot. Or he tempts you to think that I am trying to enhance my own authority over you by claiming such authority from Jesus. Satan tempts you to resent it and then tempts you to try to take over the pastoral vocation to the neglect of your own. Such satanic temptations usually materialize in some such statement as this, "Pastor, you mean to tell me that I have to go to you in order to get my sins forgiven?" or "Pastor I don't have to go through a clergy men or anyone else to get my sins forgiven."

If you think such thoughts you are missing the point of what the Lord is doing by putting His forgiveness on earth at all. The point of vocational authority is not that someone gets to do something and therefore Lord it over someone else. The point of vocational authority is to make sure that forgiveness gets done at all.

Do you not believe that you are sinners? If you do believe that you are sinners, do you not believe that you deserve death and hell? If you do believe that you deserve death and hell, then you believe what God has told you. But then if you are worthy of death and hell, there is nothing absolutely nothing, that you can do to make up for what you have done. There is no good deed that will make up for your sins. There is no favor that you can do for God, that will purify yourself before Him. There is nothing that you may accomplish that will make Him accept you. Only if you are forgiven will He accept you. Only if you are forgiven will He delight in you. Only if you are forgiven, will He spare you eternal hell and death. Only if you are forgiven will He give you life everlasting.

That being the case what does it matter where God puts His forgiveness as long as He puts in somewhere? Why does it matter that God gives some the authority to forgive as long as He gives the authority to do it? He could have given no one the authority to forgive and then we would all be in hell because there would be no way to access it. Fortunately for us God has given us forgiveness and He has given in on earth in a way that is accessible to you. He has established vocations around you and given those vocations the authority to pronounce forgiveness upon you. One of those vocations is mine.

Another vocation is your father and your mother. And you fathers and mothers have authority from the supernatural risen from the dead Jesus to announce the forgiveness of sins to your children. I do

it when the congregation is assembled according to my vocation. You do it practically all of the time, but especially in your homes, so that your children may have salvation.

The point of vocational authority is so that you may be certain of your forgiveness. That is the point of it. So that you may leave those doors and not doubt that your sins have been forgiven before God in heaven because the one whom Jesus called to bestow forgiveness on His behalf has forgiven you and therefore you are forgiven. If you go out of the doors believing that you are not forgiven, or that there is still something that you must do to obtain forgiveness, then you do not believe in the One who rose from the dead nor do you believe that He has the authority on earth to forgive sins. You may as well deny that He is supernatural after all if you believe that you are not forgiven by Jesus. His miracles are not doing any good to you.

And so Jesus presents the miracles. He presents His greatest miracle. He presents Himself alive after His crucifixion. He presents Himself to the likes of Thomas who is no different than any of us. I am surprised that Thomas even gave the disciples the benefit of the doubt when they told him that they had seen the Lord. If I were Thomas, I would have smiled that nice smile of mine and thought they were crazy. At least Thomas says, "Unless I see, I will not believe." He at least does that much the big unbeliever. But then Jesus presents Himself to Thomas. He presents Himself to the unbeliever in order that Thomas may become a believer. John's Gospel then presents that evidence to us as one who saw the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

You do have a supernatural Jesus. He has sent people into our lives with His authority to forgive us. They have forgiven us and we are forgiven.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.