

Fil-Am Community Church
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HE IS THE SON OF MAN
Matthew 16:13

You have probably heard it before. It is a saying commonly attributed to Marie Antoinette, the Austrian princess who became queen of France after marrying Louis the Sixteenth. Legend says that when she was informed that her subjects, the French peasants, were starving because they had no bread, she naively answered, "Let them eat cake!" While there is no evidence she ever said those words, she was nonetheless beheaded in the early days of the French Revolution.

But the legend lives on, and has come to symbolize a person who is spoiled and privileged, and out of touch with common people and everyday life—like a queen who would assume that someone who has run out of bread could eat cake instead.

It is a common failing of the rich and powerful. Someone who has been raised in a wealthy family may have trouble understanding what it is like to work hard and still not be able to make ends meet.

We get an overdraft notice or a shutoff notice, and we wonder if there's anyone who really knows how bad that feels. Someone treats us like dirt, and we sense there's no one else who truly understands how that feels. We doubt ourselves, disappoint ourselves, and think that no one could possibly identify with us.

If any of that is close to what it feels like to be you, you are not alone today. In fact, you couldn't be less alone because of what God has to say to you through His Word today.

Today we continue our series on who Jesus is called "Just Who is Jesus, Anyway?" We're looking at the five titles of Jesus as he is called by others in the Bible and as he called himself.

And one of the titles that Jesus applied to himself over and over again was "Son of Man." It seems this was his most favorite. It appears more than 80 times in the New Testament. For example, in Luke 5:24 Jesus says, "The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." —Luke 5:24, NIV. Then, there's Matthew 8:20, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." —Matthew 8:20, NIV. Then, in Matthew 12:8, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." (Matt. 12:8) And so on.

I. What Does it Mean?

Now, many would have recognized this title as a reference to the prophecy of Daniel, from hundreds of years earlier, who wrote: "I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." —Daniel 7:13-14, NIV

The Jews interpreted this as a prophecy about the coming Messiah. Thus, when Jesus called himself "Son of Man," He was making a clear reference to His identity as the promised Messiah. But the phrase "Son of

Man” also refers to the fact that Jesus shares in our humanity. God called the prophet Ezekiel “son of man” ninety-three times. In doing so, He wasn’t calling Ezekiel the Messiah; He was simply calling him a human being.

Of course, the Jews of Jesus’ day expected the Messiah to be fully human. Jesus did not surprise anyone by being human; He surprised them by being much more than fully human. And so the title, “Son of Man,” means that Jesus is not out of touch.

He knows what it’s like to work hard; He knows what a blister feels like. He knows what it’s like to have bills to pay; He knows what it’s like to face disappointment, rejection, betrayal, and grief. He knows what it’s like to be you. He is able to identify with you in your sorrows and sufferings, as well as in your pleasures and successes.

So, that’s what Jesus meant when he called himself the “Son of Man”. He is God who became a man.

II. What Does It Mean to Me?

Now what does that mean to me? And to you? In the rest of this message, I want to share with you three things regarding its implications in our lives.

A. Jesus can identify with my weaknesses.

All of us have weaknesses, don’t we? What is a weakness? It is something that you’re unable to resist. In short, it is a temptation. Temptation is unique to every person. One’s weakness may not be another person’s weakness. Now, before you became a Christian, it was so easy to give in to that weakness. No matter how much you try to avoid it or prevent yourself from surrendering to it, you just don’t have the will power to do it.

In fact, you may even be looking for it. Some people for example, can't help themselves from getting so impatient. They drive their cars and they drive like they own the road. Or some people swear at everything. Or some people gossip. Or some people look at porn on the internet. Now, being a Christian helps us to tame that tongue, moderate our temper, remove the desire for too much chocolates. But, if truth be told, even though we are already Christians, this weakness or the weaknesses we have come back every now and then. And many of us struggle in this area. I know I do. What is my weakness? I won't tell you. Ask my wife.

Now, as we struggle with our weaknesses, sometimes we get to a point of desperation, or hopelessness, wondering whether there's hope for us. Folks, let me tell you, straight out, yes, there is, because of Jesus. He identifies with you.

This is what the Bible says, "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 4:15)

I like the way the NIV renders this verse. It says, "empathize". Other versions say "sympathize". What is sympathize? It is to feel sorry for, to understand, to pity. It is kind of a detached feeling. But to empathize is to identify with or to relate to someone's feelings. It is more involved and intimate. So, Jesus is like that. He identifies with you. He knows exactly what you're going through. And why? Because he was a man himself when he was on earth. He himself was tempted. And look, it says in every way. Jesus may have been tempted in every way like us but the difference is that, he never, never gave in to any of the temptations that came his way. Why is that? I

figure because of his close walk with God. He was a man of prayer. And that is the key. To pray when we are tempted. To look to God for help. Look at the next verse, *“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* (Heb. 4:16)

What is your weakness? When you feel it, do you pray to God immediately? Do you ask for his help to overcome your weakness? The Bible says don’t be shy in coming to God. Be confident because God is listening and he will help you in your time of need. Listen, the Bible says that we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. *“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”* (Romans 8:37) Jesus Christ loves us. He knows our weaknesses and he will help us when we come to him. And the beautiful thing is that he will not condemn us.

No matter how many times we fall, he is ready to pick us up and assure us that he still cares. Because he was a human being like us and he knows how we feel.

I remember years ago. I was working at NABISCO in New Jersey as a computer programmer. I had a boss who was fond of saying the ‘F’ word. Whether he was happy or angry, he always uttered the ‘F’ word. Now, one day, he and I were trying to debug a program because it was causing a problem in our computer system. So, we were trying to figure out the problem with the program. And we had a hard time finding a solution. It took us hours. Throughout this time, my boss was always muttering the ‘F’ word. We were sitting side by side and so my ears were totally absorbing it. Of course, I couldn’t just shut my ears or tell him to stop. I just endured it.

But we finally solved the problem and I was so relieved. But I think I got a headache. Anyway, the next day, I discovered that every time I encountered a problem with my program, I would say the 'F' word. But, only in my mind. Actually, I was tempted to say it loud, but, I just prayed for God to help me control myself. That went on the whole day. But God is faithful, he helped me to overcome.

Now, Jesus was indeed tempted in every way, just like we are, and he understands our weaknesses and empathizes with us. But he also set the example for us by overcoming and resisting every temptation. We see that for every temptation the devil puts before Him, Jesus counters it with the Word of God –“It is written....”, basically he used the powerful Word of God to send the devil packing. Jesus wants to help us to do the same. So, the next time you're tempted by the devil, why not make sure you are grounded in God's Word, and take a moment to prayerfully ask Jesus to help you overcome, just like He did.

B. Jesus Can Feel My Pain

Now, the other thing that all of us struggle with is when it comes to problems that come our way. All of us suffer from this. There's no one here who doesn't have any problem. If you don't, I assure you it will come.

Facing tragedy, or life storms of any kind, can be extremely difficult. But in the midst of heartache and pain, you can find the hope and courage to go on. With God's help, the help of caring family members and friends, and the encouragement found in the Bible and other resources, you will receive the necessary strength to overcome.

You may be thinking, I don't know how I could ever get through this. Or you may be battling powerful feelings of despair, suffering, confusion, fear, worry, and even anger. These are all normal responses to tragedy.

But as difficult as this life storm may be, you are not alone. Jesus is with you always. He loves you, and cares about what is going on in your life. He hears your cries and sees your pain. Moreover, He understands.

The Bible says, "Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested." (Hebrews 2:17-18 NLT). You see, when he was on earth, Jesus experienced the same things we experienced. He experienced loneliness, despair, anger. He was thirsty, he was hungry, he was even homeless. People cursed him, people stayed away from him. He was denied and rejected. He was betrayed by a friend. He was prosecuted, persecuted, whipped, punched in the face, beaten by sticks, dragged like a criminal, nailed on the cross, humiliated and died a shameful death. Truth is, he suffered more than any of us would ever suffer.

So, my friends, be encouraged that whatever you're going through right now, Jesus understands and he empathizes with you. He knows your feelings. And he cares so much for you. He says, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." (Heb. 13:5 NLT)

So, let me tell you, whatever we endure, His care is certain, His love is unfailing, and His promises are secure. Jesus will come through you. That is his specialty.

C. Jesus Can Be My Savior

In the lower Congo region of Africa, tribal artisans are often called upon to craft or create nkisi nkongi, or "power objects." These wooden

fetishes, usually in the shape of a human being, are thought to possess supernatural healing powers. When there is any kind of sickness in the village—physical, emotional, or spiritual—a priest will take something associated with the suffering person, such as a lock of hair or a piece of cloth, and nail it to the fetish. This act tells the spirit what’s wrong and calls upon its power to heal the problem.

Christians don't need fetishes. When the Son of Man was crucified, flesh just like ours was nailed to the cross. Jesus came from the glory of heaven to become like us so He could suffer for us.

Jesus told Nicodemus: “No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.” – John 3:13 (ESV)

He left a place of complete perfection to dwell in our sin sick world, not even having a roof over His head, or a place He could call His own.

“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” – Luke 9:58 (ESV)

When we think about what Jesus left behind for the purpose of serving and saving us it is beyond extraordinary. Especially when you consider the fact that the reason He came was not because we deserved it, in fact, we have proven over and over again that we didn’t deserve it. But that’s the point, isn’t it? Jesus came to show grace to those who have rejected God, sinned against Him, and refused to conform to His will. In fact, Jesus said:

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.” – Matthew 20:28 (NLT)

Only by becoming like us could we possibly identify with Him, and only becoming like us would we accept God’s offer as genuine. So God came

to us, in the same type of body that we have, so that we would accept His gift of salvation and His rule in our hearts.

What I am trying to get across is this – Jesus came to this planet as God – “Son of God” – to become the “Son of Man” – the man who would be representative of all humankind and stand in our place by receiving the punishment we all deserve. Jesus came to earth for the purpose of identifying with us and taking upon Himself all of our sin, all of our faults, all of our rebellion against God.

So what does all of this mean on a practical basis? It means that Jesus loves you so much that He was willing to do whatever was necessary to bring you into a personal relationship with Him. He saw your sin and knew it separated you from God – He saw your rebellion and knew you had no desire to turn to God – He saw your destiny and desired to change it. And the only way to remove your sin and turn you from your rebellion and give you a better destiny was to come to earth as the Son of Man and die in your place.

Most of you have heard the story before – that Jesus went to the Cross so you wouldn't have to, and that He did it all because He loves you. But have you really thought through the ramifications of all this? God created us without sin, yet we chose to sin and rebel against Him. He could have stayed in heaven and allowed us to face the ultimate destiny that would result from the choice we made to turn away from Him.

Have you ever wondered why God bothered? I have. I mean, why leave the glory of heaven, have to live in a body of human flesh, have to deal with the heat and the cold, and with the flu and all the other things that make us uncomfortable?

Why come to earth to have people spit in your face, question your motives, flog your back, press thorns into your head, and drive stakes through your hands and feet and thrust a spear through your side? Why deal with temptation when you didn't have to? Why get involved in religious debates with people who don't have a clue? Why go to all the trouble of living as a man when you've spent all of eternity living as God? The only possible answer is that Jesus was willing to do whatever was necessary to establish His rule in our hearts, and so He did what had to be done. So the question is what will you do with Jesus?