

Part 3: Weakness in Our Bones

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Kids, have you ever been to the fair or an amusement park where you discovered a ride you really wanted to go on but saw a sign that said, "You must be this tall to ride." College students, have you ever been denied an internship because your grades weren't high enough or your school not prestigious enough? Have you ever been barred from board rooms, mom groups, or bank loans because you just didn't measure up?

Maybe it's those experiences which either confirm, or shape your understanding of Christianity. We must be "this tall," "this good," "this holy," in order to come to Jesus. But what the Bible holds up is not that we come to Jesus when we are tall enough, but only when we are low enough.

If you were to visit the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the traditional site of Jesus' birth, you'd find that there is one door but it is so low that you have to duck to enter the church. Throughout the centuries it's been called, "The Door of Humility."

This door is a great reminder of what the Bible says anyone who would follow Jesus, "humble yourselves therefore under mighty hand of God and at the proper time he may exalt you."

But this Door of Humility that marks the birth of Jesus is not only a reminder for us of how we must come to God in order to be saved, but it's a reminder of how Jesus came to us in order to be the one who can save. While we stoop to come to Christ in faith, no one stoops lower than Jesus who left heaven to take on flesh so that sinners could be saved.

The Dutch pastor, Herman Bavinck described the scandal of the birth of Jesus this way: **"Therefore, the incarnation of the Son of God was not only an act of condescending goodness...but it was at the same time, an act of deep humiliation. This humiliation commenced at conception, continued throughout his life, even to death and to the grave. Along various steps, as it were, such as a humble birth, circumcision, the persecution of Herod and the flight to Egypt, the private life and the carpenter's business in Nazareth, [Jesus'] baptism by John, and his temptation in the desert, the opposition, denial, and hatred to which he was exposed in his public activity, his imprisonment and condemnation, his crucifixion and death, his funeral and descent to hell--upon these stairs, he descended deeper and deeper, always farther from the Father's house, always closer to us in the community our sin and death, until finally on the bottom step, he let out a frightened complaint of his own abandonment by God, but here the victory cry could also be heard: It is Finished."**

I'd invite you to join us next week as we examine that last step of humiliation—his death on a cross. But today we are going to examine the first step of humiliation—his life as human. But it was in his willingness to be made weak like us that his power to save us is displayed. In this we have the privilege of seeing and saying that no one and nothing is like our Jesus.

Our main point today is this: **Jesus' weakness in the flesh shows us the immense power of God.** We will see this in three parts. First we will see **The Weakness of the God who Became Man**, then we will see

The Wounds of Men Who Tried to Be God and we will conclude by looking at The Fellowship Won Between God and Man.

First, we see the **Weakness of the God who Became Man.**

Notice the humanity John displays in our opening verses today: **(John 4:1-7)** "Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. And he had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.'"

What John records for us here is a Jesus who in his humanity is both opposed and ordinary.

Just as we often experience with others, Jesus here faced the discomfort of relational opposition. Already there is comparison between his ministry and John's, and the opposition of the Pharisees causes him to leave southern Judea and travel north into the more rural parts of Galilee.

This journey reveals how he was also ordinary. Despite being fully God. He was also fully human. This journey had him weary, thirsty and hungry.

"Man gets thirsty," is hardly a headline in our world today and that's precisely the point. That's the wonder of the incarnation. What is ordinary for humans is not ordinary for God. God can't thirst.

Isaiah tells us about God in this way: **(Isaiah 40:28)**, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is an everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable."

While the Son of God existed in eternity with the Father and the Spirit—he was inexhaustible. He had no needs. He had no limits other than his own character. But when Jesus took on flesh, he didn't stop being God or lose his divine nature, but he added to that divine nature the true nature of humanity. So what was in eternity infinite—was in the incarnation for a season and in a sense, finite.

Can you imagine what this would be like? In an honest sense, we cannot. For we have never been God. In fact we have never been anything other than human. But we can see some illustrations of this. For instance I have talked with missionaries who have taken a leave from the field who have expressed the frustration of slowly losing their language skills while back in the states.

I for one, have never been frustrated at my loss of knowing Swahili. Why? Because I've never known Swahili. I can't lose it, and therefore I'm not frustrated by it.

We do get frustrated by stubbed toes, by hunger, and by thirst—yet we have never not known those things. We have always been tied to the needs of humanity. But, the Son of God for eternity past was unbound to all these things.

If you've ever walked through the aging process with someone, or find yourself in the aging process, you know how hard it is to ask for help in places you've generally always been capable. When an adult who

has always been able to use the restroom on their own needs to ask for help, we encounter the full humility of our needs. When it's you, you find yourself frustrated and conflicted.

But the amount of humility it takes to ask someone else to clean you up after using the bathroom hardly touches the humility it would have taken for the creator of the world to ask someone for a drink as he was weary from a walk.

It doesn't matter if you grew up playing sports or not, but when someone calls you weak there's generally one response isn't there? We get mad. We don't want to be weak. We don't want to be weary. We don't want to appear subjected to the elements. But we are dependent creatures. Only God is independent.

Yet the eternal Son in his infinite independence chose to be dependent and subjected to the ordinary hunger, thirst and weariness of the flesh. One theologian said of this, "He gave up the better, and assumed the worse." In this he didn't whine, though he could have. He didn't sin in anger, though he felt the tension. But instead he continued to do what he came to do.

Why? Well an early church father put it this way, "For he became man in order that that which was overcome might overcome...for that which is not assumed is not remedied." Because every aspect of our humanity was corrupt by the effects of sin, Jesus had to take on humanity in full so that those who were overcome by sin might overcome it in him.

In this passage the weary Jesus asks for a drink of water on account of his own lack. But the beauty of our passage in John is that this weak and needy Jesus is the only one able to provide abundantly for the needs of his brothers and sisters in the flesh.

Notice what happens next: **John 4:7-15**. If you listened closely, you probably picked up on loads of interpersonal issues in this text.

This is our second point this morning: **The Wounds of Men who Tried to Be God.**

While Jesus became like us, it's important to notice some differences as well. Jesus, being uncreated and eternal freely took on flesh out of a perfect desire to save. We on the other hand, were created perfectly human yet by our own willingness added the devastating effects of sin. In Jesus, God took on humanity in order to save a humanity who tried to be God.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit thinking it would make them like God they not only encountered relational condemnation which lead to spiritual death, but with that sin came all the pain and toil we know so well in this world: bumps, bruises, conflicts and cancers. Our descent into weariness and brokenness was on account of our own condemnation—Jesus' was on account of his compassion.

We are currently in rock chip season. And if you've ever had a rock chip your windshield you know that it fractures and spreads over time. The impact of Adam and Eve's sin splintered and fractured the realities of the world. It fractured our relationship with nature as disasters and famine litter our land, it fractured our relationship with one another, and it fractured our relationship with God himself. Paul says the sting of death is sin. This world stings because of sin.

The life of this woman, and the world she describes is riddled with that sting.

She already vocalizes a racial rift between the Samaritans and the Jews: “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me a woman of Samaria?” I won’t go into all the details between this Jew and Samaritan issue, but know that its wounds are deep, visceral, and violent. Sin fractures relationships between cultures, nations and ethnicities.

But here Jesus, leans into those divides and his interaction with her reveals personal conflict as well. **(John 4:16-18)**, "Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come here.' The woman answered, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right, you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband.'"

This woman has had five husbands, and has now taken a lover who is not her husband. Whether by divorce or death, she’s lost five husbands she seems to have given up on marriage all together and is living with another man in an adulterous relationship.

Whether as sinner or sufferer, there was undoubtedly a huge amount of pain associated with this. This is confirmed by the time of day she came to the well. She went to the well in the sixth hour, which is midday, the hottest part of the day. It's the time of the day when most people don't get water, but it's a perfect time where someone who lives on the edges to come and be spared examining eyes.

But here as Jesus approaches her she is reminded not only of the pain of sin politically and personally, but also spiritually—she is aware that her relationship to God is also fractured. She says, **John 4:19-20**, "'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.'"

The effects of sin are diverse and profound on our relationship with God. For some of us, like the Pharisees, we have no desire to worship Jesus. But for many others, as we become convicted of our own sin we, like this woman, quickly find that we don’t know how to worship Jesus. These layers of division: political, personal and spiritual can cause any of us to succumb to the ditches of despair or desperation.

And here is Jesus, who just wanted a drink, and who now finds himself fully immersed in a counseling session he didn’t ask for. But what does weary Jesus do in light of all he now knows? He invites her to know him. He seeks to repair all that sin had fractured by calling her to the God who redeems it all.

Jesus continues: **John 4:21-26**, "Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in Spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that the Messiah is coming (he who is called the Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things,' Jesus said to her 'I who speak to you am he.'"

In a world gone wrong, Jesus calls this woman to the only man who can make it right. This man didn't look like the man she was with. He didn't look like a political power broker. He looked thirsty and weary and yet he offered to her living water.

Jesus’ weariness in the flesh led her to encounter her own weaknesses of sin and shame, and yet it was the power of Jesus who showed her how he himself might fix all of it.

The location of this scene lends itself to the fractured reality at play. Jacob's Well was sandwiched between two mountains: Gerizim on the right, Ebal on the left. These mountains were significant because as God was bringing Israel into the Promised Land he sent half of them up on Gerizim and they declared the promises of God if Israel were to obey. The other half went across and stood on Ebal and declared the curses God warned of if Israel disobeyed.

This woman's personal history is representative of human's corporate history: more bruises than blessing, more fractures than fellowship. But here, standing between blessing and curse, was the man who would bridge the gap. Jesus wouldn't merely warn of curses, but instead he would wear the curse of sin onto the cross so that all those who stood far off might come to the mountain of blessing by the spring of his blood.

That spring, that water is too deep for us to reach. We can try all we want, but nothing can reach the water we need. But because it was too deep for us, Jesus came down to us. As man he drew what man needed, but as God he drew what man could never reach.

Now notice how this story ends. The disciples finally come back with lunch and look at what happened. **John 4:28-29**, "So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?'"

Don't you love this? Jesus comes to the well weary and thirsty and asks this lady for a drink. Meanwhile, instead of getting him a drink this lady hears that Jesus is God, he is the living water her soul has been longing for. So what does she do? She leaves. The man who was thirsty, was still thirsty.

But Jesus doesn't care. Why? Because he came to bear our weaknesses for our sake. He came to encounter thirst so that others might never thirst. That's the beauty of Isaiah 40, not only does it say we serve a God who doesn't weary, but look at what this God does: **(Isaiah 40:29-31)** "He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall and be exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

God couldn't grow weary in eternity. But Jesus grew weary in the flesh. And all the weakness and lack he experienced in the flesh was so that the infinite abundance of his divinity could be offered to those who needed it. He suffered to be our strength. That's our Jesus.

Everything he did here on this earth, he did for us and for the Father's glory. Paul describes his ministry as being poured out as a drink offering. No one has been poured out like Jesus. Every moment he lived on earth was a moment of constant ministry to restore what was lost. He endlessly poured himself out, because his compassion for us was greater than the condemnation of our sin.

Now lastly, notice **The Fellowship Won Between God and Man.**

Do you remember why this woman wanted living water at first? Look back at **verse 15**, "Sir give me this water so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

She didn't want to have to keep going to the well. She was tired of it. She wanted to be independent from it. She didn't want to suffer the weakness of her needs. But did you notice what Jesus said right way, "Go, call your husband and come here."

Isn't that amazing! This woman wants whatever the living water is so that she would not need to do anything. But the first thing Jesus says is that she needs to come back! You see the beauty of what Jesus does is that he doesn't eliminate our needs, but instead he exposes what we truly need.

We need to come to him, and we need to come to him always. How many of us think that we come to Jesus for the water so that we never have to come to him again. But that's not the picture Jesus paints here, he restores us to him so that we always want him.

In fact, after this experience with Jesus look at what this woman says when she goes into town: **John 4:29**, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

She who never wanted to come again, is now calling others to come. What a transformation. And notice what she said and how she phrased it. "He told me all I ever did." Remember, these townspeople probably knew the things this woman talked about. They knew she had some skeletons in her closet and a man who wasn't her husband in her bed.

In any other circumstance and with any other god there would be nothing more terrifying and horrible than this reality. Encountering a God who "told you all you ever did" is only good news when that God is the God of the Bible.

Because he took on flesh and became like us in order to take away the punishment of all we have done. Though he was frail in his thirst and in his flesh, it was only the strength of God in Jesus Christ who could bear the penalty for our sins. Non-Christian, do you know that there is one you can meet who accounts for you and has come to save you? And that is good news. It is humble news, it is costly news. But it is good news. And what Jesus gave up to save you is infinitely more than what we give up to follow him.

Notice the response of the crowds, **Vs. 30**, "They went out of the towns and were coming to him..." We pick up again in verse **39-42**, "Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. 'He told me all that I ever did.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They 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.'"

In Jesus, it is not enough that a sinner would be reconciled back to God—but he has come that all sinners would be reconciled back to God. He is, the savior of the world. And in order to do it, he became like us.

Every other human experience will leave us needing to come back because it can't fix the problem of sin. The joy of following Jesus is that we want to come back because he has fixed the problem. We will always need another paycheck, another kiss, another vacation, another drink, another car. Those things stand in worldly power and they fail by worldly power.

But Jesus is the power of God, for worldly people. He came not to offer, but to be offered. He came not for empty comfort in our need, but for costly conformity to our need. And to come, is to come to

endless, bottomless, living water in a parched place. He is the savior of the world—so come to him, and keep coming back.

To conclude this morning let me offer what Peter did to the lame beggar in Acts 3: “Silver and gold I have none, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk.” Christ has come in weakness, to save us from our weakness. So let us worship him.