

There is Another King: Jesus

Luke – Acts

Jesus Completes Us

Luke 6:1 – 11

Introduction: Jesus Completes Us

Imagine that you lived in a world system that was so powerful and yet so subtle, that it could get you to do things without you even thinking about it! Can you imagine that?

When I was a kid, there was a commercial on TV for Cross-Your-Heart bras that went like this. An attractive young woman is walking her dog, and as she steps off the elevator, she runs into some old boyfriend. They recognize each other. And then he looks at her breasts. As if there's nothing better to look at! And he says, "Jane, is that really you?" As if she was incomplete before, but now that her breasts are larger, she's a more complete woman. And she says something like, "Cross my heart." For women especially, there's the idea that you need to look a certain way in order to be complete. Notice that they never do the same thing to guys! Can you imagine a man walking off an elevator, running into an old girlfriend, who stares at his crotch (?) and says, "John, is that really you!?" And he says, "Cross my jockey strap," or something!

But here's what they do to guys. How many of you saw the recent Mitsubishi commercials a couple of Super Bowls ago? In one of them, a young man and a young woman – both looking very stylish – walk out of her apartment building all set to go out on a date. On the sidewalk, she catches a glimpse of her reflection in the window of a sporty looking Mitsubishi. She pauses, teases her hair a little bit, and then looks around to see if the guy is going to open the door for her. But he's at the next car over, which is not as stylish as the Mitsubishi. Then the screen fades. What is that saying? That we're somehow incomplete unless we buy that car!

In both cases, what these ads are offering you is 'being complete.' All you have to do is BUY THESE PRODUCTS. You tell me if this system is powerful. If it's subtle. How many people have given their lives over to it, believing, "Yes, I will feel complete this way"?

Context

What does Jesus have to do with this? We're going to look at two powerful incidents: one of Jesus claiming to be the one who completes us, and the other is a picture of Jesus bringing a person to completion. Both happen on Saturday, the day of completion in the Jewish calendar. In Jewish thought, Saturday was the Sabbath. The Sabbath does not mean REST. It means COMPLETION. Rest is merely the appropriate respond to something that is complete. Back in Genesis 2:1, "God completed His work which He had done; and He rested." The Sabbath means 'completion,' and completion is observed or honored by resting. There is poetry to what Jesus is doing: completing people on the day of completion.

If you've read along with us as we've taken Luke 5 in large group, you will have noticed that Luke tells stories in pairs. Two people fall down at Jesus' feet: Simon and the leper. Two people rise up at Jesus' command: the paralytic and Levi the tax-collector. Then Jesus' opponents voice two questions challenging him. Here's how it looks:

Passage	Jesus	Disciples/Others	Pharisees
5:1-11	Calls to follow	Falls, leaves to follow	
5:12-16	Heals, cleanses uncleanness	Falls	
5:17-26	Heals, forgives sin	Gets up	"Who can forgive sins?"
5:27-28	Calls to follow	Gets up, leaves to follow	
5:29-32	"I have come to heal the sick"	Eat with Jesus	"Why do you eat with sinners?"
5:33-39	Calls to leave the old for new	Eat with Jesus	"Why do your disciples eat and not fast?"
6:1-5	Calls to leave the old for new	Sabbath with Jesus, eat	"Why do what is not lawful on Sabbath?"
6:6-11	Heals	Sabbath with Jesus; gets up	Can't answer "What is lawful on Sabbath?"; get enraged

[hide the bottom 2 lines] Notice that in each pair of stories, one story emphasizes Jesus' lordship over people, that he calls people to make an all-out, no holds barred commitment to him. Simon left all he had (line 1). Levi left all he had (line 4). Jesus' disciples leave their old life behind (line 6). In addition, the other story in each pair of stories emphasizes Jesus' healing people. The man full of leprosy was cleansed (line 2). The paralytic who couldn't get up to walk got up and walked (line 3). Jesus has come to heal the sick (line 5). When people open their lives to him, Jesus restores them to what they were meant to be. He completes them.

Now we come to yet another pair of stories. [uncover the bottom 2 lines] Like the others, one is about his lordship. The other is about his power to heal. Both revolve around the question, "What is lawful? What is the will of God?" And both take place on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees: v.1-2

The first story is a statement by Jesus about who he is. Jesus has probably been teaching in a town. He and his followers are probably all hungry. They pass through some fields. According to Jewish law, if you are a traveler, you can eat from orchards and fields that are not yours. You can't take extra, but you can take as much as you can eat. So in v.1, "Now it happened that he was passing through some grain fields on a Sabbath; and his disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating the grain. 2 But some of the Pharisees said, 'Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?'"

To the Pharisees, God was going to bring Israel out from Roman oppression into a Golden Age. God will make you complete and the whole nation complete, they taught, if you live within a certain system, the system that they had constructed: the kosher laws and Sabbath observance and certain ethnic and religious distinctives that they majored on. Problem was, that system, their system, never actually delivered.

Illus: You know what the most obvious parallel to that is? Advertising of course! What system in our society offers to make us complete? Consumerism! That's why I began our time together by reminding you about what these commercials say. Here are some more of them:

- Do you remember the Pantene commercials where a good looking woman whips her hair around and says, 'Don't hate me because I'm beautiful'? What's that about? You can make everyone jealous
- Our consumerist society is a religious system; it says, "I will make you complete! All you need to do is buy these things and services." And so when you like yourself in the mirror, you feel more complete. When you think about what you might own one day, you feel more complete. In point of fact, corporations are the new Pharisees who want us to bow down and worship at the altar of products in order to feel complete. Look at how effective it is. Consider Asian-American high school youth. They're totally bought in to the system, religiously. How can you tell? Because they all look the same. They all dress the same. All the guys have almost the same haircut. All the girls wear clothes that emphasize their breasts in basically the same way. Everyone wears Tommy Hilfiger and Abercrombie & Fitch. At least when I was growing up, there was variety!! But now!?! I have never seen a generation that is so homogenous. You tell me: How is this all being marketed? Because boy is it effective! But I know none of **YOU** are affected by that....You're too smart to spin your wheels...for nothing.

In the Israel of Jesus' day, you just got a bunch of people spinning their wheels, trying to achieve completion and never getting there. All of a sudden, they were hearing this new voice of Jesus saying, "No matter how much you tried to live by the old ways, there was no way to be complete by yourselves. God will make you complete only through me."

Now did Jesus really break a law by picking grain on the Sabbath? Maybe. Maybe not. If it were cut and dry, the Pharisees would take Jesus and stone him immediately according to Exodus 31:15. But there were lots of opinions about what was lawful on the Sabbath, so it's not like the Pharisees could nail him on just

this one.¹ They were trying to figure out where he stood on the major issues. Actually, they're wondering how he fits into their system. Is he liberal or conservative, or what?

Jesus seems to know what they're doing. So he responds by turning the tables and raising the stakes. Verse 3-4: "And Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?" (v.3-4)

Now why does Jesus tell this story? The story of King David? This story comes from 1 Samuel 21. Basically, Israel chooses their first king, a man named Saul. But God later says of Saul, "Because he does not keep my decrees, I will remove him from his office. Let young David take his place." But Saul does not step down. As a young man, David slays Goliath and becomes a national hero. Saul, aware that his regime will come to an end, afraid of David's growing popularity, drives David and his loyal band out into the wilderness. Saul keeps sending spies and soldiers after them, trying to hunt David. Then David goes to the priests who are sympathetic to him and gets supplies. He eats holy bread from the sanctuary, which was normally not allowed. But it was ok because David was the king. Then he goes on his way.

Why does Jesus compare himself to David? Because he's redefining the issue. Let's look at the comparison Jesus is making.

	David	Jesus
Who are the hostile pursuers?	King Saul and his henchmen, the false leaders who will soon be overthrown	Pharisees and Herodians, the false leaders who will soon be overthrown
What is the pursued doing?	He is in exile; avoids the capital, stays in the wilderness, builds up a loyal group of followers	He is in exile; avoids the capital, stays in the wilderness, builds up a loyal group of followers
What is the situation dealing with ceremonial conventions?	David and his men eat bread that is 'holy'	Jesus and his disciples eat on a day that is 'holy'
Why was this OK?	Because David was the true King	Because Jesus is the true King
Who is the true King who will one day be victorious?	David	Jesus

Jesus' message is: Look at the situation! You are pursuing me and my followers just like Saul and his cronies pursued David. I am in the wilderness building up a band of followers like David did. You are in power, but will be overthrown because I am the true king! By quoting from the David story, Jesus is making strong political claims! It would be like saying, "You ask me why I can do this? It's because I'm on my way in. You're on your way out."

One helpful parallel to draw might be this. The Declaration of Independence was supposed to get Americans to respect the dignity of all men and women, of all races and classes, not just white landowning

¹ The Mishna says: 'He that reapeth corn on the Sabbath to the quantity of a fig is guilty; and plucking corn is reaping.' Rubbing the grain out was threshing. Even to walk on the grass on the Sabbath was forbidden because it was a species of threshing. Another Talmudic passage says: 'In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered sifting; if she rubs the head of wheat, it is regarded as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherences, it is sifting out fruit; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing' [Jer. Shabt, page 10a].

men. But for most of U.S. history, it didn't affect reality. Some would argue that today it doesn't affect reality. It didn't come from the past to impact the present. Instead, it became a memorial. Americans just felt good that they had it even though they didn't actually live by it. If you went to the White House right now, walked up to President Bush in the Executive Office, put a copy of the Declaration of Independence on his desk, raised your right hand, placed your left hand on a Bible, and said, "See you on January 20th, buddy," you would be telling him that you're on your way in, and he's on his way out. You would be sending a message symbolically that says that you are the next President. That's the kind of thing Jesus is saying. I am the heir to the throne, I am the real king here. I am the one who is going to make the Sabbath not as a memorial of an old event a long time ago, but a reality. I will complete people in a new way.

To top it off, Jesus says of himself, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." In other words there are at least two things Jesus is saying here. One is, "The Sabbath symbolizes me. I make people complete, not you or your system." The second is, "Whether or not it is kosher to pick grain according to your laws, *I don't operate within your system*. I stand above the Sabbath. I am Lord over it. And I will call you out of your system, too."

Here is the outrageous way Jesus turns the tables and raises the stakes. The Pharisees thought they would get a nitpicky battle about what is the right way to do the ceremonies; what is the right way to keep people invested in the current system? What they get instead is, "Sit down. We're not even talking about the same thing. I don't fit in your little system, so don't try to have me take a side in your petty concerns. I am Lord over it and I will call you out of your system, too."

ILLUS: I have a friend from college who learned this her sophomore year. During the last term of her sophomore year, she was taking a class in the Human Biology major. She was a pre-med and this class counted for a lot. So she went through the usual routine, believing that her life fit into a system, Jesus fit into the same system, and that he would help her in that system to make her feel complete. She studied as much as she could. She felt totally inadequate, but she gave the test over to God. She prayed as she walked into the test. And she wound up getting the best grade she ever got, as she told me in her own words. It was a D. Why was that the best grade she ever got? Not because it helped her get into med school, but because it was the catalyst for a new understanding of Jesus. You see her Mom had always said, "You're the oldest, you're the smartest one, you're the responsible one. You're the one who needs to go make the big bucks." All they ever talked about was how she was doing in school and her role in the family. What this grade did was question the assumptions about her future. Everything was laid out on the table: her life, her faith, her dreams, her fears, her parents' love and hopes...And despite the tension, God transformed the relationship she had with her parents. She discovered that if she looked to Jesus to complete her, she didn't have to rely on her parents' affirmation, which was what previously made her feel complete. She realized she had wanted Jesus to fit within her little system, whereas he was much bigger than that. Now my friend feels like she can love her parents more freely, more sincerely; even her relationship with her parents is much better. She understands that Jesus doesn't just fit into your little system. He is Lord over it. And he will call you – your fundamental identity, that is – out of it.

How did the Pharisees feel in response? We don't know. My guess is that the Pharisees went off stunned. Question is, would they believe him or not.

We Are Incomplete: v.6-8

Well, on another Saturday, perhaps even the next Saturday, Jesus gets another chance to communicate the same thing. Verse 6-7: "On another Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees were watching him closely to see if he healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find reason to accuse him."

Notice that this is the first time Luke spells out their motive explicitly. Before, they seem to have come to Jesus with more of an open mind. Now, they're coming specifically to accuse him, to find some grounds by which to say, "Gotcha! Let's discredit you!"

"But [Jesus] knew," in verse 8, "what they were thinking, and he said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!""

Now here we enter a third party to the scene. We don't know much about this man's background or story, but we know one thing: He is incomplete. Somehow his hand didn't grow with him. This man has had this problem with his hand probably since birth. The closest thing I could think of is clubfoot, where your foot is turned and curled because of a deformity from your birth. His hand was turned and curled – it was a deformity.

That probably had major effects on his life. He was probably a farmer. And how can you farm with only 1 good hand? It probably took him twice as long to do things. And how would this crippled hand make you feel when everyone around you seemed so healthy? To the Jewish mind, the right hand was a symbol of power and strength. It was used consistently to bring blessing, and it had authority. A father blessed his son by placing his right hand on his hand, it conveyed manhood, it passed the mantle along. Could you imagine if this man had never really known that? Or wasn't able to give that? Or if he had done it but then looked down at his own hand and felt ashamed and incomplete? He wasn't only physically incomplete, his whole life was incomplete.

I want to share with you some of the ways in which I have felt incomplete. Early in my life, I was a big Dungeons and Dragons fan. For those of you who may not know, it's a role playing game where you play another character. You plunge into a whole other world, a fantasy world. In some sense you become another person. That's what I liked about it because my own life felt incomplete. What was going on in my life? Well, when I started to peel back why I felt incomplete, I thought that becoming an Olympic swimmer would make me feel complete. My friends had badges and medals and trophies, and I started to build up my own collection. I eventually joined the same team as Janet Evans, who won three Olympic gold medals in 1988, and I was training four and a half hours a day. Two hours in the morning, two and a half hours after school. Sometimes, it felt like hell. But I felt like there were moments when that hell seemed worth it. You know how in homeroom, someone would make announcements? Well, after one swim meet with another school, the announcer said my name! "Mako Nagasawa set a new school record." To the whole school! It was a moment of glory! And then it was gone. I felt empty again. I still felt incomplete. Then when my parents started arguing about divorce late in my sophomore year of high school, I found myself talking to my biology teacher. Her name was Miss Schultz. We were sitting one day in her classroom during lunch, and I was sharing my home situation with her. She was a very sympathetic listener, and just loved on me. Then she said, "I admire how you're handling the situation." That is exactly what I wanted to hear. I realized right then and there that I had geared the conversation to gain her sympathy, and her affirmation. I was so self-centered, even in my time of deep crisis, that I turned every situation to my advantage, to serve my purposes. Have you noticed that about yourself?

I looked down at myself at that moment, and I felt like something inside me had never grown. I realized then and there, that it wasn't about external things in my life not being all there. It meant something deeper. Something inside me was withered and useless, that crippled me, that hadn't grown, that made me ashamed and incomplete. That was the thing that drove me to create external systems. We are incomplete **internally**.

What do you do about feeling incomplete? Do you hope that the perfect someone is out there somewhere and will complete you? Do you try to be successful, hoping that enough words of affirmation from your others will somehow make you feel more complete? Do you pretend you're someone else? Create an internet persona? Do you distract yourself with activities, television, and video games? Or do you recognize that there is something deeper that is incomplete, something that needs a total change.

Jesus Makes Us Complete: v.8b-10

This man in the synagogue certainly knew he was incomplete. He had wrestled with it all his life, probably. Now Jesus calls him to GET UP. I love what this shows us about Jesus. How easy it would have been for Jesus to avoid this conflict? He could have said, "Not right now." Or, "Pssst, meet me outside after the service!" But he has great compassion on this man right then and there, even when Jesus' own life is in danger. Even when this guy is bait in the Pharisees' trap.

Can you imagine what this guy felt when Jesus said to him, “Get up”? MONOLOGUE: “All of a sudden, all eyes turned on me. I felt very self-conscious. I put my hands in my sleeves as I usually did when I felt people looking at me. I sensed the tension in the room between the Pharisees and Jesus. They looked so angrily at Jesus. I wasn’t sure whether I wanted to stand by him or not, but something drew me to him. He was dangerous and compassionate, powerful and gentle all at once. I got up and came forward. Jesus turned to the Pharisees and said, ‘I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?’ I wasn’t sure what he was getting at, but the Pharisees just glared at him. They said nothing, and the air was thick with tension. Jesus looked around at them all, one by one, and then he turned towards me with such compassion in his eyes and said, ‘Stretch out your hand!’ I wanted to, and I didn’t want to. Not in public in front of all these people. Suddenly my arm felt paralyzed. How could I after all these years, even hope to be complete...” [stretch out my hand slowly, slowly uncurl fingers, clutch hand in amazement]

Luke says, narrating, that in v.8, “And he rose and came forward. And he did so; and his hand was restored. But [the Pharisees] were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.”

Sometimes it feels very vulnerable to get up when Jesus says get up. Sometimes it feels very vulnerable to stretch out to Jesus that part of you that feels incomplete. Sometimes other people see that. Sometimes you have to explain to people who know you, “I’m not complete by myself. There’s a part of my life that needs healing.” But when you feel Jesus tugging at you to get up, get up. Respond to him even if there are Pharisees in the crowd, who are looking at you and at Jesus through narrowed eyes and hostile stares.

Overview of Luke 5:1 – 6:11

We have seen some really cool responses to Jesus thus far in Luke, haven’t we? In fact, there’s a pattern. Simon fell at Jesus feet because of his awareness of his own sin. The leper fell at Jesus’ feet because of his need to be healed. The paralytic got up after being healed. Levi the tax collector got up out of his sin. Now, the last episode has that element of getting up, too.

Passage	Jesus	Disciples/Others	Pharisees
5:1-11	Calls to follow	Falls, leaves to follow	
5:12-16	Heals, cleanses uncleanness	Falls	
5:17-26	Heals, forgives sin	Gets up	“Who can forgive sins?”
5:27-28	Calls to follow	Gets up, leaves to follow	
5:29-32	“I have come to heal the sick”	Eat with Jesus	“Why do you eat with sinners?”
5:33-39	Calls to leave the old for new	Eat with Jesus	“Why do your disciples eat and not fast?”
6:1-5	Calls to leave the old for new	Sabbath with Jesus, eat	“Why do what is not lawful on Sabbath?”
6:6-11	Heals	Sabbath with Jesus; gets up	Can’t answer “What is lawful on Sabbath?”; get enraged

This is a theme that runs through Luke. In fact, when Jesus says, “Get up,” he really means “Leave everything behind.” I want to call your attention to this pattern:

Jesus calls Simon; he **leaves** everything (5:1-11)

Jesus **heals** leper (5:12-16)

Jesus **heals** paralytic (5:17-26)

Jesus calls Levi; he **leaves** everything (5:27-28)

Jesus here to **heal** the sick (call sinners to repentance) (5:29-32)

Disciples **leave** behind conventional religiosity (prayer & fasting) (5:33-39)

Disciples **leave** behind conventional religiosity (Sabbath observance) (6:1-5)

Jesus **heals** the crippled man (6:6-11)

What Luke is getting across is that Healing is Leaving. Leaving is healing. To be with Jesus is to get up and simultaneously leave behind everything you have ever known, and to be healed on the fundamental level of who you are. It is to get up and leave behind old ways of thinking, old ways of being religious, old ways of relating. It is to allow him to touch us, to raise us up into a new life, a new sense of being complete, so that we have new ways of thinking, a new spirituality, and a new way of relating. It is to have

Jesus involved in every area of our lives: where we feel unclean, paralyzed, and incomplete. And to let him be working there in us.

[Note: Is there an archetypal relation between this opening sequence of Jesus' interactions and the Cross-Resurrection account? Fall. Rise. Eat. Sabbath. Is that an archetypal pattern underlying the Emmaus Road encounter as well? Their hopes have fallen with Jesus' death. Their hopes rise when they meet the risen Jesus, though they don't recognize him at first. They eat with Jesus when he breaks bread with them. They enjoy the new Sabbath era with Jesus.]

Jesus is calling us right now to get up and leave behind our old self-centeredness, the old sick and crippled ways we have of trying to make ourselves feel complete!!! Get up and leave that behind!!! If you gossip among your friends because the attention and the coalition building makes you feel complete, you need to get up and leave that behind. That is a self-centered way of dealing with conflict. How might it feel for you to "get up and come forward" to Jesus in regards to that area of your life?