

Intro: Who's Your Superhero?

Picture of Jesus with the Superheroes

What do you think about this picture?

Problem – makes Jesus out to be a fictional character rather than a real person. But it does make a good point. Jesus is like a superhero – a powerful figure who saves the world.

But there is a couple of important differences. Firstly, Jesus is a real historical figure, not a fictional character. Secondly, Jesus doesn't beat up or smash or destroy the bad guys in order to save the world.

Jesus wins through his gentleness, as we will see in this passage.

A couple of questions for you to think about as we go through this passage?

1. Do you think you need a superhero/saviour? What would you need saving from?
2. If you do need a saviour, what sort of superhero/saviour would you prefer? Characteristics, qualities etc.

Context:

Matt 8-10 – People were excited about Jesus being the Messiah, but are now becoming disappointed with Jesus, as he doesn't meet their expectations of what the Messiah should do.

Ch 11 – JTB asks if JC is the Messiah

Jesus proves from the OT that he is the Messiah through his healing and preaching ministry.

Jesus pronounces woe on unrepentant cities b/c they did not repent after seeing his miracles.

Last week - Jesus condemns the Pharisees for strictly enforcing the Sabbath, yet lacking mercy. They have not worked out who he is – he is claiming to be the Son of Man (Dan 7), and Lord of the Sabbath (Gen 2). God in human form.

They hate him.

Firstly b/c he is directly challenging their cherished way of doing things (religious system) and they feel incredibly threatened by that.

Secondly, by claiming to be God, they say he is committing blasphemy because they don't believe him.

Pharisees go out and plot how to kill Jesus.

1. Jesus is the Suffering Servant, who is gentle

Let's turn to the passage and see what happens in this episode

V15 -16 – Aware of this – aware that the Pharisees are out to kill him, so he withdraws from that place. But the crowd still follow him, even though they might know that it is dangerous. Jesus heals all who were ill, and warns them not to tell others about him.

V17 – Matthew says that this was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. What is the “this”?

I think that it is Jesus' action of withdrawing from that place because of the threat of the Pharisees.

Body of quote will show why I think that.

18 “Here is my servant whom I have chosen,

First thing to notice is that Jesus is referred to as God's servant. To understand this reference, we need to understand what the OT says about Jesus. Two main groups of prophecies in OT about coming of a saviour:

First is the coming of a Messiah – King in David's line who will defeat Israel's enemies and establish God's rule forever.

Second is the coming of the suffering servant – one who comes to save God's people through his suffering. This is the one Matthew is focusing on – quoting Isaiah who was writing about 700 years before Jesus.

Now Jesus is both the Messiah **and** the Suffering Servant, but Matthew says here that Jesus' actions fulfil Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant.

Matthew is saying that Jesus is the Suffering Servant –the humble, gentle one, who saves through his suffering.

How does Jesus' action of withdrawing fulfil this prophecy?

Think about it. Jesus could have destroyed the Pharisees with a word. He is the Messiah, the Son of Man and Lord of the Sabbath – God in human form. He knew they wanted to kill him but instead of destroying them, he withdraws from that place and goes elsewhere. He acts in a gentle way rather than a harsh or violent way.

Eg.s of Jesus' majesty and power:

Transfiguration – Matt 17:1-2

1 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. **2** There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

Supernatural being

At his arrest – John 18:3-6,

3 So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. **4** Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?” **5** “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) **6** When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground. Just his words are powerful

Matt 26:50-54.

50 Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. **51** With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. **52** “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. **53** Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? **54** But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”

Son of God with angels at his disposal

Jesus is the all-powerful Son of God. He can do anything he wants but he **chooses** to be gentle. Let’s look at the details of the prophecy:

V19 – He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets.

Focus on him not quarrelling – will argue the point with them, but will not keep on going and going.

You know those people who have to be right. Every time you talk to them, it ends up in an argument. And they can’t let it go until they get you to say that they are right and you are wrong.

Jesus is the opposite of those people. He’s not a doormat. He has opinions and he is not afraid to state them. He will respond to the Pharisees when they question him or accuse him. But he doesn’t go on and on about it and scream and shout to make his point heard. He is peaceful rather than quarrelsome.

V20 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory.

Bruised reed – reed that grows in the marshland. Very fragile, but this one even more fragile – already bruised (damaged). Jesus is so gentle that he will not even break a reed that is already damaged.

Smouldering wick – wick of a candle – getting close to the end of its life or defective – flame about to die out. Jesus is so gentle that he will not even snuff out (blow out) a smouldering wick.

Jesus is the Suffering Servant, who is gentle.

Illustration:

Gentle doesn't mean weak. Opposite of gentle is harsh or rough or violent, not strong. Possible to be incredibly strong but also really gentle at the same time.

e.g. Father – strong physically, but incredibly gentle when looking after his little children

2. Goal of his gentleness

But notice that there is an end point or goal to his gentleness.

V20 - Until he has brought justice through to victory – end point or goal, but what is it referring to? The cross. Paradoxical victory – victory through gentleness, not might. Justice here means more than legal vindication, but rather the setting right of whatever is not as it should be – the complete establishment of the will of God.

How will he bring justice through to victory?

Jesus, through his gentleness, wins the victory that establishes God's justice here on earth and forever more.

John 18:12-14

12 Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him **13** and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. **14** Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people.

Jesus allows himself to be arrested, beaten, mocked, falsely tried and convicted, and then nailed to the cross. At any time he could have saved himself and destroyed his persecutors. But he is gentle – gentle with a purpose. Through his refusal to save himself, he defeats the biggest enemy – sin and death. Jesus dies a horrible death and in doing so pays the penalty for our sins so that we don't have to pay for them ourselves. Jesus saves us. He is a real superhero.

Jesus is victorious through his gentleness.

Illustration:

Hacksaw ridge – movie based on true story of Desmond Doss, a WWII soldier who was a Christian and refused to carry a gun.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, Doss enlisted in the Army to serve as a combat medic.

Doss' unit is sent to Okinawa and informed that they are to relieve the 96th Infantry Division, which was tasked with ascending and securing the Maeda Escarpment ("Hacksaw Ridge"). In the initial fight, both sides sustain heavy losses. Doss saves his squad mate Smitty as well as several wounded soldiers.

The next morning, the Japanese launch a massive counterattack and drive the Americans off the escarpment. Smitty is killed, while several of Doss' squad mates are left injured on the battlefield. Doss hears the cries of dying soldiers and returns to save them, carrying the wounded to the cliff's edge and belaying them down by rope, each time praying to save one more. The arrival of dozens of wounded once presumed dead comes as a shock to the rest of the unit below. When day breaks, Doss rescues his commanding officer and the two escape Hacksaw under enemy fire.

Doss is told that the men have been inspired by his selflessness, and that they will not launch the next attack without him. With reinforcements, they turn the tide of battle. After an ambush set by Japanese soldiers feigning surrender, Doss manages to save some of the American soldiers by deflecting enemy grenades. Doss is eventually wounded by a grenade blast, but the battle is won.

The film switches to archival photos and footage showing that Doss was awarded the Medal of Honour by President Harry S. Truman for rescuing 75 soldiers at Hacksaw Ridge.

Not making a comment on whether Christians should go to war or not. Just showing an example of a Christian man who saved 75 other men through his gentleness. Gentle, kind, other person centred – saved others by risking his life time and time again.

Jesus saves us through his gentleness – self-sacrifice, refusal to save himself, focus on others

3. Who is the victory for?

V18 – Jesus is the servant whom God has chosen (suffering servant). God both love and delights in him. God will put his Spirit in him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. What does it mean that he will proclaim justice to the nations? Declare God's justice – everything the way it should be – everything under the will of God –explain sin and judgment and salvation through Jesus.

V21 – In his name the nations will put their hope – Hope in Jesus to pay the penalty for their sins and bring them back under God's rule.

This would have been a shock for both the people in Isaiah's time and in Jesus' time.

In Isaiah's time the people of Israel had just witnessed the nation of Assyria invade Israel and carry the 10 northern tribes into captivity. Isaiah had warned the people of the 2 southern tribes that the Babylonians were going to invade them. And now Isaiah is saying that the Suffering Servant is going to save the nations? The people who are invading them and taking them into captivity?

And in Jesus' time, the Israelites had come back from the Babylonian captivity once the Medes and Persians had taken over from the Babylonians. The Jews rebuilt Jerusalem and the surrounding area, only to see Jerusalem etc. invaded and taken over by the Greeks, and later by the Romans.

And now Matthew is saying that Jesus is the Suffering Servant, who is going to save the nations? The people who are invading them and ruling over them?

Isaiah and Matthew make it clear that while God chose the Jewish nation to be his special people, his intention was always to save lots of people from all nations. Jesus is the Suffering Servant for anyone who will come to him and believe in him.

Big Idea: Jesus is the suffering servant who is victorious for all nations through his gentleness.

Application:

- **Know that Jesus is God's Suffering Servant who was gentle right through to the cross**

He didn't save himself so that he could save us.

- **Allow him to be your gentle saviour**

Back to the question I asked at the start: Do you think you need a superhero/saviour? What would you need saving from?

The answer the Bible gives us is that we all need a saviour for exactly the same reason – we all have sinned (rejected God) and deserve his punishment. Jesus saves us by dying on the cross, taking our punishment so that we don't have to.

If you haven't come to Jesus yet my question to you is: Will you allow Jesus to be your gentle saviour?

If you want to talk about this some more, please come and see me, or Stu or John after the service.

- **Know that Jesus is the saviour of the nations**

Not just the nation of Israel! You do realise how good this news is don't you. God didn't have to save anyone. He chose the nation of Israel to save, and he could have stopped there. But God chose to save people from every nation under heaven. Even people in Australia! No nation more or less deserving of being saved – no place for looking down on people from other nations.

- **Get involved in Jesus' mission to the nations**

If God is on about saving people from every nation, we as his people should be on about that too. How can we do that – lots of ways. Here's just a few ideas:

- Pray for other nations, esp. Christians in other nations seeking to share the gospel with their countrymen, particularly those who are being persecuted for being Christians.
- Pray and support our link missionaries like the Taylors who have given up the comfort of Australia to preach the gospel overseas.
- Use the gifts that we have – finances, skills, bible knowledge etc. to help those overseas who are struggling – e.g. Steve Payne's trips to Vanuatu, the group from here who went to Sri Lanka
- Biggest gift God has given us – brought the nations here to our doorstep. If you want to reach out to the nations, you don't have to go far in Sydney to find them. Perhaps get involved with the Bales in Greenacre.
- No place for being angry or upset about Australia being multi-cultural. Great thing – help people from lots of nations become Christians.

- **Relate to him as your gentle saviour**

Other Question I asked at the start of the sermon:

If you do need a saviour, what sort of superhero/saviour would you prefer? Characteristics, qualities etc.

Now we all do need a saviour, but what do we want him to be like?

Ironman, Batman etc. Save you from the crisis, but not with you every day. May or may not be there next time there is a crisis.

Jesus on the other hand, saves us once and for all – guaranteed to go to heaven when you die. But he also promises to be with us every day – because often it's not just a crisis we need saving from. We can be lonely, or stressed, or grieving. We need a saviour then too.

Listen to Jesus, our gentle saviour:

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus promises to be with us everyday, and to help us through all our troubles, big and small. Not saying that everything is perfect when you are a Christian. Far from it. Jesus doesn't save us from pain and suffering in this world, he promises to be with us through all the pain and suffering, comforting and strengthening us. And then one day, he promises to take us to be with him in heaven forever, where there will be no more suffering, crying or pain.

That's the sort of saviour I want – what about you?

That's the sort of saviour we have – so come to him when you are weary and burdened, when you feel like a bruised reed or a smouldering wick. Come to him, rely on him, and he will help you through the hard times. And he will keep on reminding you of the wonderful future he has won for you through his gentleness.