THE STORY
“No Ordinary Man”
Luke 8:22-56; Matthew 5–7; Luke 19:10

Introduction

1. In the summer of 2005, college student and web designer Ian Spector was looking for a source of inspiration. His parody “Vin Diesel Fact Generator” had crashed and burned on take-off, leaving him searching for another idea to fill his time. He was sure the idea of a new celebrity meme would be great. He just needed the right celebrity. Enter this guy (picture of Chuck Norris).
   a. Spector relabeled his website as a “Chuck Norris Fact Generator.” That one change made all the difference. Soon, his ode to Walker: Texas Ranger lit up the internet. Chuck Norris jokes were suddenly all over the place.
   i. Over the past decade, Ian Spector has turned the concept into a cottage industry. He’s made thousands of dollars – and even met Chuck Norris himself!
   ii. He’s published four books of Chuck Norris facts and generated over 1600 jokes about the man, the myth and the legend.
   b. Even today, nearly 10 years after Ian Spector published his first Chuck Norris joke, the internet meme still goes on. Search for “Chuck Norris jokes” on Google and you will literally get millions of hits. A few of my favorites… Okay, a few of my favorites that I can actually say from the pulpit:
   i. “Chuck Norris has a bearskin rug in his front room. It’s not dead; it just doesn’t dare move.”
   ii. “When Chuck Norris does a push-up, he isn’t lifting himself up. He’s pushing the world down.”
   iii. “Chuck Norris once kicked a horse in the chin, single-handedly creating giraffes.”
   iv. “When the Boogeyman goes to sleep every night, he checks his closet for Chuck Norris.”
   v. (By the way, did you guys know that Chuck Norris is 74 years old! Seriously…)
   c. I know I’m risking my own life by saying this, but there’s nothing particularly special about Chuck Norris, is there? I mean, Walker: Texas Ranger is awesome, but that’s really about it. (My parents still won’t let me watch Delta Force, though, so I can’t really comment there…)
   i. These jokes are funny, but they’re nowhere near accurate. Chuck Norris can’t actually do any of these things! He’s not superhuman or invincible! Chuck Norris is just an actor – and not a very good one at that!
   ii. You can’t believe everything you read on the internet. Just because someone claims something doesn’t make it true.
   d. As Christians, we make a lot of claims about Jesus Christ, don’t we? Our entire faith is built around what He said and did. We’ve based our very lives around His. More than that, we claim that He is God in the flesh, that He is literally “God with men.” That’s a pretty big claim!
   i. Since we started The Story, we’ve been saying that Jesus is the One to whom the Story moves. He’s the One from whom the Story flows. Everything that’s ever happened has been about Him.
   ii. The things we believe about Jesus are so much greater – so much more important – than any other claim that’s ever been made! History literally rises and falls on who we say Jesus is.

So, how do we know it’s true? How do we know that Jesus is who we say He is? What we’re going to do today is look at Jesus’ ministry through a broad lens. The Bible tells us that Jesus spent three years ministering throughout the region of Judea and Palestine. As He did so, He did some things that differentiate Him from every other religious leader. Everything from His actions to His teachings show that Jesus was no ordinary man. In fact, today we’re going to talk about three characteristics of Jesus’ ministry.
that set Him apart. As we look at these three characteristics, we’re going to discover – or rediscover – what makes Jesus so special and why we make the claims we do.

2. The first characteristic of Jesus’ ministry that sets Him apart is HIS MIRACLES. Over the course of His time here, Jesus performed many miraculous feats. He did things that only God Himself could do!
   a. In fact, Luke 8:22-56 contains a trifecta of Jesus’ miracles. In back-to-back-to-back accounts, Jesus asserts His power. He shows His disciples exactly what He is capable of.
   b. The first miracle occurs as Jesus and the Twelve are sailing across a lake. In that area, it’s not uncommon for storms to sneak up on you as you sail. As Jesus and His disciples head across the lake, that’s exactly the predicament they find themselves in!
      i. **Luke 8:22-25**: “One day Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.’ So they got into a boat and started out. As they sailed across, Jesus settled down for a nap. But soon a fierce storm came down on the lake. The boat was filling with water, and they were in real danger. The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, ‘Master, Master, we’re going to drown!’ When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and the raging waves. Suddenly the storm stopped and all was calm. Then he asked them, ‘Where is your faith?’ The disciples were terrified and amazed. ‘Who is this man?’ they asked each other. ‘When he gives a command, even the wind and waves obey him!'”

   c. In the midst of this storm, the disciples find themselves fearing for their lives. The boat is taking on water. The wind threatens to capsize them. But Jesus gets up and calms the storm with just a word. He speaks and the rain stops.
      i. Obviously, this is a pretty big deal. Even now, 2000 years later, we can hardly predict the weather. But Jesus commands it. Leads the disciples to ask themselves a pressing question: **“Who is this man? …Even the wind and waves obey Him.”**
      ii. This isn’t a question so much as it’s a statement. They would have known that there is only One who can speak to the wind:
         1. **Psalm 89:8-9**: “O Lord God of Heaven’s Armies! Where is there anyone as mighty as you, O Lord? You are entirely faithful. You rule the oceans. You subdue their storm-tossed waves.”
         2. **Psalm 107:28-29**: “‘Lord, help!’ they cried in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress. He calmed the storm to a whisper and stilled the waves.”
      iii. Miracle asserts Jesus’ divinity. Shows that He has the power to calm the wind and waves – a power reserved for God Himself.

   d. When Jesus and His disciples reach the other side of the lake, they soon find themselves confronting another dangerous situation. This situation provides Jesus with another opportunity to show His power.
      i. As soon as they make shore, a demoniac meets them. The text tells us this man has been suffering from demonic possession for years. It’s so bad that he’s been ostracized from his community, forced to live in a cemetery. If that’s not creepy enough, things quickly get worse.
      ii. **Luke 8:28-30**: “As soon as he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell down in front of him. Then he screamed, ‘Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Please, I beg you, don't torture me!’ For Jesus had already commanded the evil spirit to come out of him. This spirit had often taken control of the man. Even when he was placed under guard and put in chains and shackles, he simply broke them and rushed out into the wilderness, completely under the demon’s power. Jesus demanded, ‘What is your name?’ ‘Legion,' he replied, for he was filled with many demons.”
e. The exchange between Jesus and the possessed man reveal the depth of his possession. The man calls himself “Legion.” A legion was a Roman detachment of around 6000 soldiers. This poor man is literally under the influence of thousands of demons!

i. But, Jesus heals him of his possession. He casts the demons into a herd of pigs, causing all the pigs to stampede down the hill and drown themselves in the lake. It’s a crazy scene! The crowd who witnessed it realized that they’ve just seen something spectacular.

ii. The people see the demon-possessed man in his right mind and they immediately recognize Jesus’ strength and authority. They see that He has power over the demons. His power is so great that they ask Him to leave and head back over the lake.

f. When Jesus and His disciples get back to the other side of the lake, people are waiting for Him there. They’ve heard who He is and what He can do. One man who seeks Jesus’ help is named Jairus. His twelve-year-old daughter is dying. Desperate, Jairus pleads for Jesus’ help.

i. Jesus agrees to heal his daughter, and begins walking with Jairus back to His house. On their way, something interesting happens:

ii. Luke 8:43-38: “A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding, and she could find no cure. Coming up behind Jesus, she touched the fringe of his robe. Immediately, the bleeding stopped. ‘Who touched me?’ Jesus asked. Everyone denied it, and Peter said, ‘Master, this whole crowd is pressing up against you.’ But Jesus said, ‘Someone deliberately touched me, for I felt healing power go out from me.’ When the woman realized that she could not stay hidden, she began to tremble and fell to her knees in front of him. The whole crowd heard her explain why she had touched him and that she had been immediately healed. ‘Daughter,’ he said to her, ‘your faith has made you well. Go in peace.’”

iii. This anonymous woman has suffered with an incurable disease for over a decade. No doctor could fix it. No medicine could offer relief. And yet, Jesus succeeds where all others failed. This woman is healed simply by touching the fringe of His robe. It’s incredible!

g. But remember, there’s still a little girl dying at Jairus’ house. This woman has distracted Jesus from where He was going. Tragically, it seems like the distraction was too much. Just as Jesus finishes talking to the woman, messengers come from Jairus’ house telling him that his daughter has died. No need to trouble Jesus anymore.

i. But, Jesus insists on going to see Jairus’ daughter. When He gets there, something truly amazing happens!

ii. Luke 8:51-56: “When they arrived at the house, Jesus wouldn’t let anyone go in with him except Peter, John, James, and the little girl’s father and mother. The house was filled with people weeping and wailing, but he said, ‘Stop the weeping! She isn’t dead; she’s only asleep.’ But the crowd laughed at him because they all knew she had died. Then Jesus took her by the hand and said in a loud voice, ‘My child, get up!’ And at that moment her life returned, and she immediately stood up! Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were overwhelmed, but Jesus insisted that they not tell anyone what had happened.”

iii. Jesus brings healing where the situation seemed hopeless. He brings life where once there was death. In these two miracles, Jesus asserts His power over disease and death. There is nothing in all this world He cannot conquer!

h. Keep in mind that these are only four of Jesus’ miracles. The rest of the Gospels contain dozens more! Jesus gives sight to the blind. He makes the lame walk. He feeds a crowd of thousands with five loaves and two fish. He turns water into wine! Jesus did some incredible things!
i. His miracles make His ministry unique. They differentiate Him from all others. We know Jesus is no ordinary man because of the great things He did.

3. Jesus’ miracles show His distinctiveness. The second unique characteristic of His ministry was HIS MESSAGE. When Jesus preached, He preached a message people had never heard before. Even today, the basic message Jesus presented is radically different than what any other world religion teaches. Turn with me to Matthew 5.
   a. We could go almost anywhere to talk about the greatness of Jesus’ teaching. His parables, for example, are some of the most well known stories in the world. The Parable of the Prodigal Son, the Parable of the Good Samaritan – these stories are instantly recognizable.
   b. Yet, what I want us to do is look at the longest continuous body of Jesus’ teaching – the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5–7. Some of you will remember that we spent 30 weeks last year talking about this sermon. Not going to do it justice today. But I do want to talk about some things that make this sermon unique.
   c. Jesus’ sermon differentiates itself fairly early in the proceedings. From the very first sentence, Jesus shows that His teaching is different than anyone else’s.
      i. Matthew 5:3-5: “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.”
      ii. Jesus begins this sermon by saying that God blesses those who are poor, those who mourn, and those who are humble. This is a complete divergence from what other religions say that God desires.
         1. Other religions teach that we have to earn our standing before God. We have to do something that merits His favor. We have to be someone that catches His attention.
         2. But, Jesus begins with the assertion that God only blesses those who know they have nothing to offer. We don’t come before God’s throne with our resume or credentials. The only way to properly approach Him is to recognize that we have nothing to offer Him.
      iii. Later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives an even more significant teaching about our relationship with God. The “Lord’s Prayer,” begins with an incredible truth!
         1. Matthew 6:9: “Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.”
      iv. Jesus tells us that we can refer to God as our “Father.” The word He uses there is the Aramaic “Abba” – a word that denotes incredible intimacy! It’s not quite as informal as “Daddy,” but is still incredibly affectionate.
         1. Jesus teaches us that we can address the God of the Universe the exact same way we would address our fathers. Carries the promise that we can have an intimate, family relationship with Him.
         2. Unlike most religious leaders, Jesus didn’t teach that God was distant or unavailable. Jesus taught that God was as involved as a loving Father could be.
   d. Beyond teaching unique truths about God, Jesus also taught unique truths about humanity. Large chunks of the Sermon on the Mount speak to who we are supposed to be.
      i. Jesus calls us to a much higher standard of living than any other religion can claim. The back half of Matthew 5 contains some very hard ethical teachings for God’s people. Much higher standard than you’ll find anywhere else:
         1. Matthew 5:21-22: “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’ But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger
of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.’”

2. Matthew 5:27-28: “You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

ii. In each of these passages, Jesus calls us to a higher standard. It’s not enough to avoid sinful actions. We have to watch our attitudes and thoughts. We have to confront sin before it even gets a foothold.

iii. Jesus sums up such a high standard with one fantastic statement:
   1. Matthew 5:48: “But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

iv. Jesus calls us to be like God. But again, it’s not about earning our standing. It’s not about becoming like God so that He’ll love us. Jesus teaches us that if God really is our Father, then we will want to emulate Him.

e. The Sermon on the Mount also contains some unique teachings about Jesus Himself. As He concludes this extended teaching, Jesus reaffirms that His words demand a response. He is the dividing line of history.

i. Matthew 7:24-27: “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

ii. According to Jesus, our lives will rise or fall based on how we respond to Him and His teaching.
   1. Those who build their lives on His teachings will stand when the storms come. The life they build will endure.
   2. Those who ignore His teachings, however, will fall apart. The storms will come upon their lives and everything will crash down around them.

iii. Your future – both here and eternally – will be determined by what you did with Jesus! Once again, Jesus confronts us with the truth that His teachings are unique. He is unique!

4. Jesus’ ministry was different because of the miracles He performed. His message, too, set Him apart, as He taught very unique truths. Yet, the defining mark of Jesus’ ministry – the thing that truly sets Him apart from all others – is HIS MISSION. Jesus came on a mission that was unlike any other person who ever lived.

a. All four of the Gospels reiterate Jesus’ main purpose for coming to this earth. Jesus may have taught, but He didn’t come primarily to teach. Jesus may have healed, but He didn’t come primarily to heal. Jesus came to this earth in order to save us by His death.

b. The centrality of this mission is clear in all four Gospels. In fact, each of the four Gospels contains a very blatant statement of Jesus’ ultimate purpose in coming here:
   i. Matthew 20:28: “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.”
   ii. Mark 10:33: “‘Listen,’ He said, ‘we’re going up to Jerusalem where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence Him to die and hand Him over to the Romans. They will mock Him, spit on Him, flog Him with a whip, and kill Him, but after three days He will rise again.’”
   iii. Luke 19:10: “For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”
   iv. John 3:14-17: “And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who
believes in Him will have eternal life. For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through Him.”

c. From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus makes it abundantly clear what He is here to do. He is here to give His life as a ransom for many. He is here to seek and save God’s lost people. He is here to sacrifice His life for the lives of many.
   i. Time and time again, Jesus reaffirms this as His central task. He was born to die. His life was building towards the cross, where He would make the ultimate sacrifice for sin.
   ii. In this way, Jesus completely differentiates Himself from all other religious leaders. Think about it like this: Other religious leaders were born and they died. Jesus was born so that He would die.

d. Jesus is unique because of His mission. As a result, the religion that carries His name is different from any other religion. Where others preach a path to enlightenment or a method for "becoming one with the universe," we preach grace. Because Jesus did what He came to do, we can have salvation no matter what we’ve done!
   i. Timothy Keller: “Christianity’s basic message differs with the assumptions of traditional religion. The founders of every other major religion essentially came as teachers, not as saviors. They came to say: ‘Do this and you will find the divine.’ But Jesus came essentially as a savior rather than a teacher. Jesus says: ‘I am the divine come to you, to do what you could not do for yourselves.’ The Christian message is that we are saved not by our record, but by Christ’s record. So Christianity is not religion or irreligion. It is something else altogether.”
   ii. Jesus’ death makes Him unique! It makes our faith unique. We believe that He came and died for us. No other faith – Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism – no other world religion has any concept of their leader – their god – dying for them! Jesus’ mission sets Him apart from them all!

e. But, it’s not just in His death that Jesus differentiates Him from everyone else. Jesus also sets Himself apart because of what happened to Him after death. Three days after His death on the cross, Jesus came back!
   i. Again, all four Gospels agree. Death was not the end for Jesus. He came back. He returned from the grave.
   ii. That’s the core hope of the Gospel. With His death, Jesus destroyed our sin. With His resurrection, He gave us the hope of life. He was no ordinary man.

Conclusion:

5. We’ve spent a lot of time this morning talking about how unique Jesus is. With His miracles, His message and His mission, Jesus lived a life unlike any other. He had a lasting impact that extends even to this day!
   a. But, as we close today, I want to remind you of one, final way Jesus stands unique. Jesus is unique because He is the One and only way to salvation. There is no other way to get to God other than Him.
      i. Jesus Himself said as much. As He enjoyed a final meal with His disciples, Jesus very clearly spelled out the truth about salvation:
         ii. John 14:6-7: “Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him!’”
   b. If we want salvation, Jesus is the only way there. No one else – no other religion, no other religious leader – can take us there.
      i. Jesus is the way. He is the gate to forgiveness. He is the path to salvation. There’s no other way we can go.
      ii. Jesus is the Truth. He reveals the Truth about who God is. He shows us the truth of who we are created to be. If we want to know God – if we want to know what God wants from us – then we have to learn from Him.
iii. Jesus is the Life. He gives eternal life and He's the only One who can do it! He alone defeated death. He alone conquered the grave. Those who want to live have no other choice but to go to Him.

c. Some of you are sitting here this morning, and you don't know the Way, the Truth, and the Life. You haven't come to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior.