



Matthew 9:1–8

9 Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. 2 Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” 3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!” 4 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil

thoughts in your hearts? 5 Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? 6 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” 7 Then the man got up and went home. 8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

Reflection

Jesus backs up his words from the Sermon on the Mount with his works in Matthew chapter eight. We’ve seen him demonstrate power over storms, power over demons, power over death and power over

disease. ‘Who is this man?’ the crowds ask, ‘Who is this man?’ even his disciple ask. The demons fleeing the tombs have just named him the Son of God. He’s come to set everything right again. To repair humankind’s relationship with God and to bring an end to the ravages of sin on our world. He’s come to call all people to repentance and faith, both Jews and non-Jews alike, Pharisees, teachers of the law, lepers, Roman centurions, Gentile slaves; anyone who calls on his name in faith. And he’s come to make everything new again; to bring an end to Satan’s dominion and sin’s effect on our world. Cleansing lepers, casting our demons, death-bed healings, natural disasters rebuked and calmed with a word – just a foretaste of what is to come when the kingdom of God is fully and finally here.

But in today's passage as we begin Matthew chapter nine Jesus' emphasis shifts. Another miraculous healing, yes. Another miraculous demonstration of his power and authority, yes. More amazement and awe from those looking on, again, yes. But in today's passage, Jesus moves from treating symptoms to taking aim at the disease. So let's take a closer look.

I can't imagine what it would have been like for Jesus to be continually mobbed by people with all sorts of terrible afflictions. God's good design for humankind was to be made in his perfect image. To live with him in paradise, walking with him in the Garden, living in harmony with creation, with each other, with all of the natural world, heaven on earth, to live forever

like this. Until the disease of sin took hold and ruined every. So the Son of God steps down into a world marred almost beyond recognition by the effects of sin. Immediately, God's precious children mob him, more than even he can heal. They come out in desperation, disfigured, out of their right minds, suffering terribly – so different to God's perfect plan. Imagine how it felt for the Son of God to see God's precious children so horribly afflicted by the effects of sin. We see him deeply moved with compassion, we see him weep, today hear his gentleness as he says to this poor paralysed man 'Take heart my son.'

But these unexpected words 'your sins are forgiven'? This man's entire world is a rectangular mat. He's paralysed, lucky not to have been left for dead in the ancient

world. In a hand to mouth existence someone who cannot move hand to mouth, let alone work, is a burden rarely to be beared. Imagine his disappointment, his confusion, Jesus was his last hope, the slightest glimmer of hope that he might be healed, impossibly he'd made it through the crowds to Jesus, and when Jesus said 'Take heart my son' his heart almost burst with hope that the impossible might be possible only to have his hopes dashed, crushed in a moment, when Jesus continued 'your sins are forgiven.' He didn't want his sins forgiven, who cares about sins, he wanted to be healed.

But Jesus didn't come to earth to treat the symptoms, he came to cure the disease. He came to earth to bring an end to Satan, sin and death forever. He came to earth to

set all things right, to rid the earth forever of the dominion of Satan and the curse of sin. To usher in a new heaven and a new earth, free from sin's effects, where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. Sure he healed many who came to him in faith but his mission is far greater than that, he's here to eradicate the disease of sin, to heal the rift between God and man and set everything right again. So Jesus forgives this man's sins, and in that moment he moves from certain death, to eternal life. From the certainty of eternal punishment for his sins, to eternal life in heaven with Jesus.

Please don't miss the magnitude of what is going on here. The teachers of the law certainly didn't. Jesus read their minds or read their faces and in a miracle within a

miracle answered their thoughts. You see they were thinking, ‘When you sin, it is against God, so what right does anyone other than God have to forgive sin?’ And yet this is exactly Jesus’ point, he has the authority because he is the son of God. And he goes on to demonstrate it with:

‘Get up, take you mat and go home.’

You can imagine the jaws drop, and the mouths and all their objections close at that scene can’t you? Then the praise began, and the awe, at the one who even has the authority to forgive sins.

Think

Please take some time now to think deeply over this passage. Take some time to

earnestly mourn sin's effects on our world: cancer in children, cancer in anyone, mental illness, domestic violence, abortion, earthquakes, tsunamis, wars and famines. Mourn like God mourns when he looks down. Think about the disease long enough and you'll begin to hate sin as God hates sin. Then turn to the cure, turn to Jesus Christ. Think over his mission to heal our world and even more importantly heal the rift, bridge the great chasm between a holy and righteous God, and sinful you and I. The greatest need of every single person you know, no matter their life situation, is to be forgiven by, and reconciled to, the living God – and the only way this is going to happen is through an encounter like the one this paralysed man had with his Jesus.

Pray

Please think along these lines and then be moved to pray. Thank God for Jesus. He is the cure and without him there is no hope in this world. Petition God for those you love that they would encounter Jesus. Petition God for the sick; pray for both their physical and spiritual healing. Pray for an end to all of this, that his kingdom would come soon and that everything would be made new as he's promised.