

MATTHEW: THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

LESSON 24 – JESUS FORGIVES, HEALS, AND CALLS MATTHEW – MATTHEW 9:1-13

MATTHEW 9:1-8

And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.” And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

In Matthew 8, the miracle stories portrayed in the first triad of Matthew 8-9 showed clear faith in Jesus on the part of the people requesting action. The second triad, Matthew 8:23-9:8, gives us more dramatic intervention of Jesus’ authority.

1. What authority does Jesus reveal in these passages?
 - a. 8:24-27
 - b. 8:28-34
 - c. 9:1-8
2. Matthew provides connections between different stories to show the movement of Jesus. Why did Jesus get into the boat and cross over to Capernaum?
3. Matthew builds this event around the phrase, “And behold.” Matthew reminds us that what is happening is not normal or expected. Why is the man brought on a cot to Jesus?
4. What does Jesus see when the men bring their friend?
5. How is Jesus’ response unexpected?

6. How do the following passages show the root of death, sickness, and all our problems?
(Genesis 3; Romans 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:21-22)

7. What is the purpose of Jesus' words, "Take heart"?

8. In what way does Matthew 9:2 help us understand the starting point of restoration?

9. The salvation that Jesus brings into this world is centered in the forgiveness of sins, which ultimately will extend to the whole person. The message and the action of this story reveal God's goal of the end times. On the Last day, God will absolve and heal all those who believe in Him. What evidence do we have that the scribes understood the full ramifications of Jesus' words?

10. Blasphemy is the act or offense of speaking profanely about God or sacred things. What did the scribes consider blasphemy about Jesus' words?

11. Jesus demonstrates that he has the authority, the authority of God, to forgive and to heal. What was the response of the man who had arrived on the cot and the response of the crowds?

Matthew adds that the crowd glorified God because he had given such authority to men. The translation of this phrase is a little complicated. One possibility is that they glorified God because he had worked this authority among men. Another possibility is that they glorified God because he gave this same authority to men, i.e. the church. But the first reading is more likely because the story highlights the unique work of Jesus. Matthew will show how God extends his authority through the church more clearly in Matthew 26:26-29 and 28:16-20.

MATTHEW 9:9-13 - JESUS CALLS PEOPLE TO BELIEVE

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

There are details in this call to discipleship that are unique to Matthew, the tax collector, as well as generic for every Christian called to faith.

12. What are some details that you believe are unique to Matthew and on the other hand some details generic for every Christian?

13. Jesus saw Matthew sitting at the tax booth. John Chrysostom, 4th century Archbishop of Constantinople, writes, "But why did he say he was 'sitting at the receipt of custom'? To indicate the power of Him that called him, that it was not when he had left off or forsaken this wicked trade, but from the midst of the evils He drew him up." How does this detail establish the authority to call disciples belongs to Jesus and not the person being called?

Jesus further intensifies his presence among sinners by reclining at table with many tax collectors and sinners. All people are sinners, but the term is used here in a more particular sense. What did the Pharisees mean when they labeled people as sinners? They were thinking of people especially depraved or alienated from God. People who flagrantly and publicly violated the Law of God were viewed with particular suspicion. Pharisees are particularly troubled that Jesus is eating with tax collectors and sinners.

14. What is the significance of table fellowship in general and specifically in this context?

15. Luke 7:36-50 and Luke 14:7-11 show that table fellowship could be opportunities to offer full acceptance and approval but also could be used to demonstrate and reinforce some degree of judgment, inequality, or criticism. How do the Pharisees' words help us understand the purpose of Jesus' table fellowship?

16. Jesus' table fellowship did not enforce notions of societal standing among the guests. His meals were inclusive and full of grace. Jesus' words and presence were invitations to healing and fellowship. Some will refuse to see themselves in need of this transformation. Not all whom Jesus called to the table responded in faith (22:14). The invitation was for sinners to find healing from the physician. Who experiences this call in an exclusive manner?

As we approach communion, all are equal in the eyes of the host – equally sinful and needy, and through repentant faith in him, equally welcome. Our status or efforts are nothing compared to our faith in his words: "This is my body ... This is my blood of the covenant." The host confers the meal, delivers the gifts, and transforms us to be his guests. When the Pharisees criticize the people at the meal, they criticizing the purpose of Jesus' arrival.