

## Sermon for Trinity XIX- Matthew 9:1-8

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

“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.” A cadre of unnamed persons brought a paralyzed man to Christ. Holy Scripture never identifies these people by name. However, these unknown people did an act of great love. They served their paralyzed neighbor in need. We know only one other thing about these people: they had faith. This means they trusted the Lord. They knew that they were sinners. They knew that Christ forgave their sins and everyone else’s sins. He would forgive even the sins of the paralyzed man that they brought before Him. They had faith in the Lord’s promised forgiveness.

St. Matthew gives no indication that the paralyzed man had faith, at least not initially. For all we know, that paralyzed man could have been carried, kicking and screaming (as much as a paralyzed man could do), to a little known Galilean preacher. What was the point? He was paralyzed, his life seemed worthless. He had no use of his arms or legs. The Galilean preacher said, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.” How did the paralytic respond? He said nothing. He gave no thanks. Silence. The paralyzed man was hoping for more. He didn’t want just the forgiveness of sins. The paralytic wanted the healing of his body more than the healing of his soul. Maybe he thought, “If I have health and money, then I’ll trust God,” or “I will never trust God because of my illness.” But I ask you, do you think that you have God and everything you need when you have earthly goods? Have bad times caused you to despair and lose hope and trust in God? Have you doubted God’s love for you when you have money problems or illness?

Unlike the paralytic, the unknowns carrying him had a different mindset. They lived in faith toward God, receiving the forgiveness of sins. They lived in love for the neighbor, literally lugging the lame man to the Lord of life. They knew what he needed more than health or wealth: he needed life! Matthew records the account of Christ healing the paralytic in a peculiar way. He said, “... some people brought to him a paralytic lying on a bed.” The evangelist didn’t say, “They brought to him a sinner,” or “They brought to Jesus a man sick because of sin.” Those statements would have been true. Those statements may have explained Christ’s first words about forgiving the man. All have sinned. All deserve death. The Lord saw the man’s greatest need, even beyond his physical condition.

Make no mistake: those carrying the paralytic were sinners. But they were sinners in which Christ was continually killing the old man, that the new man might be continually resurrected. They “...put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” St. Paul would exhort: “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.” No longer were

they called liars; instead confessors of the truth. No longer were they called angry men; instead peacemakers. No longer were they called thieves; instead honest workers sharing with those in need.

As the people of God shared, the Lord did never forsake them. David says in Psalm 37: "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked ... [The righteous] shall not be ashamed in the evil time and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied ... The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again but the righteous sheweth mercy and giveth. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand. I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful and lendeth; and his seed is blessed." Even when the righteous gives generously and lends abundantly, Christ ensures that they will have enough. They will never be forsaken. Perhaps no better explanation of the Christian life can be given than in the second stanza of Martin Schalling's hymn "Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart." "Lord, 'twas Thy rich bounty gave my body soul and all I have in this poor life of labor. Lord, grant that I in every place may glorify Thy lavish grace and help and serve my neighbor." Simply put: this life of labor is for the good of the neighbor. Love for the neighbor reflects the love Christ first gave you.

The love of Christ was reflected that day when a few unknown persons carried a paralytic to Jesus. You may also be an unknown person. Maybe you're that Weekday School teacher who makes a difference in the lives of our young people. Maybe you're that faithful man or woman who attends every Worship service and Bible Study. Maybe you're that man singing in choir. Maybe you're that one who diligently gives your stewardship envelope week after week. Maybe you're that summer helper for Vacation Bible School. Maybe you're one of the gals counting the offerings. Maybe you're that guy who's always working on the lawnmowers. Whoever you are, your gifts of time, talent, and treasure are a reflection of Christ's love.

The Lord said, "For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?" The Lord is essentially asking, "What costs more, to heal body or to heal the soul?" It takes great cost and time to heal the body, yet to heal the soul the most costly price was asked: the death of God's Only Begotten Son. The Lord who was born of the Virgin Mary redeemed you, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won you from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood. The promise is delivered to you when you receive Him in His Body and in His Blood. See what kind of love the Father has given to you, that you should be called a child of God; and so you are. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠