

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Matthew 9:1-8
October 22nd, 2017
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Which Is Easier?

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The man healed in the Gospel reading has a serious and crippling condition. A condition which neither he, nor his friends who cared for him so much that they would let him down through a roof in order to see the Lord + Jesus, could cure. This man could not cure himself of his crippling disease. His friends could not cure him of his crippling disease. Only the Lord + Jesus could cure him of the disease for which he so desired for healing. This crippling disease that neither he nor his friends could cure was...sin.

Oh, certainly the man's paralysis would have caused him some agony of soul and depression in this life, but it is his sin that truly troubled him. How do we know? Because of the response that our Lord makes when the paralytic is brought before him. Our Lord doesn't say like He normally says in these situations, "Go, your faith has made you well." Or, "Rise, and walk and be going home." No, our Lord sees into this man's heart and analyzes the real concern in his heart, and says, "*Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.*" The Lord + Jesus knew that this man truly desired forgiveness of sins, more than the healing of his palsied limbs.

The same is true of us. We may have ailments, diseases, blind eyes, deaf ears, palsied limbs, or whatever other damages we have incurred in this body and life to our physical bodies, but there is a greater need for which we need a cure first and foremost, and that is the healing of our palsied sin-sickened souls. The paralytic in the Gospel knew what he needed, even though his friends sought another form of healing. Our Lord + Jesus knew what this man needed, too—he needed his sins forgiven and washed away.

That is why this healing of our Lord in today's Gospel informs us of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Christian friends—the Church, parents, sponsors—bring those who need to be baptized—those who need to be healed from their palsied souls—to our Lord + Jesus in the waters of Holy Baptism. In those waters the Lord declares that those who have been buried with Him in His death through the waters of Holy Baptism are forgiven; they have been washed clean of all sin. We who have been baptized are declared forgiven by our Lord. This is why our Liturgy is a vessel of the forgiveness of sins, for at its heart is the Triune Name that we bear that declares to us our forgiveness.

In the Invocation we are reminded of the Name that was placed upon us at Holy Baptism, the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And that Triune Name which we bear echoes

over and over again throughout the Liturgy: at the Absolution, where we are told by the Minister that we are forgiven for the sake of our Lord's death and suffering on our behalf; in the Gloria Patri, where we sing our praise to the Triune God Who has forgiven us of all our sin; in the Gloria in Excelsis, where the angels praise the Lord for His goodness that He has done for men on Earth; in the Kyrie, where we recall that the Triune Lord has mercy upon us by forgiving us of our sin. We hear the Triune Name repeated at the end of the Collects; there is a Triple Hallelujah which echoes that Trinitarian Name; we confess Him in the Nicene Creed; we pray to Him in the General Prayer; He is praised in the Sanctus; the Agnus Dei; the Nunc Dimittis; and in the final blessing. Therefore, we see in the Liturgy that our Lord's healing Name is constantly put before us, as a reminder throughout our service that we are forgiven of our sins.

But there are those who doubt that such words—“*Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.*”—mean anything at all. In fact, in the Gospel for today, the scribes accuse our Lord of blasphemy, because they thought, “What man can forgive sins?” The same is true of us today. With all of our struggles with sin and evil in this world, how can such simple words do anything? When the Absolution is proclaimed, do you breathe a sigh of relief because your sins have been forgiven, or is it more, “Well, that part's over, on to the Introit.” I would venture to say, that for us too often it is the latter. Maybe not because we don't appreciate hearing those words, but because either we feel our sins are too great to be cured by simple words; or, because of the hurried nature of our lives, we just dismiss it as words we've heard too often before. We pass over it without giving it much thought at all. But, my dear friends, those words that proclaim your forgiveness, are your soul's life and salvation, for they are the very words of our Lord spoken through the called and ordained Minister of God.

The Minister stands in the place of our Lord + Jesus to declare that all of your sin—great and small—is washed away in the waters of Holy Baptism. And on account of this washing you are now welcome to eat the meal of our Lord's Body and Blood which feeds and strengthens your soul, to further heal you of all sin and death which clings to you.

And if the General Absolution still leaves you troubled on account of your sin, we have the Private Absolution, where your specific sins that trouble and haunt you can be confessed and be forgiven privately with the Minister of God, who speaks forgiveness to you on the Lord's behalf. And these sins that we confess privately—just like in the Gospel today, where the paralytic man's sins are not revealed except to the Lord + Jesus Who is able to forgive them—will never be revealed to anyone; they will be forgotten and washed away, that is the promise of the seal of the confessional.

But for those of us who still have trouble with doubt—who need further proof of our Lord's forgiveness—our Lord + Jesus provides that for the paralytic as well. He said to him, “*Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.*” Here stands a visible sign of this man's forgiveness. It was a testimony to those who in their heart called the Lord + Jesus a “*blasphemer.*” And, it was a visible sign to the man himself that his sins were forgiven.

Our Lord provides visible signs of our forgiveness as well. We have the waters of Holy Baptism that are a visible testimony that our sins have been washed away, so that whenever we see water we are reminded that our sins are forgiven us. We have the bread and the wine, which are connected to the Lord's Body and Blood as a visible testament that our sins are forgiven us, whenever we eat and drink this Blessed Sacrament. And, as mentioned before, we have the voice of the Minister of God, as a testimony that our sins are forgiven.

By all these things the Holy Ghost heals our paralyzed sin-sick souls, and through the Word of God causes us to arise, and come to this holy House to receive over and over again the gifts that our Lord + Jesus would give to us—forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. For, wherever there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. We, therefore, should respond to these great gifts

of our Lord, as the people in the Gospel today did: *“They marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.”* We should marvel and glorify God that He has chosen to forgive us through such simple means as water and bread and wine and word. He has given them to His Bride, the Church, for us to bring all those who are paralyzed by sin and evil in this world, so that they might be lead to receive faith in our Lord + Jesus Christ through the waters of Holy Baptism, and for Him to declare to them and all those who hear His Word in faith, *“Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.”* Your sins are forgiven you. May the Lord grant you peace in this healing. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.