

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Matthew 9:1-8  
October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## When Jesus Saw Their Faith

*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.

In today's Gospel reading our Lord + Jesus does two healings. One of body, and one of soul. The Lord + Jesus causes this paralytic to walk, and more importantly He forgives this man all His sin. At first glance this text appears to be a pretty simple text. You have forgiveness and healing. But there is a lot more to this text than appears on the surface. First, let us look at the proclamation of our Lord + Jesus to this paralytic. *"Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you."*

*"Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you."* Those are indeed remarkable words to hear, are they not? These are words we would all like to hear. This is a truly remarkable statement by our Lord + Jesus, for by these words the Lord + Jesus gets to the heart of this man's problem—sin. In order to be declared forgiven, in order to receive forgiveness, a person has to have something from which to be forgiven. In essence, what that means, is that the Lord + Jesus is saying that this man is a sinner in need of forgiveness.

We truly do not understand what forgiveness is. Oh, we can say it to one another. We desire it to be said to us. But we truly do not understand what forgiveness is, nor do we understand what is being said to us, when someone declares us to be forgiven, or we declare someone else to be forgiven.

Listen well, when you hear those words, *"your sins are forgiven."* They are not just some polite saying, like "good luck," or "have a nice day," or "I hope you are feeling okay today, and if you are not, well then, I hope you feel better." *"Your sins are forgiven"* is a declaration to that person that they have something in them that needs forgiveness, and it needs to be forgiven right now, or else they will continue to carry the penalty of their sins with them. We are declaring to that person that he is a sinner and in need of God's grace. When we hear those words spoken to us, we should be shocked! "That person just called me a sinner!" "I must be a sinner, otherwise what need would I have for forgiveness?" "What need do I have to be told my sins are forgiven unless I need something forgiven?"

This is why we really do not understand what forgiveness is, because we do not really want to admit what poor, miserable sinners we are. And so, we disdain God's forgiveness, first by not considering our condition of sinfulness before God. And second, by not considering what God is doing for us by the words, "your sins are forgiven you." If we did, when we heard those words we would rejoice greatly. Instead what do we do, when someone calls us a sinner? We put up barricades to the very

idea. “How dare he call me a sinner! Just look at his own life, and how screwed up that is. Who does he think he is?” You see, we do not think we are really that bad of a person, otherwise we would be running to the pastor with every sin and trouble that bothers us, to confess them and hear those words one more time, “*Your sins are forgiven.*” If we truly knew what kind of danger we were in because of our sinfulness, we would not be ashamed to hear someone call us a sinner. We would embrace it, and admit it, and in faith we would confess those sins and look for absolution from the pastor, for he is the mouth of the Lord who proclaims the promises of the Lord, that our sins were paid for in full on the tree of the holy cross, and through our faith which grasps onto and holds onto this promise, we have that forgiveness.

When we hear that our sins are paid for on account of Christ’s death, we should be relieved, and overjoyed. Our faith should cling to Christ, and we should never doubt His mercy. We should want our neighbors, and coworkers, and yes, even our enemies, to hear of Christ’s forgiveness—the same forgiveness to which we hold onto in faith. If more people in this world realized how full of sin they are, and how much they need God’s grace and mercy, this church would be packed to overflowing every Sunday. If we, and the world, were truly aware of our sinful condition, everyone would want to hear those words, “*your sins are forgiven*” as much as possible, and take comfort in them. We would not let anything get in our way of being in this Lord’s House to receive that gift of absolution, and partake of the opportunity to remember our Holy Baptism, and receive with rejoicing our Lord’s Body and Blood given in bread and wine. Nothing would get in our way. We would be just like the men in today’s Gospel who tore open a hole in the roof, just so that they could receive the Lord’s mercy. This is how great their faith was.

But, that is the problem with our sinful ears. We hear those words, and we do not really take them to heart. It is almost like, “yeah, I know I am a sinner and I need forgiveness, and I hear the words you are saying about my forgiveness, but I need something else; something bigger and better than that. What good is a bunch of words going to do for me? I have ‘real’ problems.” Well, my dear friends, you do not have any bigger problem than your Old Adam; than the inborn sin you inherited from Adam dwelling within you and fighting the New Adam every step of the way. We have no bigger problem than that.

Our Lord + Jesus knew this about the paralytic. This is why He deals with this paralytic’s biggest problem, first—sin. Think about that! We think we have problems, but this guy, could not walk or move his arms. He had to be carried in by his friends. This man was paralyzed. Logic and reason would dictate to us that this man’s greatest need was his paralysis. Not so, says the Lord + Jesus! It is sin! He first needs to be healed in his soul. When He saw their faith, He said, “*Your sins are forgiven you.*” “Whew! Thank you, Lord + Jesus. Now I can go home a happy man.” That is what he would be saying if the Lord left him with those words, right? “Thank you, Lord + Jesus for forgiving me my sins.”

NO! I doubt his friends who went through all the trouble of getting him in front of the Lord + Jesus would have been satisfied, and neither would we be. In our eyes, and the eyes of the world, the Lord + Jesus ignores this man’s greatest problem—his paralysis. But the ways of God are not the ways of man. The Lord + Jesus sees what his real need is and fixes it first.

The text does not say it; however, I like to think that the paralytic man heard not only what he *needed* to hear, but exactly what he *wanted* to hear. And this is what really upsets the Pharisees. The Pharisees do not like what the Lord + Jesus has to say. They say, “*This man blasphemes!*”

The Pharisees embody our own response to the proclamation of forgiveness—our disdain, our unbelief, our desire for something more and better. The thing is it is also the response of the devil to Christ’s preaching—“You don’t need that. You are basically a good person. Your sins are not that big of a deal.” The devil gets in our ears and convinces us that the forgiveness is not really necessary; that

in the end, it is just words, that it does not really do anything for us. The devil gets us looking for other ways and means in which to find comfort and healing. We do not want to believe it. He gets us looking at our situation in life, and what physical and material possessions we have or do not have. The devil, the world and our sinful flesh, do not want us looking inside ourselves at our sin, because if we did, we would desire and want forgiveness. They do not want us to have comfort or peace, or to even truly know what it means to forgive and be forgiven. And I believe this is why private confession is disdained among many Lutherans, even though it is praised and encouraged in our Confessions, because we do not really think our sins are that big of a deal, and that simply confessing them in private to the pastor and receiving absolution from the pastor as if from God Himself will really change our view of our sin.

Consider what the Word of God does for this paralytic. For, that is what is really healing this paralytic's soul—God's Word. Christ is speaking to his soul to be clean and undefiled, to be a new creation, formed as a new man before the Lord God. When we hear those words of forgiveness from the pastor, or from one another, it is again the Triune Lord God's Word that is awaking and strengthening our dead arms and legs to stand before His throne, and give Him thanks and praise. The New Man stands before the Lord God forgiven of all of his sin, and rejoices. And a deep sigh of relief echoes forth from the healed sinner's lips. "Ahh, now I am at peace. Now I have all things. Now I have forgiveness, nothing more do I need."

Our Lord + Jesus goes even further with this paralytic. He heals him of his paralysis, to show the Pharisees, and you and I, that His Word really can breathe life into dead limbs; to show us that the Son of Man, truly does have power to forgive sins—to forgive our sins through the voice of the pastor. The thing to remember is that this man did not need to be healed of his paralysis after the Lord + Jesus healed him of his sin. He already had everything he needed for this life. However, this man gets a bonus. And the bonus was not for his benefit alone. It was to show the Pharisees, and indeed the whole world, that the words of Christ do have power to heal, not just the body, but the soul. This paralytic was healed so that we may know that when someone tells to us, "*Your sins are forgiven you,*" we will know that our sins are forgiven us; we will know that our souls have been healed from all sin, and through our faith which holds onto that promise, we have peace with the Triune Lord God.

Your sins are forgiven you. Depart in peace. 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.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*