

Trinity 19

October 10, 2021

Text: Matthew 9:1-8

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

The Gospel today is one of the most explicit texts you'll hear regarding the forgiveness of sins.

The Christian Church is centered and grounded in forgiveness, secured for you by Jesus Christ upon the cross. From the cross, the forgiveness of sins proceeds; it proceeds through the liturgy of Church – through the absolution, the Gospel, the Sermon, the Lord's Supper – and then flows into your lives, the paths, and conversations you encounter throughout every day of each week.

Yet, this article of faith is one of the hardest for Christians to truly exercise in their lives. To forgive is often seen as a form of surrender; it's the end of a battle and conflict, it's to admit a wrong or a perceived wrong. The old Adam residing within your hearts can't afford this form of humbleness before friends and foes. Thus, this hardness of heart we live with paralyzes and renders you immovable in your lives and relationships.

In the Gospel today, the paralytic is said to have been brought to Jesus by his friends. Those are some good friends. They cared for this man and brother. They wanted him to be healed again. To walk with them, to converse, to be part of who they are as a community.

But as the friends bring the paralytic to Jesus, He says something odd, *“Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.”* A better way to translate this pronouncement from Jesus may be, *“Be courageous child, your sins are forgiven.”* It's a nuance, but the courage needed for life is to face sorrow, hardship, broken relationships, and the like with confidence in God, to remain hopeful and courageous through the good and the bad of each day.

Jesus also says to you, as He did at the beginning of today's service, *“Be courageous child, your sins are forgiven.”* But like those gathered with the paralytic, that's not what you genuinely want to hear. The friends brought the paralytic to Jesus to have him

healed, and likewise, you want the challenges and tribulations of life removed from your path.

The person you struggle with within the church, remove them! The child who struggles in class, send them elsewhere. The cloud of sadness that accompanies untimely deaths, well, just don't let this happen to me.

For you today, Jesus doesn't treat the symptoms of paralysis in your life; he treats the cause – sin.

You see, the paralytic was healed, but there's no guarantee he wouldn't lose his ability to walk again. There's no promise he wouldn't meet danger or trial. So, Jesus tells him to be courageous – to face the days of his life and take comfort in what is eternal – the forgiveness of sins.

So, my friends, what is easier, *“to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk?’*” Sure, at first, you might say the forgiveness of sins is the easier road. But you can't necessarily see forgiveness, can you? You may know what's within your heart, but can you see your brother or sister's heart?

For the scribes gathered, they thought within their hearts that this Jesus was blaspheming God. Do you know why this whole interaction should scare you? Because Jesus likewise knows your thoughts and hearts and says, *“Why do you think evil in your hearts?”* He sees the paralysis of sin dwelling within.

At this moment, Jesus begins to reveal His omniscience in the Gospel today. He sees beyond your external actions and knows your secret thoughts and words. He knows the deep waters of your heart and the evil that lies within, just as He knew the heart of the Scribes.

Truthfully, we don't want to deal with the darkness of life. We don't want to deal with confessing what truly troubles us. We don't want to reconcile with those brothers and sisters we genuinely loathe and despise. We don't desire forgiveness; we simply want to be told, *“Arise and walk.”* We desire cures for the symptoms of life's troubles, just not the cause.

Reconciliation makes us uncomfortable, and it forces us to speak with one another. To say, *“I'm sorry and I forgive you.”* Yeah, no, thank you, let's just devise ways to coexist, tolerate one another, keep the banter going for good measure.

Seriously, when's the last time you sat down with someone you didn't agree with or have sinned against and walked through confession and absolution? When's the last time you spoke the tearfully freeing words to your greatest nemesis? We need to learn again how to say, I am sorry, and I forgive you – because it is life-giving, restoring, and eternal.

The healing and forgiveness of God did not remain in heaven but entered this world through the incarnation and took the form of a man, the Father's only begotten Son. He bore the sin of the world upon the cross, and now in the font, you have been united in Christ's death and resurrection. In the font of Holy Baptism, you have been made brothers and sisters. You are family.

In the Epistle this morning, the Apostle Paul wrote, *“put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”* (Ephesians 4:22-24)

After coming to the font, you are called to confess your sins, to *“put off your old self,”* your pride, anger, and the secret motivations of your heart. But, instead, you are called to go forth in *“the likeness of God, in true righteousness and holiness.”* In other words, having received the forgiveness of Christ Jesus, you are to be little Christs to your neighbors, to everyone you encounter – friend or foe.

Don't just walk past the font as an ornament within the church, but be reminded of who you are in Christ Jesus. Seek out reconciliation throughout life. Be a friend and neighbor to one another, carry those paralyzed by sin in prayer to God – that their hearts would be softened and moved to confess, and by all means – be courageous throughout this life, for when you confess, you can be assured your sins are remembered no more.

Life is full of adversity, periods of darkness, and unfortunate conflict. Do not permit the world to form you, but through confession and absolution, be continually renewed in Christ Jesus and His likeness – for on the last day He will return, and to you, He will say, “Arise and walk.” Come forth from the grave, for your faith has healed you. +INJ+

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

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