

3/8/26

Sermon Title: Jesus Who Came to Call Sinners

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 9:1-13

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

⁹ Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town.

² Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

³ At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"

⁴ Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?"

⁵ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?

⁶ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home."

⁷ Then the man got up and went home.

⁸ When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

The Calling of Matthew

⁹ As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.

¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Jesus calmed the storm and crossed the Sea of Galilee to come to the region of the Gadarenes, but at the request of the people there to leave their region, He crossed the Sea of Galilee again and returned to Capernaum.

¹ Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town.

“His own town” refers to the main base of Jesus’ ministry, which was Capernaum. Capernaum was the administrative and military center of the region of Galilee at that time.

Before coming to Capernaum, Jesus had been living in Nazareth.

When the news spread that Jesus had returned from the region of the Gadarenes, many people gathered around Him.

Among them were some people who brought a paralytic to Him.

² Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”

According to the accounts in the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke, these men were friends of the paralytic.

Because so many people had gathered that they could not bring their paralyzed friend, who was lying on a mat, to Jesus, they went up onto the roof, opened it, and lowered the mat with ropes down in front of Jesus.

Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven.”

From these words of Jesus, we can see that the man’s illness was closely related to the sins he had committed.

It is likely that he had lived a long life of moral corruption and reckless behavior before becoming paralyzed.

Because of this, he may have been burdened with guilt in his conscience and felt fear in the presence of Jesus.

But Jesus, knowing this, removed not only his physical illness but also the root cause of the illness.

What is important here is that Jesus did not merely see their earnest actions; He saw their faith—their belief that He had the power to heal the sick.

“They” refers to all of them, including the paralytic himself.

God examines even the deepest parts of the human heart and knows the thoughts within it.

This passage once again confirms that the grace of salvation comes only from faith that completely trusts in God.

The Jews believed that once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place and offer a sin offering to God so that the people could receive forgiveness for the sins they had committed during the year.

Yet Jesus, who was not a high priest but the son of a carpenter, proclaimed forgiveness of sins on a day that was not the Day of Atonement.

Seeing this, some of the scribes thought that Jesus was blaspheming.

³ At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!”

When the scribes heard Jesus’ words, they thought that He was intruding into the unique domain of God and even attempting to place Himself in the position of God.

This was because they believed that the forgiveness of sins belonged solely to the authority of the LORD God.

But Jesus knew what was in their hearts and rebuked their evil thoughts.

⁴ Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?”

Jesus asked the scribes why they were entertaining such evil thoughts, since they made no sincere effort to find out who He truly was—the One who boldly proclaimed the forgiveness of sins—but instead sought only to find fault with His words and destroy Him.

Then Jesus asked them which was easier: to say, “Your sins are forgiven,” or to say, “Get up and walk.”

⁵ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?

What do you think?

Naturally, it is more difficult to say, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Only God has the authority to forgive sins, whereas miracles of healing can also be performed by prophets sent by God.

Yet because the forgiveness of sins cannot be immediately verified, one might think it is actually easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven,” than to say, “Get up and walk,” which can be instantly confirmed.

Jesus explained that the reason He first said, “Your sins are forgiven,” instead of immediately saying, “Get up and walk,” was to declare His divine authority.

⁶ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.”

By saying to the paralyzed man, “Your sins are forgiven,” instead of first saying, “Get up and walk,” Jesus revealed to the people that He has the authority to forgive sins.

In doing so, He declared that He is the Son of God who came in human flesh—indeed, God Himself.

In fact, atonement is the very essence of Jesus’ ministry.

By offering Himself as the sacrifice on the cross, Jesus laid the eternal foundation for the forgiveness of sins.

Nevertheless, because people found it difficult to understand His words, “Your sins are forgiven,” Jesus then commanded in a way they could clearly see and understand: “Get up, take your mat and go home.”

When the people witnessed this, they were filled with fear.

Yet they still did not recognize Jesus as the Son of God—God Himself—but regarded Him only as a prophet who had received authority from God.

⁷ Then the man got up and went home.

⁸ When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

The paralyzed man not only received healing through his unquestioning faith, but he was also forgiven of his sins.

He gained not only a strong body but also a healthy soul.

In other words, he received blessings both physically and spiritually.

Through this event, Jesus showed the people that He possesses not only the power to heal diseases but also the authority to forgive sins, thereby declaring that He is the Son of God.

Those who witnessed this were filled with reverence for God. They glorified God. However, they still did not recognize that Jesus, who performed this miracle, was the Son of God.

Next comes the scene where Jesus calls Matthew the tax collector to be His disciple.

As Jesus was walking along the shore, He saw Matthew the tax collector sitting at the tax booth and called him to follow Him.

Without hesitation, Matthew followed Jesus.

The author of the Gospel of Matthew is this very Matthew, and he later became one of Jesus' twelve disciples.

⁹ As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

At that time, Judea was a province under the rule of Rome, and the tax office was a place where taxes were collected for the Roman Empire.

It was also a source of political funding for the tetrarch Herod Antipas.

Tax collectors often extorted taxes harshly because the system allowed them to collect more than required and keep a portion for themselves.

For this reason, the Jewish people regarded them as traitors and collaborators with the enemy.

Matthew himself also considered himself a sinner.

Therefore, when Jesus was passing by, he paid close attention to Him, and Jesus read his heart.

Knowing his heart, Jesus personally approached Matthew and called him.

Matthew was thankful and deeply moved that Jesus came to someone like him, a sinner.

Therefore, he immediately obeyed the call and welcomed Jesus and His companions into his house.

Matthew then held a banquet.

He invited many tax collectors and sinners who were in the same situation as himself so that they too could meet Jesus.

¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.

In Jewish society, sharing a meal together signified the affirmation of belonging to the covenant community.

Therefore, for Jesus and His disciples to sit and eat with these tax collectors and sinners was, from the perspective of the religious leaders of that time, a truly revolutionary act.

Seeing this, the Pharisees criticized Jesus.

However, they did not say this directly to Jesus but spoke to His disciples instead. Perhaps they were trying to create division between Jesus and His disciples, or they did not have the courage to speak directly to Jesus, who had performed such powerful works.

¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

The Pharisees thought that Jesus sitting and eating with tax collectors and sinners was defiling the Law.

The Law forbade those who feared God from associating with the wicked or those who practiced injustice.

They believed that if Jesus were truly God’s prophet, He would never eat with tax collectors and sinners—people no different from Gentiles who did not keep God’s commandments.

However, Jesus did not come to judge or punish sinners.

Rather, He came to set them free from sin and grant them liberation.

Upon hearing the Pharisees’ criticism, Jesus responded with the following words:

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

The place where the doctor should be is beside the sick and the afflicted.

In other words, Jesus came to save sinners, and His mission is to be with them.

There is no reason for Him to be with the self-proclaimed righteous Pharisees.

Jesus associates with those who recognize their own sin, who grieve over it, and who lament their condition, offering them forgiveness for their sins.

To the Pharisees, He responds with a measure of irony, telling them to study the Scriptures more diligently.

¹³ But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

In short, Jesus’ words here point out the misconceptions of the Pharisees and rebuke their pride.

The Pharisees, confident in their mastery of Scripture, ignored the fundamental purpose for which God gave the Law.

They neglected love for God and neighbor, clinging instead to outward rituals and formalities.

They mistakenly believed that simply following the external forms fulfilled their religious duty.

To explain His actions, Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6:

(Hosea 6:6) For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings

He highlights that the Pharisees, who were supposed to exemplify God's mercy and compassion, had forgotten the essence of true religion, focusing solely on formal rituals—just like the religious leaders in Hosea's time.

The Pharisees maintained their rigid outward appearance of righteousness without practicing genuine love.

When Jesus says, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," He is not dismissing the importance of sacrifices or religious rituals.

Rather, He emphasizes that acts of love and mercy toward the marginalized must take precedence.

Focusing on ceremonial rules without practicing compassion is a misunderstanding of God and Scripture.

Jesus says that He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

This does not mean that the Pharisees were actually righteous.

All human beings are sinners.

However, the reason Jesus did not include the Pharisees among the 'sinners' here is that they were self-righteous people who refused to acknowledge their own sins.

Jesus came to this world to call sinners, invite them to the heavenly banquet, fellowship with them, and lead them to repentance and salvation.

Beloved members of the Church of Godly Dreams,

Almost all human problems originate from sin.

When problems arise, people often make various excuses and try to defend themselves, yet deep down they know that the ultimate cause is their own sin.

And they suffer from guilt.

Sometimes that guilt even leads to physical illness.

It was the same for the paralytic and Matthew the tax collector in today's passage.

The world criticized them and pointed fingers at them.

But Jesus did not turn away from them.

He had compassion on them and came near to them, saying, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven," and "Follow me."

He forgave their sins, healed the paralytic's physical sickness, and even called Matthew to be His disciple.

Jesus said that He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

These words bring immeasurable comfort and strength to us who struggle and blame ourselves because of our sin.

As we receive this message today, God sees our hearts and comes to us, saying, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven," and "Follow me."

Like the paralytic, rise and walk in faith.

Like Matthew, obey the word and follow Him immediately.

Jesus is not merely one who has the power to heal our illnesses; He is the Savior who forgives our sins.

Therefore, let us joyfully respond to His call and live with the heart of Jesus, who came to seek sinners.

May all of us live such a life.