

I have come for you

Bible reference for sermon Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

¹⁰ And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹² But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous but sinners."

For you! I have come for you.

Jesus reaches out his healing hand; Jesus comes to heal the sick. His ministry, His purpose, His life is to bring life. Jesus comes to bring mercy not demand sacrifice, to heal the sick. To reconcile the outcast. Because these sick ones are not only unwell. But they are in the eyes of the Law, unclean. The Law demands that the sick not come into the holy presence of God. They are to be excluded.



And they know it....And yet... And yet this Jesus is so different. And so, they come, they come to the Holy one, Jesus, because they know (They have faith) that he can heal. They come because he comes for them. Grace trumps the law. Mercy is the gift it can't be earned by human sacrifice and perfection. Forgiveness trumps punishment. Love trumps and triumphs over fear and hate. Life in Christ trumps and triumphs over death.

Matthew wrote his gospel story primarily for a community of Christians with a Jewish background who had been dispersed to many places after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD and the teaching of grace is under threat from the rise of Pharisaic Judaism with its focus on the law and keeping the law and making the law...I can't help but think of the parallel to our time with the rise of extremisms of all sorts but especially those whose demands of others, often minorities to keep their law. They become to be a law unto themselves.

The Pharisees like extremist groups of a particular law, became the law.

Jesus loved them. He loved them and never stopped loving them, but he knew they were looking for God and for righteousness in all the wrong places. No place for God and God's grace, they became lost in their demands of others to be holy and pure as they saw themselves. Grace had no place and neither did Jesus.

So, Matthew structures his gospel to tell the one gospel story of Jesus the Christ to encourage those Jewish Christians who are under pressure. He writes to assure them of the authority of God in Jesus as shown by his grace. **Learn this: I desire mercy not sacrifice.** Matthew has structured the way he tells this part of the gospel story to show who actually has authority:

He emphasises Jesus as God's Messiah by his authoritative teaching in chapters 5-7

And he emphasises Jesus as Messiah who has authority over even death by his healing miracles (authority chapters 8-9

So, in chapter 8 Jesus heals a man with skin disease (he makes the unclean man, clean). **I have come for you!**

Matthew Ch 5-7
Emphasise Jesus' authority as a teacher.

Matthew Ch 8-9
Emphasise Jesus' authority by his healing and making clean that which was unclean.

Jesus heals the sick servant of a centurion (an outsider who is unclean comes to the holy one of God for an unclean servant and Jesus' heals and makes holy). **I have come for you too.** Jesus heals Peter's sick mother-in-law, cast out spirits and cured the sick fulfilling Isaiah.

"He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

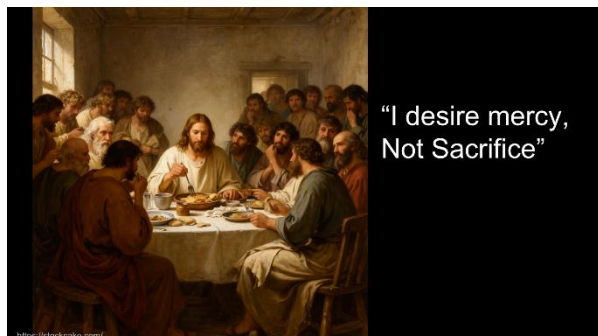
In Ch 8 he stills the storm and heals two men possessed by demons. Jesus has authority. He heals. He makes the unclean, clean again. **I have come for you!**

In chapter 9 he forgives the sins and heals a paralysed man. "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has **AUTHORITY ON EARTH TO FORGIVE SINS**, he said to the paralysed man "*Stand up, take your bed and go home.*" **For I have come for you too.** The people are in awe and they glorified God.

But not the Jewish authorities. Not the ones living by law alone. They would exclude and in doing so, exclude themselves from grace and from God.

Jesus makes clean by calling the unclean and eating with them. (this upsets the Pharisees).

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*but sinners.” **I have come for you** who are in need of love.*

Jesus is on a mission to heal the sick and to make those unclean and separated from society and from God clean again. To become holy people touched by the grace of God. Jesus makes clean by touching death in the young girl in our text and exchanging her uncleanness with his holiness and her death with his life.

Matthew has a story to tell of Jesus as the Messiah. -And so do you and I

Some of us will have stories to share of physical healing. Some wont. But as Christians, we share and have the amazing gift that God has touched our lives and made us holy. He has healed us by taking the punishment for sin on his own body and exchanging our uncleanness to become holy. **I have come for you!** Jesus still says. He finds us and calls us **“follow me”** in holy baptism. And he invites us to share his fellowship at the table.

In Jesus’ day tax collectors had to bid for contracts to collect taxes. Once they had a contract they could carry it out as they saw fit and recoup their outlay on the contract... Now, surprise, surprise! The natural human tendency was to be greedy and collect more than they should through dishonest dealings. Also, the fact that tax collectors could bid for contracts meant that they were already wealthy and in Jesus’ basic agrarian subsistence economy that gave them a huge advantage over others. They were not liked. They were not invited anywhere.

Yet Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners. Follow me. Table fellowship could signify the closest bond and relationship and upheld social rules of who could eat together. Jesus hosts us at his table, a gift of sheer grace where the company of heaven meets with us on earth at Jesus’ table and all are welcome who accept the gift of Jesus as he calls **“Follow me.”**

Jesus still eats with sinners today...sinners who are also saints made holy by his saving love and life.

This is my body given for you. Jesus comes to the unclean. **I have come for you!**

Jesus heals by touching the unclean...death. **I have come for you!**

Jesus on the cross-exchange’s punishment for forgiveness. **I have come for you!**

Jesus’ free gift for us who are unclean.... washed clean is to be invited to the banquet **which is for you.**

And from here we are sent into the world to bring this to others in our lives. Is there someone, a relationship, a family in need of Jesus’ healing grace in your life? Pastor Sue talked of reconciliation in our lives and families and country last Sunday. Is there someone in your life that Jesus is calling you to bring his grace to in order to heal?

I can’t wait for the wonders of heaven; the people I’ll meet at the throne of the Lamb... there will be Matthew the unclean tax collector who was found and called by Jesus and chosen to tell the gospel story, there will be the people mentioned in chapters 8 and 9s.. The unclean woman who waited 12 years for the time to come when she saw Jesus and knew that if she just touched his cloak, she would be healed. So many and all saved by

the grace and mercy of Jesus alone. We are all people saved by amazing grace. We'll sing these words soon...

“When I consider Jesus Christ
Beaten, killed and broken man,
I hold my breath
But even more
I stand in awe
When broken people come to him,
Hand in hand.

In Jesus' day and Us today to ...

“When I consider God's own church
Sinful sort of saintly band,
I hold my breath
But even more
I stand in awe
When sinners come to share God's meal,
Hand in hand, hand in hand.
Sinners come to share God's mean hand in hand.



In a time where extremist views and demands like those of the Pharisees of Jesus' day seek to drown out all others today, hear the merciful One of God, Jesus the Christ, continue to come in grace to heal, to make holy and to bring life and to speak above the angry demands:

“I have come for you”

Continue in your life and in your relationships that “I desire mercy and not sacrifice”.

Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul's Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>