

6/7/26
2nd Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from May 31st – June 6th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O God, you are the source of life and the ground of our being. By the power of your Spirit bring healing to this wounded world, and raise us to the new life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:

Share: How did last week's scripture (Matthew 28:16-20) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. How does Matthew respond to Jesus' invitation?
2. What action does the woman take to approach Jesus?
3. What does Jesus say to the woman after healing her?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What areas of your life feel in need of healing, restoration, or renewed hope?
2. Share a time when you felt God calling you toward something unexpected or uncomfortable.
3. What do you do when prayers seem delayed, healing seems absent, or hope feels fragile?

Memorize this verse: "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous but sinners." (Matthew 9:13) Share a time in your life when have you experienced mercy rather than judgment.

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 50:7-15. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

Let's deal with both sections of this text separately. In verses 9-13, this scene clearly identifies the heart of Jesus' mission. He has come to seek out the lost. He has come to extend God's love to those who are considered by their peers to be unlovable. He has come to heal the broken-hearted, to restore the outcast, and gather all those who have been scattered and shattered by the trials and tribulations of this life. And for this reason, it is also the scene that points out what gets Jesus into so much trouble. The religious authorities are offended by Jesus' audacity to forgive sin. And now matters only get worse, as he doesn't simply perform some religious rite of absolution but actually treats all the people he meets with profound respect. He treats them as if they weren't the awful sinners the Pharisees know them to be but instead as precious children of God. A "tax collector" didn't designate anything like those who work for the Internal Revenue Service today but rather named those Jews who worked for the Romans to extract a tax from their neighbors, a tax that simultaneously made the tax-collectors wealthy and supported the Roman occupation. Similarly, "sinners" doesn't merely describe those who have fallen short of God's ideal but rather is reserved for the worst of the worst: thieves, bandits, prostitutes, and more.

All of which means that Jesus is deliberately seeking out those who normally are considered beyond the pale of decent society in order to treat them with the respect and dignity they deserve as God's beloved children. And so, he eats with them. Accepting their hospitality and honoring them with his presence, and in this way names and identifies them as worthy of God's love, attention, and forgiveness. And it drives the religious authorities bananas. But Jesus won't be deterred. He isn't particularly concerned about either the spiritual or material welfare of the Pharisees because, quite frankly, they are doing just fine. He has come to seek out the lost in order to demonstrate God's intention to find and redeem and love all of God's children, even those in the most dire of straights.

In verses 18-26, Matthew employs a story-telling technique as old as, well, storytelling. He is sandwiching one encounter within the first and second halves of another. The purpose is not merely chronological accuracy – just telling it like it happened – but also narrative intensity. In other words, the scenes interpret each other, inviting us to pay attention to the similarities and contrasts between them. We might notice, for instance, that both scenes involve women, a girl in the prime of her life who has died, a woman who has suffered for most of her adult life. With that major similarity as backdrop, we can also focus on contrasts. In the first, the girl is being restored to life, the second is restored to community. The first has someone to advocate for her. The second must advocate for herself. Correspondingly, the first is entirely passive in her healing, while the second is quite active. Now, having compared and contrasted all of this, we might notice one more thing, perhaps the binding similarity of these two stories. Both women are daughters. The first is born the daughter of a synagogue leader who comes begging Jesus on behalf of his beloved child. The second is called daughter by Jesus, restored to health and wholeness and commended for her great faith. Might it be that at the heart of these two mutually interpreting stories is Jesus' promise that, whatever our outward similarities and differences, to God we are all beloved children? That we all are therefore worthy of dignity and honor. That God loves each and all of us the same. I wonder: how might our daily attitudes, assumptions, and actions change if we believed that? I think, at the very least, we'd have some more really good stories to tell.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen