

Jesus' Purpose Matthew 9:1-8

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

Do you understand that there is something significant going on in our text? Two words in English translated, "And behold," let us know this. In Greek, it is *kai idou!* Matthew uses that phrase to arrest the attention of the reader to a significant event. And behold. . . something incredible is going to be done or said by Jesus.

"And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed." We initially think, "what is so significant about that? All sorts of people were bringing their sick to Jesus. What makes this time so unusual and important that we are to take special notice?"

Something *different* is about to take place. Matthew does not tell us, but if we look at this account as recorded by Mark and Luke, we notice something that might help bring the significant into focus. The house in which Jesus was speaking was so crowded that the four men who brought Jesus could not even get near the door. So, they took their paralytic friend up onto the roof of the home, dug a hole through it, and lowered him, upon his pallet, down into the room.

But those details have theological implications of their own, and combined with Jesus' actions, reveal His divine omniscience - His all-knowing-ness. He understood the faith of this paralytic and his four friends. And in turn, Jesus dealt with what was most important to the man.

What was most important? Why would four friends go to such great lengths to bring a paralyzed buddy before Jesus? Why would they go through the effort to destroy the private property of a roof of someone's home?

To our human eyes, there is an obvious answer to this question – the man was a paralytic. Everybody was bringing people to Jesus for healing.

Lord, give my brother Tyler the ability to walk. Make his legs strong! Bring about a miracle. I prayed that prayer – fervently. Lord, get my mother off her back. Restore her nervous system to health that she might enjoy life more. I also prayed that prayer – fervently.

Why was God silent to me? Why didn't God answer my prayers? Why was God deaf to my requests. Maybe He doesn't care? Maybe He doesn't exist?

Or maybe I just didn't understand?

How many times, when God does not do what we want Him to do in the manner and time we want Him to do it, do we say or think, "God did not answer my prayer!" There are times God does say, "No!" or "Wait!" But either way he answered the prayer.

Notice that nobody speaks in this text except Jesus. At least, no one else is recorded to have spoken. We are given to know what the Scribes were thinking within themselves, but no one else speaks. And the first words out of Jesus' mouth must have stunned the gathering into silence, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."

How many were stunned into silence? Probably many of them were thinking, "What? Is Jesus blind? This

man doesn't need forgiveness, he needs to walk." Dear friends, take note of this, the paralytic did not object. He didn't say, "No Jesus, I want to be healed." The paralytic's silence seems to indicate that Jesus was indeed correct in His assessment of the man's greatest need, and what weighed most heavy on his heart.

What you have thought that day? Would you have considered the man's paralysis his greatest need? Isn't that true of us all? What is your greatest need? What is most needed in your life? That might be a tough question. Think hard upon it. Is it your health? Your belongings? What you hear today?

Are you here because it is what you do on Sunday, because you are a Christian? Is your time here your duty to earn God's grace? Or have you come to hear what Jesus brings to you? Would you have gone to such great lengths to hear the Word of God? Would you have climbed to the roof and cut a hole through it, just so you could hear today that your sins are forgiven?

That is why the men brought their paralytic friend before Jesus. Did they hope that maybe Jesus would heal him? Probably, but the main purpose for bringing him into that home that day was to have Jesus speak to him forgiveness.

Why was the man a paralytic? Because he was a sinner. Why was my mother afflicted with Multiple Sclerosis? Because she was a sinner. Why is my brother confined to a wheelchair? Because he is a sinner. Why do I need glasses? Why have you been sick in the past? Because you and I are sinners.

For a moment, let us consider this paralytic. He had nothing to do as he lay unable to move all day – every day. All those sins which we might consider as greater offenses to God, he could not have done – he could not get up to steal, break into another's home, commit adultery with another man's wife, or murder his neighbor.

Now, consider the sins of the normal believer. Consider being unable to move, and therefore all you *can do* is lay there and ponder all his "ordinary" sins - sins for which he knew he deserved God's wrath and punishment.

What sins could a paralytic have? The same as you! Gossip, anger with a brother, unwillingness to forgive another, doubting God, failure to trust God above all things, failure to think of God first at all times, lust in the heart, coveting the abilities and belongings of other, and a host of other sins. All the sins you and I commit in our hearts and minds were what he had time to ponder as he helplessly lay there thinking on the physical evidence of his sinfulness.

So, Jesus met the man's greatest need by declaring to him, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."

The Scribes thought within themselves that this was blasphemy. They believed that no one could make the claim to forgive sins except God Himself, and they didn't believe that Jesus had such authority.

In our text, Jesus shows Himself to be God in a number of ways. First, He knew the paralytic's thoughts. Secondly, He knew what the Scribes were thinking. And finally, He showed His authority over sin by removing the effects of sin in the paralytic by healing him. If Jesus has power over the effects of sin, He also has the authority to forgive sin.

What exactly was the greatest miracle in our text? Was it giving the paralytic the physical ability to get up, take up his bed and go home? Or was it in forgiving him?

Those people crammed into that home heard Jesus' words, saw the miracle, and were afraid. Why? Because God had given such authority to men. What authority? To heal? No, Jesus had healed many others before this paralytic, they knew He was capable of that, that no longer made them afraid. Something else had to happen, but what? Jesus heals by clearly stating that it will declare his authority to forgive sin.

If he would have simply healed his paralysis the man would still have had the weight of his sin upon his conscience. As will we all, this man was going to die later, with his conscience burning, did he possibly believe he was unforgivable? His paralysis was a daily reminder to him, the evidence of his sinfulness that was impossible to ignore. In giving Him forgiveness, even if Jesus had not healed his paralysis, Jesus had granted him eternal healing and a perfect body in the resurrection.

When we consider the reason for Christ's incarnation, it was for a rather simple purpose. The purpose for which the Divine Word took on human flesh was to live a perfectly sinless life, to suffer, die, and to be raised to life again. His life, suffering and death, were to sacrifice that perfection, in order to purchase forgiveness of sins.

His purpose for instituting the Sacrament of Holy Baptism was to deliver what He purchased, the forgiveness of sins.

His purpose in instituting the Sacrament of Holy Communion was to deliver in that meal what He purchased, the forgiveness of sins.

His purpose for commanding the Apostles to go into the world, was that they might preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

The reason Christ appears to the disciples in that upper room on the night of His resurrection was to give them the authority to deliver what He purchased into the ears of the penitent, the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus shows His authority to forgive sin by healing the paralytic. Jesus gives His disciples that authority to forgive sin, and they also did miraculous healings as proof of that authority.

But even with that authority, not all who believe were healed. We point out Paul's "thorn in the flesh," some illness which was plainly visible to others. We know Paul prayed fervently to have that thorn removed, but God's response was, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinth. 12:9) That illness remained with Paul so that he might trust God solely, and rely only upon God for strength.

Today, the need is as great as it was then for physical healing *and* for the forgiveness of sins. You and I are like the paralytic in our text. Our sins have paralyzed us – sabotaged our relationships with all around us. But even greater than the paralysis of our sinfulness, it will be the death of each of us. It is for this reason that forgiveness is the most important need in your life and mine. The weight of the paralytic's sin had been conveyed to his friends so that they cut a hole in the roof of this home so he could be forgiven.

Today, Christ comes into our midst to meet our greatest need, to give us the forgiveness of sins. Christ is the very Word you hear of forgiveness spoken into your ears, Christ Himself comes in that Word and removes sin.

The Divine Service is God's gift to us of Christ – He is present. By His authority, that forgiveness He purchased is dispensed to you again and again. Look through the order of service and see what it is all about. See how many times forgiveness is requested and how many times it is dispensed. Christ's omniscience still looks into the hearts of men and women, He knows our greatest need even at those times when we do not.

God knows your need for forgiveness and gives it to you.

"Take heart, dearly beloved of God; your sins are forgiven." As your sins are forgiven you, know that Jesus is involved in your daily life. He is with you and caring for you. Your life is only what He allows it to be. And sometimes, He allows things to come into your life that you might focus upon Him and your great need for Christ as the only strength in your life.

Your sins are forgiven, and your life is Christ. It is yours to enjoy eternally with Him in His heavenly kingdom. This flesh is indeed passing away, but your life is eternal. And the flesh which passes away in this life, will be raised up again, perfect and holy – that eternal life has been purchased by Christ and is distributed to you in His forgiveness – for you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.