

The Gospel According to Matthew

Of What Value is Forgiveness?

September 12, 2021

Matthew 9v1-13

1 And after getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came to his own town.

2 And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." 3 Then some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." 4 But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk?' 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Stand up, take your bed and go to your home." 7 And he stood up and went to his home. 8 When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings.

9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

10 And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him 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 come to call not the righteous but sinners."

What are your strengths?
What are Jesus strengths?

Of what value, if any, is the ability to forgive sins?

To what extent, if any, do you believe in the idea of sin? Or is sin just an archaic word utilized by pre-modern people who lacked any understanding of human psychology?

Does Jesus hold to the idea that suffering is a result of unresolved sin?

Suffering & Sin in the Ancient Near Eastern mindset

Why does Matthew chase the story of the healed paralytic with his own story?

Hosea 11v1-2, 5, 8

What if this story points to the idea that at times (not all the time as demonstrated by Jesus numerous healings that did not make mention of sin) Jesus sees sin and suffering as intertwined?

What if God has a profound character flaw (so to speak) and it's that God values mercy more than justice?

To what extent do you believe in the reality of sin?

"When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings." _ Matthew 9v8

"Son of Man" = son of Adam

"These are two very different hermeneutics, two different ways of construing our current condition: the 'spiritual' versus the 'therapeutic.' What was formerly sin is often now seen as sickness. The moral is transferred to a therapeutic register; in doing so we move from responsibility to victimhood....The therapeutic revolution has brought a number of insights, approaches. It is just as a *total metaphysic* that it risks generating perverse results. There is something in the spiritual...perspective that does justice to the cracks we feel in our existence - in ways that the exclusively humanist 'therapeutic' construal can't make sense of."

_ Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age* & James K. A. Smith in *How (Not) to be Secular*

1. Who are you mad at?

2. How are you doing at exercising your call to forgive others?

3. To what extent are you aware of your need for God's forgiveness?

Podcasts: The Word on Fire Show 296: The Fading of Forgiveness & 298: How to Forgive People

Book: *How (Not) to be Secular* by James K. A. Smith

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