



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 9:1-8

KEY POINT(S): Jesus has the authority to forgive sin, because He is God.

FOR LEADERS

- Available Resources! - Just as a reminder, we have a number of resources available to leaders at Emergence, including these discussion guides, but also podcasts, blog posts, topical sessions, Coaches, development curriculum for apprenticeship and other potential leaders, and much more! For all things Communities, check out www.emergencenj.org/weeklyresources! If you have questions about anything else, reach out to your Coach or shoot us an e-mail at Communities@emergencenj.org!
Baptism! - We'll be having another Baptism coming up soon at Emergence! If you know someone who would like to be baptized or is considering baptism, have them reach out to us and we'll get them signed up!

GETTING STARTED

- Icebreaker - Name a talent or skill you have that is both impressive and entirely random!
Communities Video - Watch this week's Communities video!
What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon this week? Was there anything you found particularly impactful or eye-opening?

THE VISIBILITY OF FAITH

Lately in our study of Matthew, we have seen Jesus making a big deal out of people's faith (or lack thereof). From commending the Centurion to reproving the disciples for thinking He might allow them to perish at sea, Matthew's Gospel is pointing our attention specifically to the idea of faith. Here, Jesus responds to a display of faith by forgiving a man's sins and indicating to us that faith makes itself known by the decisions we make and how we respond in times of distress or trouble.

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 9:1-8

- What does faith mean to you, personally? How would you define what it means to be faithful?
What is it about a person's life that might indicate that they are a person of faith?
How does biblical perspective of faith compare to the common understanding of faith found in our culture today?
Who is someone that you personally consider to be a person of great faith and why?

Leaders: In our culture today, faith is often seen as something that is generic or represents some surface-level understanding of being religious. Jesus' definition of faith pushes in quite a bit deeper, in that it commands both an understanding of who Jesus really is (God), but also a complete and total trust of Him as Savior. A person whose faith is truly in Christ, will bear fruit in accordance with that faith. Most often, a person's faith is most clearly seen in times of trouble, distress, or trials.

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**WHICH IS EASIER?**

- [5]** Read over the question that Jesus poses to the scribes in verse 5. What do you think about Jesus’ question, and how would you answer it? Is there a right answer? Explain.
- [6]** In your opinion, do people more often tend to prioritize physical needs or spiritual needs today? How so? What about Christians today?
- [7]** It’s obvious from this week’s text that Jesus cares both about our spiritual needs AND our physical...but what do you think should be the appropriate balance between the two?

In the sermon this week, Ryan talked about how the Bible clearly teaches that God is always the most offended by our sin, as opposed to the person whom we’ve sinned against, even when we’ve done terrible harm to them (Gen. 39:7-9, Ps 51:1-4).

- [8]** Why do you think that people are more often concerned about the impact their sin has on people, rather than the impact it has against God? In what way(s) might this affect someone’s faith?
- [9]** How should the truth that God is the most offended by our sin affect our walk of faith and our relationship with Christ?
- [10]** What risks are you personally trying to take in your own life for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel? How does your own commitment to the Great Commission manifest itself in your life?

*Leaders: The “right” answer to Jesus’ question to the scribes (question 5) is Spiritual forgiveness of sin. The apostles and disciples have accomplished miracles of healing in the name and power of Jesus, but there is only one who can forgive sin, and that’s God Himself—the offended party. Today, it’s not uncommon for us to prioritize our own physical needs above our (or someone else’s) spiritual needs. When we become hungry, we eat. When we become ill, everything in our lives becomes secondary so that we may rest and heal. But how often does the reality of our own sin affect us so deeply that all else in our life becomes mute, and we only and simply seek out time with God? Jesus did...regularly. In truth, our spiritual health and our spiritual needs are far greater than the physical, though it doesn’t always feel that way. Praise God that we can walk in community with one another, to remind us all of the incredible love of Christ!*

**WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS?**

- [11]** Why do you think that the scribes declare Jesus as blasphemous when He forgives the man’s sin? Isn’t that a good thing?
- [12]** The text tells us that the reason Jesus heals the man was to show that the “Son of Man has authority to forgive sins.” What do you think Matthew is trying to tell us about Jesus in this passage?
- [13]** How does the fact that Jesus is God enable him to bring forgiveness to all who come in faith and repentance? Why would he not be able to do this if he were just a “morally-perfect” human being? How does this affect the way that Christianity relates to other world religions?

**PRAYER**

- [1]** Pray that God might help us to rightly prioritize people’s spiritual needs, while also being attentive to the physical as well. Take time to thank God for sending his Son, whose life has infinite value, while praying that forgiveness of sin would be the chief reality of our lives.