

# ***“WHO CAN FORGIVE ME?”***

April 26, 2020

Matthew 9:1-13

**INTRODUCTION** -- A pastor’s wife and their son had been to a SHOPPING MALL, and the boy had acted rather badly, wanting this & that, & running off, etc. As they were driving home, the boy could sense his mother’s displeasure & said, “When we ask God to forgive us when we are bad, He does, doesn’t He?” His mother replied, “Yes, He does.” The boy went on: “And when He forgives us, *He buries our sins in the DEEPEST SEA*, doesn’t He?” The mom replied, “Yes, that’s what Micah 7:19 in the Bible tells us.” The boy was silent for a little while, and then said, “I’ve asked God to forgive me, but I bet when we get home, you’re going to go fishing for those sins, aren’t you?”

**FORGIVENESS** -- We all need it, from GOD and from others. And there is an unfortunate aspect of human nature that we often find it hard to forgive - hard to forgive even those we love. So it is surprising to us, and not easy for us to

**UNDERSTAND** -- How it is that God loves us & forgives us for anything, if we simply repent of our sin and ask Him for forgiveness.

The Scripture today tells of:

## ***I. The KING of KINGS and FORGIVENESS***

In 2 related stories, we learn about the forgiveness of God. First, there is:

### **A. The Paralyzed Man — forgiven and healed (v. 1-8)**

1. A question that has been asked for CENTURIES is: “What causes sickness? What causes debilitating illnesses??”
2. In the ancient world, and among the Jewish people of Palestine of Jesus’ day, it was thought that illness & sickness was God’s punishment for ONE’S SINS!
3. After all, the law of Moses said something in Deut. 28: 58. however, that is not what Moses meant: the Lord’s warning was given to impress on the minds of the people that God wanted obedience!! Obedience to the law! It was not a warning of vague reasons behind every illness or handicaps - sins or wrongs that could only be guessed at by others.
4. Today - we think we are much more sophisticated than that - we are not so simple as to think that “your sins will make you sick!!” We know all about viruses, germs, and the bacteria that cause most illnesses, sickness, and handicaps. Of course - our sins can be detrimental.
5. We have learned addiction to hard drugs, especially those involving the sharing of needles can spread diseases. and we’ve known for a century or more that years of abuse of

alcohol can destroy the liver and other internal organs of the person hooked on alcohol.

For example: One of my grandfathers abused alcohol for years, and, when I was a boy about 8 years old, he died of a burst appendix as a result of the devastating effect of whiskey on his body. So, even in this sophisticated, technological age, light years advanced from those people of 2000 years ago in Palestine - we have learned that, in some ways, our behavior can make us sick.

6. So Jesus faced his paralyzed man - he knew he had the authority to forgive sins and the power to heal the sick. What would he do?

7. Jesus chose to deal with the paralyzed man as the people around him perceived this man - his sins had made him paralyzed. So Jesus forgave the man's sins - and then - he healed him!

8. The religious experts were, of course, upset with Jesus for this. By forgiving the man of his sins, Jesus took on the authority of God - who alone has the right to forgive people of their sins.

9. To the religious experts, Jesus gave no defense. He let his actions speak louder than words!

10. By healing this man, Jesus claimed to have the authority of God to forgive people of their sins!!

The second story of Jesus showing God's forgiveness is:

B. Matthew - forgiven and called!! (v. 9-13)

1. Jesus gave His call to Matthew in a very matter-of-fact manner: "Follow me." And yet this call carried a great deal of meaning in it:

Matthew as a "tax-collector," which, to Jewish people of that day, was a lot worse than being an I.R.S. agent! The tax-collector was working for the enemy - working for the hated Romans, who had conquered & now occupied their beloved land. The tax-collector was taking money that should have been feeding the children of Israel, and was sending it to their oppressors (after the tax-collectors had saved out a nice income for themselves, of course).

2. Jesus, in calling Matthew to follow him, was doing a *controversial & unpopular thing*. The actual call to follow him presumed forgiveness & acceptance of the man! Then, in the eyes of the self-righteous Pharisees, Jesus made it even worse by going to dinner that evening at Matthew's house!! All sorts of tax collectors & common people (meaning "unreligious, impure" people) came to Matthew's house that evening. The Pharisees grilled the disciples as to *what Jesus was really up to!!!*

3. Notice Jesus' response - 'I have come to heal the hearts and minds of those who realize that their lives are ravaged by sin, and realize that they need help!! Those of you who think you "have all the answers" - I can't help you. I'm calling those who know that they are sinners in need.'
4. And so, He gave forgiveness to sinners as though it was His to give!! So: what about forgiveness today???

### **CONSIDER:**

#### *II. THE NEED for FORGIVENESS TODAY*

##### A. Do modern people feel guilty?

1. We live in a day when people hold different presuppositions about their lives. Many people today do not agree with the statement: "*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*" (Rom. 3:23)
2. Many people today do not think of themselves as "sinners" or "guilty" of any serious sins - many people think of themselves that: "they are as good as anybody else!"
3. This means that the concept of personal sin is glazed over in our country, & people do not believe that they have sinned or done anything before God to feel "guilty" about.
4. However—

##### B. Guilt, desperation, among modern Americans

1. Henry David Thoreau, the great author of the last century, said "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."
2. There are so many people around us today who fear that they will be "found out" - that they are somehow not the "good people" that they appear to be, & that they must be careful or people will find out what they are really like and condemn them or despise them.
3. Despite the denials of absolute truth and the denial of sin that have run rampant through this country over the last 100 years, a sense of unresolved guilt is one of the main causes of mental illness in America today.
4. Karl Menninger, one of the great psychiatrists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a dedicated Christian (he was a lay elder in the Presbyterian Church), said once that "75% of the people in hospitals for the mentally ill could go home *tomorrow* - if they KNEW they were forgiven."

### III. THE CALL of JESUS TODAY

A. Jesus calls us today to follow him just as he called Matthew so many years ago - and Jesus has the same meaning behind the call that we must realize: “you are forgiven!!!”

B. That Bible verse I have mentioned so many times before is still true: “*If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”  
(I John 1:9)

C. So, Jesus calls us, his forgiven disciples, to:

1. Follow Him;
2. To associate with unchurched people, as he did, to win them to Christ;
3. To share God’s mercy with all people!!

**CONCLUSION** - (On the evening of April 25, 1958) One warm April evening a few years ago, a young Korean exchange student, a leader in student Christian affairs at the University of Pennsylvania, left his apartment and went to the corner to mail a letter to his parents in Pusan, Korea. As he turned from the mailbox, he was confronted by 11 leather-jacketed teenage boys. Without a word they attacked him, beating him with a blackjack, a lead pipe, & with their shoes & fists. When the police found him in the gutter, he was dead. All Philadelphia cried out for vengeance! The District Attorney secured authority to try the boys as adults, so that they could receive the death penalty. Then a letter arrived from the family that caused the city to stop & think. The letter was written and signed by the parents and 20 other relatives of the murdered student. It read in part:

“Our family has met together and we have decided to petition that the most generous treatment possible within the laws of your government be given to those who have committed this criminal action. In order to give evidence to our sincere hope contained in this petition, we have decided to save money for a fund to be used for the religious, educational, vocational, and social guidance of the boys when they are released. We have dared to express our hope with spirit received from the gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ, who died for our sins.”

YOU ARE FORGIVEN!!

NOW, GO and FORGIVE OTHERS, and

TELL THEM of the ONE WHO FORGIVES EVERYONE!!!