**Knowing Their Thoughts**

**Matthew 9:1-8**

Trinity XIX 10.18.2020

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

I want to read our text for this sermon again:

And getting into a boat he [Jesus] crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

The scribes, leaders of the Jewish church, heard the word of Jesus, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." Some of them, within their own thoughts and minds, began to think, “This man is blaspheming.”

Blasphemy was a sin punishable by death by stoning. Blasphemy was an egregious sin against the 1st and 2nd Commandments. It can either be an active sin against God by unbelief or vile denial. But blasphemy can also be done as one claims to be God or claims to have the authority of God.

Jesus, by forgiving the paralytic’s sins, appeared to the scribes as if He – as a man – was claiming authority He had no right to claim.

Only God has the authority to forgive sins. Only God has the authority to pass on the ability to forgive sins. Who is this Jesus? What right does He have to proclaim forgiveness to this man lying on the mat? Is He claiming to be God? Does He claim the authority of the priests? He is possibly a good teacher, but this is too much! This goes too far!

These scribes were present with the express purpose of keeping an eye on Jesus in the hopes that they could find a way to discredit him and counteract if possible, his teachings and the influence of his miracles. However, at this point they had not spoken their objections - they had only thought them in their minds.

If you consider what Jesus had done and said to the paralytic, it was obvious that he had read the man’s heart and mind. Who could do such a thing except God? Jesus had spoken to the paralytic the one thing he needed to hear to bring peace and calm to his heart and mind.

This paralytic knew that his paralysis was an outward evidence of his sinfulness. His thoughts were consumed with his condition, as he could hardly do anything else all day except consider what he could not do all day. His sinfulness, therefore, was plainly evident to him.

Did he desire healing? Probably! Did he think that his condition was beyond healing? That may also have been probable! But his greater, deeper, heart-most desire was to know that he would not be lost to eternal destruction because of his sinfulness. And his sinfulness was vividly plain to him in every wakeful moment - his paralysis!

So while he probably spoke to his friends about his desire to have the healing of his body, that desire for outward healing was driven by the inward knowledge, and the unspoken fear of God's wrath against his sinfulness. So, his friends brought him there for outward healing – to be the evidence that God’s forgiveness could indeed be his, and eternal life in God’s kingdom, a future hope.

He had talked with his friends about his situation. His friends knew his fears and sorrows. They also knew his desire to be comforted by this One who not only healed, but spoke of God’s promise of forgiveness. They desired that their buddy not only be healed of body, but have comfort and healing of his spirit as well.

Jesus knew the mind of the paralytic, the deep secrets of his heart, the unspoken hope for something greater than outward physical healing. Jesus proclaimed that the man’s hope for the future was indeed possible – in Him, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."

These words grant unto the paralytic perfect healing and eternal health at the resurrection on the last day. And before that day, they bring peace and comfort to his heart and mind.

The scribes however have a problem with these words. In their minds they begin to consider that Jesus is blaspheming. But before they even have a chance to speak to one another about their thoughts, Jesus replies to what they are thinking in their minds, their unspoken thoughts, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--He then said to the paralytic---"Rise, pick up your bed and go home."

Yes, omniscient God, God who knows all, in the person of Jesus knows their thoughts. He could have said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? Yes, I know your minds. I know you are thinking that I am blaspheming. Could I know your thoughts were I not God? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--He then said to the paralytic---"Rise, pick up your bed and go home."

Jesus, omniscient God, knew their thoughts, just as He knew the thoughts of the paralytic, and the friends who brought him there! We hear that echoed when He speaks from the cross, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!”

Do you fully comprehend the implications for your life?

In Divine Service One we confess that we have sinned against God in “thought, word, and deed; by what we have done and by what we have left undone.” We confess them, not because God does not know them, but we acknowledge the guilt and sorrow they bring to our lives – the eternal consequences that they deserve – and we have remorse for them, repenting of them, desiring forgiveness and the amendment of our lives.

Yes, God knows our sins – all of them – whether they have been lived out in the deeds we have done,

or the deeds we have left undone.

He knows every sinful word we have spoken – whether we have blasphemed His holy name, or spoke vile things of our neighbor.

And today we are reminded again that He knows all our thoughts, including our sinful thoughts.

But just as God knows our sinful thoughts, He also knows the deep desires of our hearts. He knows the groanings of our hearts too deep for words, the thoughts wrought in us by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.

Paul reminded us in our epistle lesson that we are not to walk as Gentiles do – as unbelievers do. Our minds are not darkened, although we certainly like to play with the darkness – our human flesh like to flirt with the things that we know full well we are to steer clear of. God knows when our minds and hearts are straying.

We also know the price that Christ paid to purchase our forgiveness. The paralytic in our text had heard from the Scriptures what God’s Christ would accomplish, that He would be the suffering servant to purchase forgiveness, but it was not something that was fully comprehended by the mind – even though it was grasped by faith. You know the price! That God enfleshed endured the cross, scorning the shame, to free you from sin.

It is knowing this that our faith leads us to live lives differently, lives pleasing to God, in thankfulness to Him for His great deeds for us.

Today we are again reminded that Christ knows our thoughts. Yes, He knows your sinful thoughts. But even more, He knows your repentant thoughts. He knows your thoughts and desires for peace with God. He knows your thoughts that hope for a different life here, and an eternally better life hereafter. He knows your thoughts, that you desire to get out of those sinful ruts and live in love and peace with all those around you.

So it is Christ who speaks to you today, “take heart, my child, your sins are forgiven!”

He speaks His forgiveness into your ears.

He places His forgiveness into your mouth.

He pours His forgiveness between your lips.

Christ knows your thoughts, take to heart His reply to them. Your sins are forgiven! In the name of Jesus. Amen.