

No Ordinary Man * Matthew 9:1-8

Will you pray with me? Hey, good morning church! Wow, it's so good to be here this morning, I'm ready to dive into God's Word with you this morning! You know, Pastor Chris is always looking out for me, and I thought it was a very good move to make sure that we asked you to vote before the sermon! Who knows how it might go if we take the vote after the message! And don't be getting up in the middle of this message to change your vote ok? It's too late, they're counting them already!

Now seriously, I can't tell you how excited I am, and what a honor it is for me to stand before the people that I love - and I do love this family - but it's such an honor to stand up here and say this, "Good morning, my name is Jeremy, and I'm one of the Pastors here at Harmony Bible Church!"

All right, we have a slightly shortened time for the message this morning, so we've got to get going ok? Go ahead and get your Bibles open to Matthew chapter 9. As soon as you are there, go ahead and save that spot with your finger or something, and also open up Luke chapter 5. We are going to be back and forth in those 2 spots. It's the same narrative in both Gospels, the Gospel of Luke simply gives us some additional information and so we'll go back and forth.

Last week Pastor Chris gave a message titled "Who is this Man?" And it's not like he left us hanging, because even the demons knew the answer to that question, but after studying the text this week I quickly decided that the title of this weeks message would also answer that question. So the title of today's message is, "No Ordinary Man." Who is this man? Well, it's no ordinary man! It's what these 8 verses, the whole Gospel of Matthew, and indeed the whole Bible proclaims: that there never has, nor will there ever be a man like the man we are talking about this morning, because there is only one God-Man. Only one, Jesus.

There are a whole bunch of men that we might say are extraordinary. Men who stand out amongst men – every period in history has them – and we have our share of extraordinary men in our time too. Let's just see if you recognize a few of them. Take this guy (Steve Jobs) there are a lot of people who say that this guy changed the world. This is Steve Jobs, this is the man who gave us the iPod, iPad, iPhone – some of you are looking at the Scriptures this morning on a device that Steve Jobs brought to us. Like it or not, this guy did revolutionize the way we communicate with one another, at least some of us anyway. You might be from an older generation and nobody will ever get a text message from you because you aren't interested in sending one. You might be like my Dad and you're **still** trying to get the clock to quit flashing on your VCR. Either way, Steve Jobs truly was an extraordinary man who did some amazing things.

Of course there's this guy, he's extraordinary for sure (Uncle Si.) I only have one quote from him "Hey, look here, you want something done right, don't ask me."

Talk about famous, how about this guy (Chris Carr.) Just for the record, these aren't in any particular order, ok Chris? This is an extraordinary man. Once a bunch of us guys on staff were at Casey's in New London getting sandwiches for a lunch thing, and the lady behind the counter asked, "Where you guys from?" And we told her from Harmony Bible Church, and she comes back with, "Oh? Are one of you Chris Carr?" We were all pretty impressed.

Now, have you noticed, all these extraordinary men have beards. Don't know if that means anything or not, but I got one last one real quick for you. Outside of the Bible, this is "da man" (Chuck Norris.) Do you know about this guy? There are entire websites dedicated to Chuck Norris jokes. The idea is that this guy is never wrong, super tough, able to do impossible things, and on top of that, he never ages. In fact, that picture up there is a current picture of him, but look at this - this one is in 1985, this one was taken in 1953, and here he is in 1907 (same photo.) Chuck Norris is some dude! He's so scary, when the boogie man goes to bed every night he checks his closet for Chuck Norris. Chuck Norris has a grizzly bear rug in his house, the bear isn't dead - it's just afraid to move. And finally, my favorite - when Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, he had 3 missed calls from Chuck Norris.

Oh boy, now like me, you're wondering how in the world we go from that nonsense to a sermon, especially a message that contains news that there is hope for us after all. Well, the way we do that is to stop and pray - so will you please do that with me now?

Father, the ability to laugh truly is a gift from you. So thank you for that gift. And really, to compare mere mortal man, any man from any time, to the beauty, and the power, and the mercy of our Savior Jesus Christ really is silly. None can compare! And there are a lot of people in this room coming from all different kinds of mess this week and every single one of us need Him desperately. So as we open up this living Word and ponder the words, the lessons, and the deeds of this living Savior, we ask for your Holy Spirit to help us hear a word from you so that we might be different people, people who are more like Him.

Ok, let's get into this text. Matthew chapter 9, verse 1: *And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city.* ² *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."* ³ *And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming."* ⁴ *But Jesus, knowing ^[a] 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, 'Rise and walk'?* ⁶ *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."* ⁷ *And he rose and went home.* ⁸ *When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.*

It's really a great passage, it's easy to track with, it keeps moving, has an amazing miracle in it, and holds our attention. And honestly, you don't have to be a Bible scholar to get the main point of this passage. The sermon title kind of gives it away, the central point is found in verse 6 where Jesus says, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" that's the one main point. I'm going to guess that most of you knew this truth, that you'd heartily agree with this truth. I suppose there could be some in this room who do not think that is true, but by and large this is something that in one way or

another you will hear preached from this stage pretty much 52 weeks a year. We don't **ever back down from that truth**, and it never gets boring. And I can assure you that this central truth will get appropriate attention in this message, but as we say around here from time to time, that if it's going to have much of an impact on our every day life, we have to get it from here (head) into here (heart.) Sometimes the best way for us to do that is to take a passage like this and put ourselves into the story and ask, "So where am I in this?"

In this passage there are two "kinds" of people (I'll call them "kinds" for now) and I think that in life, and in this room just about all of us will find ourselves in one camp or the other. Maybe at different times you've been in both. I have been.

Let me just describe these two kinds of folks so you can be watching for them as we walk through this. The first group is people who know here (heart) that regardless of what their issue is, or what their problems are, no matter how serious, whatever it is, they know they need to take it to Jesus. They don't care who's watching and they don't **know** what Jesus is going to do – they just **know** everything else has come up empty. They've tried everything else and everything else is a dead end. The 2nd group of people is a group that it's all the things they know here (head) that blinds them and keeps them from Jesus, holds them back from running to Him like a child. They know so many things, they know a lot about religion and rules, and they love to study those, get steeped in them. They are very concerned with who is watching and they are supremely focused on making sure everyone knows exactly how much they know. You'll see both kinds of people as we roll today.

Let's look at the same account in the gospel of Luke. In Luke 5, let's pick it up in verse 17:

¹⁷ On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸ And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, ¹⁹ but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus.

Some folks will do whatever it takes; go to any lengths to get themselves or someone else to Jesus. This is our first group of folks. So here we have Jesus, he's in somebody's house. And at this point in his ministry he's getting really famous. The text in Luke tells us that these religious scholars, Pharisees and teachers of the law, had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and they had come from Jerusalem. So in your mind don't picture like 5 guys sitting around listening to Jesus. I want you to picture like 75 people packed into your living room. They're sitting on your sofa, sitting on the arm of your favorite chair, packed in there, in the doorways, on the stairs, even outside the windows trying to listen in. Jesus has like 2 feet of space in front of him. Meanwhile, outside you've got these 4 guys who know one thing: they have **got** to get their friend to Jesus. They've heard about the things He can do. They are not going to wait and hope that they catch him later. They didn't turn to their buddy and say, "Sorry man, maybe next time." They care about their friend and they have got to get him in front of Jesus. Luke 5:19 says, "but finding now way to bring him in..." So they come to the door - pardon me, excuse me - we got our buddy outside and we have to get him to Jesus. Nothing. Nobody budes. I'm guessing they tried pushing their way in, but

the place was too packed. They probably tried things like hollering, "Hey, make a hole here people!" And all the religious people – who were already in – did nothing to help. We'll talk about that crowd in a second.

But these guys were not going to be deterred. Now look, they have no idea what Jesus will do, they just have to get to Him. So they come up with this plan, they're like "to the roof!" They have their paralyzed friend on a mat and the text doesn't say so, but I'm guessing they didn't show up with tools or anything, so they have to improvise, but their plan calls for some rope. So someone heads off and comes back with some rope, and up on the roof they go. Now, in that day, the roofs of these homes were flat: no shingles, no steel roofing, but sticks and then mud, and they'd do it in layers. The roof was generally about a foot thick of hard, packed mud with layers of sticks. So these guys are up there working man, digging with their hands, moving these large chunks of hard mud, literally tearing a hole in the roof of this guys house. Now, remember, we have Jesus sitting down there teaching and there's dirt and debris falling on him, and everyone is looking up, like what in the world is going on up there! And you can bet the guy who owns the house is hollering "Hey, somebody's gonna have to pay for that!" Afterward he's probably like: hey Jesus, can you like, do your thing and fix that hole? And Jesus likely replied, uh, you could have had some of your buddies pass him through the house, so maybe they can fix your roof?

But the 4 guys helping their friend, they don't care. They know one thing – our friend has issues that only Jesus can sort out. I hope this is us. I hope this is our church, our people. I'm sure we could have easily come up with about 4 legitimate excuses as to why it was ok to give up. I mean, after all, why go to so much trouble when we don't even know if it's going to work? There will be some days ahead, family, where bringing folks the Gospel will be costly. And in this story there are plenty of people who could've made it happen, but there were only a handful of people who were willing to sacrifice, and those people celebrated that story for the rest of their days. People who knew that nothing would happen if they didn't act on their faith.

So they tear this hole in the roof, they lower this friend down and put him right in front of Jesus. And the room goes silent. What's he gonna say? What's he gonna do? And what probably seemed like a very long time. Flip back to Matthew chapter 9, middle of verse 2: *And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."* Now we'll get to the reaction in the room among the religious people. But do you ever stop and wonder about the fella on the mat? What might have been going through his mind?

My sins are forgiven? My **sins** are forgiven? But what about my legs! If you think that's awful to even suggest something like that, then maybe you haven't suffered horrific loss yet. Because there's folks in this room who are walking in it and could ask: what about this Parkinson's disease that is destroying my body? What about this grief that never seems to end because my child's gone? What about this cancer? This addiction? What about this marriage that is a complete disaster? Some of you have cried out with all your heart – begging, yelling, and still you wait, and hope, and trust that all that has been lost will be returned for those in Christ, and that one day – sooner than we all think – death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore.

Now we've read the story, so we all know that this guy gets healed, but in the minutes he lay before Jesus, he doesn't know it yet. I think there's more than one reason Jesus proclaims forgiveness of sins first. It's so important that we get this, because He is God, Jesus knows that it's our **sin** that is killing us. There's no doubt Jesus wants this man, and us, to be comforted in every kind of trouble. In verse 2, notice the words, *"Take heart, my son"* It's a very endearing, very loving, tender term He uses. Over and over in the Scripture we see Jesus speaking words of comfort to those who are trying to follow Him, and they're struggling. Matthew 10:29-31 says, ²⁹ *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.*³⁰ *And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* ³¹ *So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.* Or John 16:33, ³³ *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! (there's that loving term again) I have overcome the world."*

So Jesus clearly wants to, and always is available to comfort the hurting, and He's promised to never leave or forsake us, but above all Jesus knows our biggest problem. He knows the world's biggest problem, He knows what's at the root of every broken relationship. And it's not cancer, and it's not the diseases or the wearing out of our body that will eventually claim all of us, it's our sin that can destroy us. That's why Jesus said, ²⁸ *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.* And when He says "take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven," those words are being spoken by the One who has conquered the power of both sin and death.

Friends, faith in Christ doesn't guarantee our "best life now" as some might see it. Faith in Christ isn't a guarantee against cancer, or suffering, or hardship, or paralysis. However, one thing is guaranteed to those who place their hope and faith in Him, that our sins, which are many and ugly, will be remembered no more. And the reason they can be put as far away from us as the east is from the west is because this man, no ordinary man, the God-man Jesus Christ went for you to the cross, after living the perfect life that you never could, and God the Father took all of His anger, all of His wrath and hatred for sin and poured it out on His Son Jesus. That is why the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins.

Let's go back to Matthew 9 and pick it up in verse 3, *And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming."*⁴ *But Jesus, knowing³ their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"* So we have 4 non-religious guys who are willing to tear through a roof with their bare hands to get a buddy to Jesus, and we have a house full of guys who were experts in the Bible and they wouldn't lift a finger to help this guy out. What's going on? What's with all the religious people getting in the way of people getting to Jesus? Here's the second group I talked about earlier.

Well Matthew doesn't tell us, but Luke records that some of these guys were Pharisees. Let me give you the 30 second low-down on these guys. They started with a good idea, that is: "We want people to obey the Bible." That's a good idea! If we were going to vote for that today too, I would hope that you would vote yes. Well, they started with a good idea, but they had the wrong answer. They made it about what we do, not about what Jesus does.

They made it about their “perfect” life, not Jesus’ perfect life. They made it about our works, not God’s grace. They got it all wrong. They became religious.

Pharisee literally means “separated one,” or “one who’s separated.” And the way they thought and taught was that sin is caught like leprosy. It’s like they didn’t understand that sin is in us, not out there. Well, sin is out there, but the real problem with sin is in me, and so what these guys would think is, “Oh, we’re clean, they’re unclean. We’re the holy guys, they’re the unholy guys, so we can’t be near them, ‘cause we’ll catch their sin.” That’s what they thought. (That’s kind of what religious people always think.) So then what they did is they took the Bible and they made additional rules alongside of the Bible, and they said “Well, if you don’t want to get near sinners and their sin, obey the rules in the Bible and all these other “additional” rules that we have made.” And religious people love their rules. They have rules about the rules.

And don’t you find it interesting here that these religious people don’t do anything to help this man. He gets lowered down. They don’t offer to pray. They don’t jump up and say, “Hey, you know what? We should step aside so that the paralytic man can get to Jesus.” Nope. They’re so worried about finding anything Jesus might say that they would disagree with - so that they could criticize him (because that’s what religious people do; they criticize.) They’re so worried about being critical, they’re completely oblivious to the fact that they’re surrounded with hurting and needy people. That’s the way religious people are. They come not to learn, they come to argue. These Pharisees come with an attitude of, “I’m always right, and somewhere there’s always somebody doing something wrong, and it’s my job to find it and criticize it. Basically these are the kind of people that can brighten up a room, simply by walking out of it. You will hear plenty about the Pharisees and Scribes as we continue through Matthew.

Jesus saves his harshest words for these folks – and maybe it seems like I just dumped on these guys pretty good, so please allow me to temper it with this: there is a little Pharisee in all of us – there’s a little bit of “religion” in all of us. Martin Luther said, “Religion is the default mode of the human heart.” We can easily find ourselves here at Harmony Bible Church chuckling about what this group does, or what that group doesn’t do, or that we can wear shorts to church and stop and have a latte’ at the café, we have to be very careful because we can all easily become religious people – we just have a different set of rules on our list.

So in our text, the Pharisees are sitting there scoffing that Jesus got near this sinner who was paralyzed and he’s forgiven this man’s sins, and is about to work a miracle, and the whole time he can read their thoughts like a book. Now, I don’t know if we actually forget that He still does that, or if we just choose to block it out that He’s doing that right now. And over the course of weeks and months as we sat under the teaching of the Scriptures, I wonder have you had religious thoughts like these? “Hmm – I wonder who this teaching is meant for” or, “Somebody should do something about that, but not me” or the saddest one of all, “I’m playing the game, but nobody knows.”

Who do you find yourself relating to in this text this morning? Do you find yourself ready to point out where those who are serving are falling short, or are you ready to drop whatever you are doing to help someone walk with Jesus? Do you know in the depth of your heart that you can take every problem every shortcoming to Him, or are you unable to take Him up on His offer because it's just stuff you know and not a real relationship? He alone left heaven for you, and He alone has authority on earth to forgive sins.

Close in prayer.

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