

Matthew 9:1-34 | “Christ’s Heart for Sinners”
Preached on August 6, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 9, and we will be covering verses 1-34 today. *[pause]*

In the previous chapter, we saw Jesus’ authority over different realms, as we saw His power on display through various miracles.

He is truly the Christ, the all-powerful Son of God, who we should place our faith in. *[pause]*

Now, as we move into Matthew 9, we will see not only more evidence of the power of Christ, but also the heart of Christ for sinners. *[pauseeee]*

Our heart for others is often seen in how we treat people and what we do for them. *[pause]*

Let’s say that there was someone who had a heart for children in the foster system.

How would their heart show itself?

They may determine to become a foster parent, become a child advocate, or even simply provide essential items for foster children. *[pause]*

Or let’s say that someone had a heart for those who have to go through a surgery.

How would their heart be demonstrated?

They may send cards or talk on the phone with those about to go through surgery.

Or they may regularly provide meals to the family after the surgery. *[pause]*

Those are great examples of people whose hearts for others are on display through their words and actions. *[pause]*

Of course, those *without* a heart for others wouldn’t do any of those things.

When the call goes out to help others, they keep silent.

There are no specific people that they care for, but they are focused on their own life.

So their actions reveal that they don’t have a heart for others. *[pause]*

Well in Matthew 9, the chapter is dripping with proof of the heart of Christ for sinners.

Both His actions and His words reveal it to us so that you can’t miss it.

His heart isn’t hidden, it isn’t covered up, but it’s opened up to us in Matthew 9, so that we can see that it beats with love for sinners. *[pauseeee]*

Let’s jump right in.

How is His heart seen in verses 1-8?...

I. Jesus has authority to forgive sinners. (1-8)

I'll READ those verses for you. [*READ VERSES 1-8*]

In this story, a paralytic is brought to Jesus to be healed, and yet the first thing that Jesus says is "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." [*pause*]

Imagine everyone's thoughts at this point.

This man was looking for healing, and Jesus just tells him that his sins are forgiven.

Kinda unexpected, right? [*pause*]

The scribes are shocked by what he said because to them it was a blasphemous statement, for only God could forgive sins.¹

But since Jesus knows what they are thinking, he says, "For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?" [*pauseeee*]

Now I've always been a little confused about this statement.

But it makes sense when you consider what Jesus says and does next.

He says, "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." [*pause*]

It's easier to say that someone's sins are forgiven because it's not verifiable, so it's much harder to say, "Rise and walk," because everyone's watching to see if your word will come to be.

Will the man rise and walk after you say it or not? [*pause*]

And amazingly, the man immediately gets up and goes home! [*pause*]

So what was Jesus doing here?

Jesus declares the man's sins forgiven *and then* heals the man as a way to verify that He truly does have authority to forgive sins.

The healing is the proof, for if He could do the harder thing to verify right in front of their eyes, then He could also forgive sins. [*pauseeee*]

This is really a significant moment.

¹ See the parallel account in Mark 2:7.

Jesus has revealed that He's not just some simple miracle worker, but He is on the same level as God, for He *is* God. *[pause]*

In the Old Testament Scriptures, only God had the authority to forgive sin.

Yet here is Jesus declaring to someone that their sins are forgiven. *[pauseeee]*

Think with me of an earthly courtroom.

Who has the authority to declare someone innocent, according to the law? *[pause]*

A random person off the street can't simply walk into the courtroom and have the authority to declare someone innocent.

Their word would be disregarded and they may even be thrown outside.

No, the judge has the right and authority to declare someone innocent or not. *[pause]*

So also, when it comes to our sin before God, who can declare our sins forgiven?

Not just some random person off the street, but only the Judge, and we discover in this passage that Jesus is on the same level as God the Father as Judge.

He has authority to forgive sins! What good news! *[pauseeee]*

You know, it's nice when someone cares for us, but our situation doesn't change, if they don't have the power or authority to do anything about it.

But it makes all the difference when the One who cares for us also has the authority to actually do something about our situation.

And that's Jesus Christ. *[pauseeee]*

He loves us, oh, does He love us!

And He has the authority to do something about our sin problem!

He has the authority to forgive our sins against God! *[pauseeee]*

Our sins deserve death and condemnation, in fact, that's the state that we were in before Christ.

And this sin separated us from God, and from the life and joy that He brings.

But Christ died for us and rose again, so that we could receive forgiveness in His name. *[pause]*

For all those who place their faith in Him alone, He says, "Take heart, your sins are forgiven."

And we can be assured of that fact because He has authority to forgive and the authority to declare our sins forgiven, for He is the Son of God, who took our place, and rose victoriously.

So take heart, sinner, forgiveness is found in Christ! *[pauseeee]*

For all who have faith in Jesus like the paralytic and his friends, Jesus speaks with warm tenderness to them.

He wants us to “take heart” and not despair over our sin.

He wants us to be assured and confident that our sins are forgiven through Him.

He doesn’t just begrudgingly or reluctantly forgive us and say, “Now go away.”

But softly and tenderly, He speaks to us endearingly, sharing with us the massive, monumental truth that forgiveness is found in believing in His name. *[pauseeee]*

To receive this forgiveness, we simply go in faith and need, like the paralytic. *[pause]*

He didn’t bring any good works.

He didn’t bring a load of treasures with him.

He didn’t bring his list of accomplishments, or prestigious, religious family background with him.

He simply went to Christ in faith and need. *[pause]*

So also, to receive Christ’s forgiveness, we only go to Him in faith that He can forgive and heal our hearts.

We lay our needs at His feet, and He supplies all that we need. *[pause]*

Have you gone to Christ for the forgiveness of your sins?

He has the authority and power to forgive you!

And when you place your faith in Him, you can “take heart” that your sins are forgiven.

For those who are forgiven and truly forgiven. *[pauseeee]*

Maybe you’re here this morning and you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness, but you often doubt that you are truly forgiven.

You sometimes feel the shame and guilt of your sin as you remember some horrible things you have done in the past.

You sometimes feel distant from God because your sin is on your mind. *[pause]*

Remember this story!

Remember what Christ says to those who place their faith in Him!

He says, “Take heart, your sins are forgiven.” *[pause]*

So be of good cheer, you are forgiven once and for all.

All your sin - past, present, and future are paid for by Christ and taken away as far as the east is from the west.² *[pause]*

Be encouraged, you stand before God because of Christ with the status of ‘forgiven and justified’.

You can boldly approach the Father without fear or guilt.

You can live in the freedom of forgiveness, knowing that there is no longer any condemnation for you.³ *[pauseeee]*

What else can we do, but respond like the crowds here in Matthew 9, who glorify God?

We stand amazed and in awe at how such a holy God could be so loving as to send His only Son to this earth to die for our sins so that we could receive forgiveness in His name. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus has the authority to forgive sinners.

But that wouldn’t be good news unless He actually *wanted* to forgive sinners, right? *[pause]*

Imagine someone had the authority to free you from slavery...

It wouldn’t be good news if that person with authority didn’t lovingly use their authority to free you from slavery. *[pause]*

People with authority can be evil or mean.

So it’s only good news if that person with authority actually wants to free you.

And what we find further on in this chapter is that Christ not only has authority to forgive sinners, but He actually desires to forgive sinners.

In fact, it was His mission. *[pause]*

In verses 9-13 we see that...

II. Jesus’ mission is to heal sinners. (9-13)

I’ll READ those verses. *[READ]*

This section is just filled with Jesus’ heart for sinners, and Matthew’s own calling is an example of Christ’s heart. *[pause]*

² A reference to Psalm 103:12.

³ See Romans 8:1.

In just one verse, we see how Matthew, the tax collector, becomes a disciple of Jesus.

He's just sitting there, and Jesus tells him to follow Him, and he does so right away. *[pause]*

But this one verse is really more deep than it appears, for in that day, tax collectors were despised and hated. *[pause]*

They collected taxes for Rome, and many times they would collect more than was needed in order to line their own pockets.

So tax collectors were seen as corrupt, sinful, Roman sympathizers, who were against God.⁴

In fact, a critical phrase was often used when speaking of tax collectors.

Look at verse 11, as the Pharisees say, “Why does your teacher eat with *tax collectors and sinners?*” *[pause]*

Tax collectors were often categorized with the worst of sinners.

Yet here is Jesus calling a tax collector to be one of his disciples? *[pause]*

Imagine what the other disciples may have been thinking...

“You're calling a tax collector? Out of everyone, you choose someone like *him?*”

“Jesus, he's the enemy. Tax collectors are the worst. Why would you do such a thing?” *[pause]*

Yet here is Jesus calling a tax collector to follow Him.

In fact, his calling of Matthew is merely one example of what Jesus would do with tax collectors, for just think about what he does next...

Jesus and his disciples recline at table and eat with many tax collectors and sinners. *[pause]*

This was shocking in that day, for to eat with someone displayed intimate relations with that person.

That's why the Pharisees bring this up to the disciples. *[pause]*

But what happens when Jesus hears their criticism about eating with sinners?

Verses 12-13, “But when he heard it, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.’” *[pause]*

What was his point?

⁴ Jeffrey E. Miller, “Tax Collector,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

The Pharisees had no heart for sinners, but saw them as people to be avoided, and that's it.

But Jesus' heart was for sinners, and so He saw them as people *in need*. *[pause]*

He wasn't disgusted or repulsed by them, but His heart was drawn to them like a compassionate doctor towards the sick. *[pause]*

They were spiritually sick and needed a physician.

To avoid them totally and not reach out would be unloving, for they were sinners in need of grace.

This is why Jesus brings up the Old Testament verse that says, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." *[pause]*

God desires a heart of mercy, not mere outward religiosity alone. *[pauseeee]*

The Pharisees had no mercy for sinners, and it showed in their posture towards tax collectors and sinners.

But Jesus came on mission to call sinners.

That's the very reason He came to this world!

He didn't come merely to be worshiped and served, but He came to seek and save the lost.⁵
[pauseeee]

So as we apply this section, let's start here: how do you think Jesus looks at you?

Do you see Him as repulsed by you because of the sin in your past?

When He looks at you, is He shaking His head in utter disappointment, as though you were a lost cause?

Do you think that He's thinking that you are just too far gone, too big of a sinner to help?

Do you think that your life is just too messed up, and you feel like you have to get your life together before you can go to Him? *[pause]*

If any of those are you, Jesus' heart is towards you.

He isn't waiting for you to get your life together, but He wants to help you *now*.

No sin is too great and no life too messed up for Christ to heal, forgive, and to save.

⁵ A reference to Luke 19:10.

As that one song that we sing called “His Mercy is More” says: “He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor, our sins they are many, His mercy is more!”⁶ *[pauseeee]*

He came to save sinners like you.

He came to heal the spiritually sick like you.

He came to help the needy and desperate.

His mission and reason for coming was for sinners like you and like me.

So go to Him in all of your need, His arms are open wide.

Bring your messed up life and lay it at His feet, He wants to show you mercy.

Take your past sin that haunts you to Him in repentance, for He wants to take that burden and throw it off your back. *[pauseeee]*

His heart is drawn towards sinners in need, He isn’t repulsed by you when He sees you in need and you see Him as the Savior. *[pause]*

Do you think Christ, the One who came to this world to die for sinners just stops loving you when you sin after you are saved?

Christian, even when you sin now, His heart is drawn towards you. *[pause]*

Of course, we confess our sin, but we must also remember that Christ even now intercedes for us and we have an advocate with the Father!⁷

The One who shed His blood for us in the past, sympathizes with our weaknesses in the present,⁸ and will never leave us in the future.

He is “gentle and lowly in heart”⁹ and will deal with you gently and lovingly, for He loves to give abundant grace upon those who look to Him. *[pauseeeee]*

Now that we have thought about Christ’s view of you as a sinner, what about Christ’s view of other sinners?

How do you see Him thinking about the worst of sinners?

Do you view Him as disgusted and desiring to just get away from them, or do you see Him as desiring to heal and to save them? *[pause]*

⁶ Lyrics found at: <https://gccsatx.com/hymns/his-mercy-is-more/>.

⁷ A reference to Hebrews 7:25 and then 1 John 2:1.

⁸ A reference to Hebrews 4:15.

⁹ This phrase is from Matthew 11:29.

Get this: He was willing to open Himself up to criticism from others so that He could minister to sinners.

He wasn't afraid of what others would think, for His heart is too gracious to let that deter him from His mission of calling sinners. *[pauseee]*

What about you?

Do you have the heart of Christ for sinners? [pause]

Jesus drew near to the people that we often draw away from. *[pause]*

So often when we see people who we think are some of the greatest sinners, we tend to start to have an unloving, ungracious attitude towards them. *[pause]*

We may try to get away from them, or we may have some mean thoughts in our minds, but we need to ask God to give us the heart of Christ for sinners.

The sick need the Great Physician! *[pause]*

May we view them with new eyes.

May we see them as people in need of saving.

May we look at them with compassion. *[pauseee]*

Let's get practical...

Let's say that you somehow came into contact with a drug addict, what's your mindset towards them?

Let's say that a prostitute walked into this church building and sat down in one of our services, what's your approach to her?

Let's say that a person who struggled with homosexual attraction or transgender identity started coming to our church, what then?

Or here's one: let's say you met someone who was all about the opposite political party than you, where's your heart at that point?

If it's not a heart for them, seeing them as someone in need of Christ, then we need our hearts reoriented to the heart of Christ for sinners. *[pauseee]*

He came to save such people!

He wasn't so repulsed by them that he drew away, but he ate with such people!

Those are the kinds of people that he was with in this story!

So are we going to be like the Pharisees or like Jesus? *[pauseeee]*

So many people are in need of a Savior, so let's share the good news about Jesus with them!

We aren't here just to mingle with the healthy and righteous and that's it, but we are to be on mission amongst the sick and sinners.

So let's start thinking outside of these four walls.

Let's start thinking about the sick and sinner among us in Clearfield County.

How can we show the love and heart of Christ towards them? *[pauseeee]*

Christ's mission is to heal sinners, that's why he came.

And then in verses 14-17, the disciples of John ask why the disciples don't fast like they do, but Jesus says to them in verse 15...

"Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." *[pause]*

Jesus is truly the bridegroom, and when He's present, He brings joy to sinners.

Go to Him!

He will give you joy, for His presence always brings joy to those who believe in Him. *[pauseeee]*

As you move on and look at verses 18-34, you see various miracles of Jesus, and through these miracles, we see that...

III. Jesus' power is displayed towards sinners. (18-34)

So not only is Jesus' mission to heal sinners, but He can actually do it through His amazing power! *[pause]*

In verses 18-26, a girl is restored to life, when Jesus takes her by the hand.

Now that's power, for He can raise the dead! *[pause]*

In those verses, a woman is also healed, who suffered from a discharge of blood for 12 years. *[pause]*

In verses 27-31, two blind men are mercifully healed, when he touches their eyes.

And in verses 32-34, a demon-oppressed man who was mute is freed from this demon-possession and able to speak again. *[pauseeee]*

What are these miracles showing us?

Christ has the power to show us immense love.

He's not just talk, but He has the power to heal us.

His heart isn't just in it, and unable to do anything about it, but He has the heart and the power to heal sinners.

Compassion is the constant companion of His power and authority. *[pause]*

A powerful person with no heart is a tyrant.

A compassionate person with no power can't actually change your situation.

But Christ is Someone with both a compassionate heart for sinners, as well as all the power to help sinners. *[pauseeee]*

Like the two blind men, Jesus has the power to open our eyes to see the truth, so that we no longer stumble in darkness and towards death.

In mercy, He opens our eyes to see Him for who He truly is, and our lives are never the same, and we can't help but spread His fame abroad. *[pause]*

Like the woman who suffered from a discharge of blood, He is able to heal our sin problem because His blood was discharged on the Cross for us.

If only we would reach out to Him in faith, we are made well. *[pause]*

Like the demon-possessed mute man, Jesus frees us from Satan's control, so that our mouths are opened to praise Him and give Him glory.

All who see the change in our lives after Christ takes over can't help but say, "Never was anything like this seen"! *[pause]*

And like the girl raised from the dead, when all hope was lost, when we were under condemnation with no spiritual life, Jesus did what seemed impossible.

He came to us and gave us life by giving up His life on the Cross and then raising it again from the grave. *[pauseeeee]*

Christ's power is displayed towards sinners, who repent of their sin and turn in faith in Him alone, who took their place and paid the penalty for their sin. *[pause]*

When we simply put our faith in Him, our eyes are opened, we are healed in our hearts, and we are given eternal life.

And we can't help but open our mouths and spread His name to others. *[pause]*

Marvel at the authority, the heart, and the power of the Lord, for....

Christ forgives, loves, and saves sinners!

If you have never placed your faith in Jesus Christ alone to save you, then remember this: Jesus forgives, He loves, and He can save you. *[pause]*

Repent of your sin, and turn in faith in Jesus, knowing that only through what He did, can you be saved.

There is no sin too great that He won't forgive, for He has authority to forgive your sin.

You are not too far gone, for He has the love that wants to save you and He has the power to save you.

Repent and believe today! *[pauseeee]*

Let's say that you are a genuine follower of Jesus.

You trust in Him, and are forgiven and saved. *[pause]*

Well guess what?

This message is still for you: Christ forgives, loves, and saves sinners. *[pause]*

Remember that in Him, He has declared that all of your sin is forgiven, so you don't have to fret or live in guilt and shame, but you can rest in His work on the Cross. *[pause]*

Remember that He loves you no matter what, even when you sin, for His heart is for sinners like you, who go to Him in their want.

The One who was willing to eat with tax collectors and sinners isn't too repulsed at your sin to draw near to you, as you draw near to Him in brokenness and need. *[pause]*

And remember that He has the power to change you.

No matter what others say, you are not a hopeless case.

For Christ can do anything when He touches a life. *[pause]*

If He can open the eyes of the blind, cast out demons, and raise the dead - then He can empower you to live for Him, love others more, and resist sin and temptation.

Look to Christ, the One whose heart reaches out to sinners like you and like me.