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The Great Physician
Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew **sitting at the tax-collection station**, and he said to him, “Follow me.”

And he got up and followed him.

¹⁰ And as he sat at dinner^[a] in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting^[b] with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “**Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?**” ¹² But when he heard this, he said, “**Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.**” ¹³ Go and learn what this means, “**I desire mercy, not sacrifice.**” For I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

While he was saying these things to them, suddenly **a leader came in and knelt before him**, saying, “**My daughter has just died**, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” ¹⁹ And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. ²⁰ Then suddenly **a woman who had been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak**, ²¹ for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.” ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “**Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.**” And the woman was made well from that moment. ²³ When Jesus came to the leader’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴ he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and **took her by the hand, and the girl got up.** ²⁶ And the report of this spread through all of that district.

Who do you call when you have an **electrical problem** at your house?

An **electrician**, right?

What about a **plumbing emergency**? A plumber, right?

Who do you call to fix a broken door?

Or a broken car?

We call **EXPERTS** all the time to help us, don’t we?

So why don’t we call on Jesus to help us,

when we are worried about the future,

or concerned about how we are going to make it through the day?

Why don't we *stop and pray*?
 Why don't we *turn to God's Word* for advice and help?
 Why do we depend on our own resources,
 Or turn to everyone else instead?

After all, here in the calling of Matthew we learn that
Jesus is the Great Physician,
 coming into the world to save sinners, and to heal the broken.

In fact, Jesus has a *preference* for sinners,
 He has a *special love* for those who know they need help!
 Jesus says he didn't come for the proud,
 for those who are sure of themselves and their own salvation, like the Pharisees.

So the question is — *who are we*?
 Are we the proud? Are we the Pharisees?
 Are we sure of ourselves and our own abilities?
 Or *do we know that we NEED* Jesus and his healing power in our lives?

This is a story about *people in NEED*—anyone and everyone in need.
 There's Matthew the tax collector,
 And all his 'sinner friends' sitting around the table!
 And Jesus actually invites Matthew to join his inner circle, as a disciple!

Then there is the *father*, we assume he's a leader of the synagogue based on other
 Gospel accounts, and his daughter has died.
 He's a *prominent member* of the community, but he's in need too.
 He humbly throws protocol to the wind, kneels down before Jesus,
 begging him to bring his daughter back to life.

Then we have the *woman* who has been hemorrhaging for 12 years—
 she is a complete *outcast*.
 She is cut off from any community because of her illness.
 Anyone who might touch her would be declared unclean.
 That's probably why she decides to just touch the fringe of his garment.

All of these people need healing by the Great Physician.
 But *what does HEALING really mean*?
 What did it mean for *Matthew* in this story, as he was called by Jesus?

Tax collectors were despised in Jesus' day—they were notoriously corrupt, they were colluding with the Roman empire, all while taking advantage of ordinary people and the poor. But Jesus calls Matthew as a disciple! It would be like calling a *white-collar criminal* to be a church leader!

And Jesus goes even further.

He *eats with* Matthew and his friends—the sinners, the other tax collectors! By calling Matthew and eating with him and his friends, Jesus *brings healing* to him, to all of them. He welcomes them into a new empire, the family of God, Much to the dismay of the proper Pharisees.

*“Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” They ask But when Jesus heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.”¹³ Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have **not come to call the righteous but sinners.**”*

Healing for the Father happens when Jesus immediately responds to his request, to bring his daughter brought back to life! He humbly begs for his little girl. Even though children were not valued at all in Jesus' day! Jesus is so moved by this Father's desperate and humble love... That he goes to his house and tells the mourners: *“Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him.²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, **he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up—talk about supernatural healing!***

Meanwhile, *the woman who's been bleeding* for 12 years-- She needs physical healing and restoration—but not just of her body— To her, healing also means being welcomed back into community, back into the family of faith because she has been an unclean outcast. When Jesus says, “Your faith has made you well”, he's declaring her not only *physically healed, but also spiritually healed.*

In this story, Jesus offers healing of all kinds--- forgiveness of sin, healing of the body, restoration to community.

I wonder, *what kind of healing do YOU need*, today?
And *do you believe that Jesus can bring* that healing to you?

We tend to *think of healing* as the absence of illness.
But what if it's far more complex, and nuanced, and layered?

We also tend to think of people as *in or out*,
Us or them.

But here we see that *Jesus crosses all boundaries to bring healing*—
Boundaries of class, gender, religion, and societal etiquette.
He's helping those who are considered 'in', like the Father,
And he's helping the 'outsiders', like the tax collectors and sinners at Matthew's
house, the little girl with no social value,
and the woman who's been hemorrhaging for 12 years, and is unclean.
Jesus' healing power means that *ALL people are included*.

So, What does healing look like in your life, I wonder?

You know, we ALL need Jesus' grace and forgiveness.

None of us is perfect, none of us is free from sin.

As Paul says in Romans 2, we have all sinned,

And have fallen short of the glory of God.

That's no joke!

If we think we don't need forgiveness and grace, we deceive ourselves.

WE are the ones in need of the Great Physician—because we are sinners!

But in order to *receive that healing* and Good News,
We first need to *admit our brokenness* and face the Bad News!

Sometimes the *bad news IS the beginning of the good news*.

Denise Thorpe tells the story about a friend who grew up amid the incredible
distortions of the late Soviet empire.

She remembers when bad news of any kind was never allowed in the public
sphere. She says, "One day, I heard a news story about a cruise ship sinking in the
Black Sea. And at that moment I knew that everything was *changing*."

The *bad news was the beginning of good news*, and *truth telling*.

The Soviet order *mandated platitudes* 'like frosting' over a cake of social
disillusionment, fear, human suffering, and exploitation.

But declaring bad news—that ***broke open a whole new world.***

Denise Thorpe, *Connections: A Lectionary Commentary*, Westminster John Knox: Louisville, 2020, pg. 66.

What if that's true in THIS story?

The bad news in this passage—is that we are sinners,
AND we are all broken.

In other words, we all need Jesus, the Great Physician!

So what if that is the ***beginning of the Good News***, for all of us?

What if that's the beginning of our hope, our future, and our joy?

This makes me think of the life-saving program of ***Alcoholics Anonymous.***

The very ***first step*** in AA is to admit you are ***powerless over alcohol***, and your life has become unmanageable.

In other words, ***you need to know you are broken***,
and why you need the help of God!

Which leads to the ***second step:***

We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

And then there's ***step three:***

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Wow. Think about that for a moment!

Think about it in your own life, as a ***Christian.***

Are we willing to ***admit*** that we are ***powerless over our own sin and brokenness?***

That ***our lives are unmanageable*** because of it?

Are we willing to ***believe that we need God*** to help restore us to sanity?

Are we willing to ***turn over our lives to the care of Jesus Christ?***

I think we could all take ***a lesson from AA***,
and admit our sins, and our shortcomings.

We could admit not only our addictions, but all of our brokenness!

The question is: ***Will*** we do that?

Just imagine the ***power of turning our lives over*** to Jesus!

We ***don't*** have to do life ***on our own.***

We don't have to pretend that we are alright.

We can be ***honest.***

Vulnerable.

Real.

Can you imagine if we came to church each week, ready to say our *names, and admit our shortcomings?*

And yet, that's is our calling!

Can you imagine if we went around and *shared our pain?*

WHY aren't we doing that again?

You know the church has often been called *a hospital for sinners, NOT a museum for saints.*

That is so true, even though we are hesitant to admit it.

It's ok to be real about it.

We're here because *we can't do life on our own.*

We need Jesus, we need salvation,

and we need the body of Christ, the church.

We need ALL KINDS of healing.

Every single one of us needs healing, of some kind or another.

We are not whole.

We are broken, in more ways than one.

We are *grieving* the loss of loved ones,

We are struggling to *care* for those who are ill,

We are watching our *children* stray,

and our *parents* age,

and our *dreams* get shattered.

We see our *lives going in directions* we never expected.

How are YOU *hurting and broken*, today?

Do you *believe* that Jesus can heal you?

What would it take for you to receive his healing power?

What would healing look like in your life?

Of course, *healing happens in many different ways.*

I believe that my precious mother-in-law *Sharon* is healed, after struggling with dementia for so long.

Now that she sees Jesus face-to-face, her mind is perfect, her body is restored.

I believe that my *own father* after his passing was healed and made whole, after struggling with his heart disease, diabetes, and memory loss.

When have *you seen God's healing?*

Have you ever seen *physical ailments* taken away?

I remember a girlfriend in seminary whose brain tumor suddenly disappeared when they went for final testing before surgery.

I remember my father being brought back to life, after six minutes with no heartbeat on an operating table.

What about *relationships restored?* Have you witnessed that kind of healing?

I remember a pastor friend whose adult prodigal child finally returned home.

Have you ever seen healing of the *emotions?* The *mind?*

What about *restoration to community?*

Jesus is our *Great Physician,*

So he is our *healer and our hope.*

The *Bad News* of our sin, and our pain, is the *beginning of the Good News!*

And when we receive healing,

We are called to *SHARE that healing* with others.

Because we are the *HANDS AND FEET of Jesus Christ.*

So what are we doing to *bring healing and hope to our community?*

And to our *world?*

How are we bringing healing *INSIDE the church?*

How are we bringing healing *OUTSIDE the church,* well beyond these walls?

Are we taking the message of *grace and hope* to people we don't even know?

If not, how can we do that?

Friends, hear the *Good News* of the Gospel today.

Jesus is OUR Great Physician,

We can *call on him* for any problem at all.

And *he will heal us*---of our sin, our brokenness, and our pain.

His healing takes *many forms,* but it is healing,

and it is *God's power* in our lives.

May we *call on Jesus,* and receive his healing power, today!

And all God's people said, Amen.