

Our Greatest Need (Matthew 9:1-8)

Introduction: *What are you most concerned about?*

What is it that people want from God? For what purpose do they seek him? After all that the evil that had happened in that man's life, the first thing that ever actually brought him to seek God was the impending victory of the Houston Oilers. But the absurdity of this true story causes us to ask the question, what do we want from the Lord? For what reason do we seek him? Maybe your answer is not as trivial as a ball game. But maybe it is relatively trivial.

1. The real reason for coming to Jesus (v. 1-3)

The do come with faith, as Matthew Henry notes: 1. A strong faith, since they firmly believed that Jesus Christ both would heal him, 2. A humble faith; since they brought him to Christ ("It is fitter than we should wait on Christ, than he on us"), and 3. An active faith: "a strong faith regards no obstacles in pressing after Christ."

The great ministry of Jesus to the world is not miraculous healing. Christ's greatest gift, and that which is the most precious to us (whether we know it or not), is his power over sin, not his power over sickness. You know, as much as the man wanted to be cured of his paralysis, without it, he might never have come to Christ at all. "It was *good* for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees" (Ps 119:71, NIV). But what a blessing it is in disguise when it brings us to say, "O God, forgive me." "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13). "You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their *sins*" (Matt 1:21). "You have given Him authority over all flesh, [in order] that He should give *eternal life* to as many as You have given Him" (John 17:2).

2. The real reason for Jesus' miracles (v. 4-7)

Jesus is now claiming to do what only God can do. Only God can do that, they said. And they were right! His question assumes, of course, that it's easier to declare that someone's sins are forgiven, because there is no way of confirming whether or not it's really happened. It's obviously much more difficult to declare a person *healed*, because it can be immediately confirmed by the person's ability to walk.

Disease is virtually nothing to the Son of God. Billions of stars and billions of galaxies were created through him simply by a word. But what did it cost him in order to be able to say, "Your sins are forgiven?" What is the healing the sick for him compared to the cross? This is the great gift of Christ to the world, "that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). His mightiest work is to bear sin that he might grant forgiveness. "But to whom little is forgiven," Jesus says, "the same loves little" (Luke 7:47).

3. The real reason for glorifying God (v. 8)

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:18-19). That's where this is leading.

Facing death with the prospect of judgment is or should be the greatest of all fears. But just as faith in Jesus' ability to care for his disciples will get them securely through a storm of nature, so faith in Jesus' ability to forgive us our sins will guide us securely through the storms of life to our eternal home. Let us therefore join together and glorify God "who has given such power to men" (Matt 9:8).