

Matthew 9 “The Power of the King: Resurrection”
1 Kings 17
Psalm 72

April 5, 2015

[Hosea 6 for call to worship (Easter Sunday)]

Read 1 Kings 16:29-17:24

My son is dead.

Oh, what a cruel twist of fate!
I thought we were going to die weeks ago –
 but the foreign prophet played his trick on me –
 he gave me hope.
If only we had died together, my son and I.
But now I must go on living – and he is dead.

What kind of monster is the God of Israel?

“What have you against me, O man of God?

You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!”

Remember this!

When you live in the middle of the story the purposes of God can look *perverse*!
What kind of God sends a prophet to a widow,
 preserves their lives with never-ending jars of flour and oil –
 only to kill off the son,
 the only hope for the widow’s future!

The widow of Zarephath is living in the middle of Saturday.
But then Elijah comes to the door and says, “See, your son lives.”

“Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.”

The book of Kings is setting you up for Easter Sunday.

There are three main stories in the book of Kings:

- 1) the story of the house of David –
 and how his son, Solomon, built a temple to the LORD in Jerusalem;
- 2) the story of the northern kingdom of Jeroboam –
 and how he built two shrines with golden calves at Bethel and Dan;
- 3) the story of house of Omri –
 and how his son, Ahab, built a temple to Baal in Samaria.

These three stories unravel in reverse order:

- 3) the house of Omri comes under the judgment of God –
 and the temple to Baal in Samaria is destroyed;

- 2) the northern kingdom of Jeroboam comes under the judgment of God –
and the shrines at Bethel and Dan are destroyed;
- 1) the house of David comes under the judgment of God –
and the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem is destroyed.

The point of the book of Kings is very clear:

Israel is going to die.

Judah is going to die.

What is Israel's hope in the face of the coming death and destruction?

Will the priests in the temple be able to save us?

Will the presence of God in the Holy of Holies deliver us?

No.

Will a good king come and save us?

Will the house of David deliver us from our foes?

No – the sons of David fall short.

What about a faithful prophet who speaks the word of the LORD?

Will Elijah save us?

No – that is not his mission.

Israel's hope is *not* that they will escape death.

Israel is going to die.

Israel's hope is that God will raise the dead.

1 Kings 17 introduces us to Elijah, the faithful prophet.

The central story of the book of Kings – the story of Omri and his son, Ahab –
is also the story of Elijah and Elisha.

Elijah begins his ministry by raising a widow's son from the dead.

In 2 Kings 4, Elisha will begin his ministry by raising another son from the dead.

Israel's hope is not that they will escape death –

but that God will raise the dead!

But notice one more thing!

Whose son does Elijah raise?

The widow of Zarephath – which belongs to Sidon.

When famine came to the land of Israel,

where did God send the prophet?

Sidon.

Remember Jezebel? Ahab's wife?

She was a princess from Sidon,

who encouraged the building of the temple of Baal in Samaria!

When God sent his holy prophet to announce his coming judgment

due to Israel because of a Sidonian woman,

he started by sending salvation to a Sidonian woman.

Are you ever shaken by the cruelty in this world?

Do you look around and wonder, “Why does a loving God take so long to bring justice?”

Easter Sunday reminds us of the central reason why!

There is no way to glory – except through the cross.

Your hope, dear friends, is *not* that you will escape death!

Your *hope* is that God will raise the dead!

And when he does, *then* there will be a Son of David whose reign will endure forever!

Sing Psalm 72

Read Matthew 9

Last time we saw the holiness of Jesus cleansing the unclean.

In the OT, the unclean contaminated the clean.

Now, in Christ, the clean decontaminates the unclean.

The Gadarenes had asked Jesus to leave –

these Gentiles were not yet ready to hear the good news of salvation.

And so Jesus left and returned to his own city (Capernaum).

He came to his own place – but his own people did not receive him.

But to those who *did* receive him – who believed in his name –

he gave the right to become children of God.

1. “Your Sins Are Forgiven”: Will You Glorify God? (v1-8)

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,

Notice that Jesus saw *their* faith.

Yes, undoubtedly he saw the faith of the paralytic –

but he also saw the faith of this community of friends –

this group that brought their friend to Jesus.

And so Jesus *said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.”*

If you were the paralytic, how would you respond?

“Thanks... I think?”

As a man of faith, he undoubtedly realized that Jesus had given him a marvelous gift.

“My sins are forgiven!

I may need to wait for years until the resurrection, before I walk again.

But I can wait.

My Lord has told me that my sins are forgiven.

So at the last day, I will rise again!”

Of course, we remember that in Matthew 1:21, Joseph was told that the son of Mary

“will save his people from their sins.”
This is why he came!

On the other hand, there were others present who had a different reaction:

³ *And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.”*

They are right, you know.

At least, if *anyone except Jesus* had said this, it would have been blasphemy.

Every Sunday, I declare that *your* sins are forgiven –
but remember how I always say it:
“In the name of Jesus Christ”!
I always say, “Thus saith the Lord” –
never, “I say to you”!

This is why the phrase, “What would Jesus do?” is a dangerous guide!
Jesus “saw their faith” – I cannot.
Jesus “saw their thoughts” – I have no idea what you are thinking!

Matthew wants you to see that Jesus is unique.

No one else could say and do the things that Jesus says and does.

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.*

The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

Because he raises the paralytic, you see his authority to forgive sins.

We heard at the end of the Sermon on the Mount that the crowds were astonished at his teaching,
“for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.” (7:29)

Now,

⁸ *When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.*

And so we ask, with the disciples,

“What sort of man is this, that even winds and seas obey him?”
What sort of man is this that even forgives sin!

As we saw in 1 Kings,
no king, no priest, no prophet could save Israel from death.

Only God can save.

That is why our Redeemer had to be true God and true Man.

We needed a Son of Man to save us –
but no son of man could undo all that Adam had done.

But as we started to see last week,
Jesus came to fulfill what Isaiah had said,
“He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.” (8:17)

Think about what that means!
When Jesus says, “Rise, pick up your bed and go home,”
he is taking that paralysis upon himself.
When Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven,”
he takes that sin upon himself.
He bears all this in his life – so that he might take it upon himself in his death.

And so the crowds “glorified God.”
They do not fully understand what is happening –
but they glorify God.
They declare that God is glorious – and worthy of honor and praise –
because he has done marvelous things in Jesus.

Will you glorify God?

2. “I Desire Mercy, and Not Sacrifice”: Will You Follow Jesus? (v9-13)

⁹ *As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.*

The way the story is told, we are invited to think of Matthew sitting at the tax booth –
not far from where the paralytic was healed.

Matthew is a tax collector.

Now, don’t think “IRS agent.”

Think, “IRS agent with a goon squad.”

The Roman governor of the province

was supposed to send a lump sum every year to Rome.

Rather than collect it himself, he hired agents.

Very few people paid their taxes voluntarily.

The only way to collect taxes was direct and in person.

Tax policy was complicated

(and the reason why was so that tax collectors could “fudge”
and demand almost whatever they liked!).

Tax collectors were not paid a regular salary.

If the tax rates indicated that a given region would bring in \$500,000,
they might tell the tax collector to pay \$400,000.

Anything above \$400,000 would go to the tax collector.

Of course, the tax collector needed staff (an armed guard to “protect the money” –
or shake down reluctant tax payers!)

Needless to say,
tax collectors were never popular –
and especially in Israel, they were seen as traitors – in collusion with Rome.

We've already heard about the tax collectors in the Sermon on the Mount:
Jesus said in 5:46 that the tax collectors love those who love them.
Now he demonstrates this in a remarkable way,
as Jesus shows love to Matthew!

Matthew sees Jesus forgive the sins of the paralytic.
He marvels – and he glorifies God who had given such authority to men.
But he is an outcast.
He has no place in the kingdom of God...

Maybe you think of yourself as an outcast – as someone who doesn't "fit" in the church.

But Jesus says to you,
"Follow me."

¹⁰ *And as Jesus^[b] reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.*

Jesus only said "Follow me" to one tax collector!
And now the house is filled with tax collectors and sinners –
those whose lives have been lived contrary to God's law!
Jesus had said in the previous chapter
that many would come from east and west,
and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob –
while the sons of the kingdom would be cast into outer darkness.
The banquet of the kingdom is off to a curious start!

Pay attention to what Jesus is doing!
They *are* tax collectors and sinners.
Jesus did not say, "Stop being tax collectors and sinners, and then I will eat with you."
They came as they were – as tax collectors and sinners –
and Jesus showed them mercy.

¹¹ *And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"*

The Pharisees have not learned the lesson of the leper!
The holiness of Jesus is not contaminated by the unclean.
The holiness of Jesus *decontaminates* the unclean!

Now, listen carefully!
Because some people *horribly* misuse this!

Some people say, “Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners,
so that means that he approved of their lifestyle!”

That’s *not* right at all!

Listen to what Jesus says:

¹² *But when he heard it, 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, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

I want you to think about what Jesus is doing here.

Jesus has called Matthew: “Follow me.”

Matthew has left his tax booth to follow Jesus.

And so now, *tax collectors and sinners who want to learn about Jesus*
are eating dinner with Jesus.

And through *table fellowship* Jesus calls them to follow him.

If you would understand this, learn what God said through the prophet Hosea:

“I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.” (Hosea 6:6)

God does not desire slavish obedience to ritual details.

God desires *mercy*.

Jesus does not approve of the lifestyle of tax collectors and sinners!

He says that they are “sick” – he calls them “sinners.”

But he has come to heal the sick – he has come to call sinners.

Do you have the courage to admit that *you* are sick?

Or do you think that you are okay?

But also notice how Jesus does this!

He does not say to Matthew, “You need to repent of being a tax collector!”

He says to Matthew, “Follow me.”

Since *everyone* is thinking about same sex marriage today,

the contemporary application would be –

Jesus does not say, “You need to stop being gay,”

he says, “Follow me.”

Of course, if Matthew is going to follow Jesus, he will need to stop being a tax collector.

Adulterers, thieves, those who engage in homosexual acts –

all will need to stop doing those things –

but the message of the gospel is *not* “you need to stop doing those things
so that you can become a Christian.”

Rather, the message of the gospel is that *Jesus* has come.

Jesus has come to heal the sick – to call sinners to himself –

to take our illnesses and bear our diseases –

to take upon himself the sin of the world.

Therefore, Jesus says to you, “Follow me.”

But all of this feasting confuses John’s disciples.

Notice that John’s disciples think of themselves as being very close (in some ways) to the Pharisees.

3. “New Wine Is Put into Fresh Wineskins”: Will You Fast? (v13-17)

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast,^[c] but your disciples do not fast?”

To fast means to refrain from eating.

Jesus spoke of this in the Sermon on the Mount –

in Matthew 6:16, “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites...”

So Jesus has made it clear that we *should* fast.

But apparently Jesus and his disciples did *not* fast.

Why not?

¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, “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.

Why did the disciples of John fast?

Why did the Pharisees fast?

They fasted because they recognized that things were not as they should be.

Yes, in one sense, the Exile was over – they lived in the Promised Land –

but in another sense, the Exile was *not* over –

there was no king in Jerusalem,

the Romans ruled over the land.

They fasted because they longed for the day when God would make things right.

Jesus says that *his disciples* are not fasting because *he* is with them.

The king *has come!*

In Jesus, God is beginning to make things right!

So, some might say that Christians should never fast because Jesus is king!

But that’s not what Jesus says.

Jesus says that “the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

If you never fast, then you are saying that everything is the way it should be.

If you never fast, then you are saying that there is no injustice in the world.

The Christian *should fast* because Jesus told us to.

It may seem strange to preach on fasting on Easter Sunday!

But Easter is precisely the reason why we must fast!

Jesus has been raised from the dead.

But I haven't.
In Jesus, one who bears our flesh and blood has triumphed over the grave!
But you and I are still staring death squarely in the face.

In Jesus we *feast* because he is risen!
In Jesus we *fast* because we are *not yet risen*.

Indeed, this is the point of Jesus' explanation in verses 16-17:

¹⁶No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

To fast in the presence of Jesus would be like putting a new patch on an old garment.
(Incidentally, that's the church has generally discouraged fasting on Sunday –
the day when we come into the presence of Jesus!)

But whenever we recognize that things are *not* the way they should be,
that is a good time to fast (like putting new wine into fresh wineskins).

But as Jesus says these things,
we see a very clear picture of how things are *not* the way they should be –
and how Jesus is in the business of making them right!

Verses 18-26 weave together two stories –
the story of the ruler's daughter,
and the story of the woman who had suffered a discharge of blood for twelve years.

4. "My Daughter Has Just Died...If I Only Touch His Garment": Will You Believe Jesus? (v18-26)

¹⁸While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." ¹⁹And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. ²⁰And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, ²¹for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." ²²Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly^[d] the woman was made well. ²³And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴he said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. ²⁵But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. ²⁶And the report of this went through all that district.

These stories illustrate the principle that the holiness of Jesus decontaminates the unclean.
A woman who suffered from a discharge of blood was ritually unclean.

This means that she has been unclean for 12 years.

She has been unable to participate in worship for 12 years.

And of course, the dead girl is also unclean.

But the woman touches his garment, and is cleansed.
Jesus takes the dead girl by the hand, and she rises.

Wherever Jesus goes, the holiness of Jesus cleanses the unclean.
He came to save his people from their sins.
He came to raise his people from the dead.
He came to open the eyes of the blind:

5. “Have Mercy on Us, Son of David”: Will You Believe Jesus? (v27-31)

²⁷ *And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.”* ²⁸ *When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.”* ²⁹ *Then he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.”* ³⁰ *And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, “See that no one knows about it.”* ³¹ *But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.*

Jesus had said,

5:7 – “blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy”

The two blind men are seeking mercy.

Jesus had just spoken of Hosea’s, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” –
now the blind men challenge him to “have mercy on us.”

Jesus has healed many – his fame is spreading.

Why does he want them to keep quiet?

Because they have figured out who he is!

They call him the “Son of David.”

It is true that Jesus *is* the Son of David,

but it will not do for everyone to know it yet!

There had been many “messianic pretenders” in recent decades.

If word gets out, then the Jewish authorities will get nervous –
and the Roman authorities might step in.

To use John’s phrase,

“his hour had not yet come.”

But their spreading his fame does not deter Jesus from his mission:

6. “The Mute Man Spoke”: Will You Marvel at Jesus? (v32-34)

³² *As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him.*

³³ *And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, “Never was anything like this seen in Israel.”* ³⁴ *But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the prince of demons.”*

How will you respond to Jesus?

The crowds marveled – “Never was anything like this seen in Israel.”

The Pharisees mocked – “He casts out demons by the prince of demons.”

In our age, we no longer marvel.

Wonder has been replaced by cynicism, skepticism, and despair.

Will you marvel at Jesus?

The Immanuel – “God with us.”

The Word who became flesh and dwelt among us.

The one who loved us and gave himself for us.

Conclusion: “He Had Compassion”: Will You Pray? (v35-38)

³⁵ *And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.* ³⁶ *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* ³⁷ *Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

9:35 parallels 4:23 in book ending Matthew 5-9.

We have heard the message of the King (in the Sermon on the Mount).

We have seen the power of the King in his healing their diseases and casting out demons.

Now Jesus sees the crowds – the crowds who marvel at his deeds –

the crowds who were astonished at his teaching –

and he had compassion for them,

“because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

When Jesus speaks of “the crowds”

he is not speaking of the Pharisees – the self-righteous, who don’t want to change.

He is speaking of that large group of people in Michiana that *know* that life is messed up.

The crowds are the ordinary folk

who stopped going to church because it all seemed so hypocritical.

I have met many people in this area who “believe” in God –

they say that they believe in Jesus.

But they don’t go to church.

Why?

Well, the church forgot that the point of the gospel is *Jesus*.

Jesus says, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.”

Too often the church has joined the Pharisees in looking down their noses at the tax collectors and sinners.

Too often the church has made people feel uncomfortable for being different.

Jesus brings together a strange mix of people –
tax collectors and sinners –
a synagogue ruler and a woman who hadn't been able to worship in twelve years –
Gentile demoniacs and Jewish fishermen.

They only have one thing in common:
Jesus.

Do you *believe* Jesus?
Do you believe that Jesus will do what he says?
Do you believe that if Jesus says the word, it will happen?

Do you *marvel* at Jesus?!
Are you amazed at his mighty deeds –
how he healed the sick and raised the dead –
and especially, how he died for our sins,
and was raised from the dead on the third day?!

Do you *glorify God* because of Jesus?
Do you make known his fame – how he has done great things?!

If you do, then you will also *fast* –
because you will recognize that things are not the way they should be –
and so we need to humble ourselves before God,
because *we* are not the way *we* should be!

And you will pray –
you will pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out laborers into his harvest.

There are so many people in St. Joe County who are harassed and helpless,
like sheep without a shepherd!

Pray for me – pray for Jon – pray for Blair – and for all the pastors in this area –
that we might be faithful shepherds.
Pray for Joel, as he trains to become a pastor.

Pray for the elders – for Joel and Mark, for Jay and for Rolf and for Rex –
as they labor in this flock.

And pray that God will send out *more laborers* –
that he will use *you* to bear witness to the great things that Jesus has done!