

## "Something to be thankful for" Matthew 9:1-8 Trinity 19 2021

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

I spend a lot of time talking to people who are feeling sad or depressed, those who have lost jobs, lost loved ones, struggling with work, with relationships, people who feel the pressure of COVID beating them down, the changing rules of society and unpredictability of life making them feel like the entire world is stacked against them. I can guarantee that if I ask them what they have in their life to be thankful for, most of them – including many Christians - would answer, “nothing.”

But you know, we all do have things to be thankful for, no matter what is going on in our lives. At the start of the service, you received something that is beyond all measure. A gift. A Holy and Precious gift, something you really should spend the rest of your life being thankful for. Do you remember what it was? It was Holy Absolution.

Holy Absolution, like the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, is always personal but never private. Baptism is a public act. Even if for some reason it happens one-on-one (as with Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch), it still publicly makes one a Christian and puts the triune Name on him for all heaven, earth, and hell to see. So also the Eucharist is public, even for the hospitalized or home-bound. The demons shudder and flee, and a confession of Christ is made before the world. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” (1 Cor. 11:26)

And so Holy Absolution is a public act. All Christians publicly confess before the church, the world, heaven, and hell, that they are sinners who need and have the forgiveness of Jesus. Blessed are you if you publicly become known as one who is dependent on the

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forgiveness of Jesus. As the Holy Spirit says: "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1).

There is no shame in the forgiveness of sins. Jesus is not shaming the paralytic by forgiving him his sins publicly, but blessing him. "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." That was not a put-down. The man does not object: "Wait! Why do I have sins that need to be forgiven?" Or: "Jesus, did you really have to say that in front of my family and friends?" No. The paralytic is not the one who complained. He did not say: "What use is forgiveness if I still can't walk." Jesus forgave him his sins personally and publicly. "Your sins are forgiven." Everyone saw it, and his heart was cheered.

O sons and daughters of the king: Be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven you. There is a reason why the Bible calls the Gospel a "proclamation" and a "preaching." It is good news (In fact that's what Gospel means – it's an old English word meaning good news), and it is public news. Jesus forgives you all your sins. Everyone has seen it. Let your heart be cheered. Give thanks for the gift that is beyond all measure and understanding!

Because the Gospel is public news, it is received with joy by some and rejected with mockery by others. The scribes and Pharisees balked at Jesus' forgiveness. They accused him of blasphemy and speaking an unauthorized word. Many people today balk at Jesus not only for speaking of forgiveness but especially for speaking of sin. They also accuse Jesus of speaking an unauthorized word: "Who are you, Jesus, to judge that my actions are sinful?" Like the scribes, they do not think that the truth is in Jesus.

This should not be surprising. Remember, it is the Absolution itself that gets Jesus killed. He receives the sentence of death for making

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himself equal to God by publicly forgiving sins. On a human level, the absolution got Jesus killed, and his execution became a public spectacle for all to see. As the Scripture foretold: "They will look on him whom they have pierced." He hung there for all to see. Yes, the absolution is public because the cross is public.

But on a cosmic level, something even more public happened to Jesus on the cross. All the sins of all the world—all the sins that Jesus has and does forgive—had to go somewhere. You see, Jesus forgives sins, not by winking at them but by taking them. He forgave the paralytic just the same as he forgives you, not by calling your sins cute or telling you to take "pride" in them, but by taking them into himself. "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?" Look at his corpse on the cross before you answer! See what it cost him to speak the Absolution to you.

At the cross, the Father held court in public. He publicly damned Jesus as the sinner who got what we deserved for all to see. Even the centurion had to confess: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39 [Open in Logos Bible Software \(if available\)](#)). The Scriptures teach us what happened on the cross, saying (1 Cor. 5:21 [Open in Logos Bible Software \(if available\)](#)): "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Then, when it was finished, when Jesus was made our sin and condemned for it, Jesus died to rise again as a public proof and testimony that the forgiveness he won for you is bought and paid for in full.

Jesus is not afraid to speak the absolution in the face of ridicule and certain death. Christians are not ashamed to receive that forgiveness and call it theirs. Because this is so, Christians have no interest in minimizing their sins or going along with them to better fit in

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with the world. Paul reminds us that we are daily to put off the old man that died with Jesus on the cross and put on the new man created in true righteousness and holiness. The new man speaks the truth. He does not get caught up in the anger machine of social media and gossip. He wants to give no opportunity to the devil by the places he goes and the shows he watches. He is not afraid to be called “prude” or “uptight,” because he knows his weakness in the face of temptation and does not want to give an opportunity to his fallen flesh. And though the Christian often walks in weakness, he believes that Christ’s absolution is true, and he has the joyful confidence that the new has come and the old is passing away.

All this is depicted for us in today’s Gospel. Jesus made the paralytic a new man than he was before and gave him new life. It was outwardly evident by his ability to walk home, but that only came later. His true newness was in the “true righteousness and holiness” he received in the forgiveness of his sins. You are no different. Jesus has made you new and given you a new life. You have publicly received the same righteousness and holiness by the forgiveness of your sins. And in a little while, Jesus will make that outwardly evident when, on the Last Day, he will come to your grave-bed and publicly say to you: “Rise, pick up your bed, and come home.”

So yes, you live in one of the richest parts of one of the richest counties on the planet. You, simply by having clean and safe water to drink, have something that over 2 billion people don’t have. Let alone the fact that you don’t live in a warzone, which impacts 400 million people, you have a safe place to sleep, something that over half a billion people don’t have, and easy access to food, something that over a billion people don’t have. You have been blessed by God with many material things in this life, all of which we ought to be thankful for. But

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that call of Jesus to rise and be forgiven, that's the gift that deserves eternal thanks.

Come soon, Lord Jesus. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.