

The Jesus Way – The Greater Miracle Luke 5:17-26

Why do we pray the way that we do?

If I were to ask you to come up here and share with us your nightly prayers, what would we hear... What would become evident about your view of God?

Because how we pray reveals much of what we believe about God!

What we emphasize... what we repeat... what we ask for... it reveals a lot!

There's a strange story about an encounter with Jesus found in **Luke 5:17-26**.

Many of us know the story well, but the main point often gets missed!

Yes, Jesus healed this paralytic man... Yes, this man's friends believed that Jesus could do it, and He did... Yes, this miracle displayed Jesus' power...

But... Jesus did something else before giving this paralytic man the ability to walk... What was it? ***"Man, your sins are forgiven you."*** Seem strange?

Why would Jesus, with a paralyzed man laying before him, & after the great lengths that this man's friends took to get him there, why would Jesus choose to forgive his sins rather than just heal his body?

Jesus is elevating the miracle of the forgiveness of sins over that of physical healing! Reading the story straight through, it is clear that the physical miracle took place simply to give credibility to the fact that He could forgive sins!

Vs. 24 - *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home."*

If you/I were present for this encounter with Jesus, & we said after seeing what took place, ***"We have seen extraordinary things today"***, what would we mean by it? Would we be more amazed at... the physical healing or the spiritual one?

- The miracle that gave a man his legs for the rest of his earthly life, or...
- The miracle that gave a man an eternity in heaven, as well as an earthly life freed from the bondage of sin?

I believe that we would all like to say the latter... but would that be honest? What do we really hold to be most important, most desired, when it comes to seeing & experiencing the power of God at work in our lives?

To answer that question, I believe we need to go back to where we started with prayer. In our prayers, what we praise God for... What we give thanks to Him for... What we really want from Him gets revealed!

Think about even the prayers we share here on Sunday mornings...

How often do we pray for a person's salvation compared to praying for healing?

How often do we ask God to forgive sin compared to asking for a physical miracle?

Yes, Jesus was/is a miracle worker... and His disciples performed miracles too... but for what purpose? To substantiate the legitimacy of an even greater miracle... the forgiveness of our sin(s)!

In our catechism Q&A this morning we recited what we believe when we say in the Lord's prayer, *"forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"*.

Why do we say *"debts"* as opposed to *"trespasses"*? translation & emphasis

We are not all paralyzed physically & in need of that kind of healing... But we're all paralyzed spiritually, bankrupt in spiritual debt, & in great need of a new heart! Which form of healing is of greater need & importance?

Jesus didn't teach His disciples to pray for God to grant us our physical desires... He taught them to pray ***"Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors..."*** ***"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*** Do we pray like this?

If the evil one can distract us from our greatest need of forgiveness, by simply diverting our focus to the physical, then he wins! Miracles are intended to be a signpost pointing to something far greater... the gospel!

Matthew 11:20-24 – ***"He began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they didn't repent."***

Forgiveness comes through repentance... but if people don't see their need for repentance, then they will never experience God's greatest miracle!

Should we not pray for our physical needs... No! We can rejoice, & have our faith strengthened, by God's physical miraculous works! But that should point us all the more to the work Jesus came here to do... Grant forgiveness!

What does it mean to walk in "the Jesus way" in light of these truths?

- We need to recognize the greater need in our lives & in the lives of others!
- We need to be people of repentance, in order to experience true healing!
- We need to pray for the lost, and those hurting spiritually!
- We need not judge God's goodness or power based on unanswered prayers!
- We need to prioritize the forgiveness offered to us... & extended thru us!

Little James... We may not experience the miracles we want, but we can all experience the greater miracle, the one we all need... the forgiveness of sins!

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Why do we say ***"debts"*** as opposed to ***"trespasses"***? _____ & _____

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