

## Matthew 9 sermon 23.5.2021 – Something New

I love getting new things. Two years ago we got a new fridge. The old one had worked hard for 20 years or more but it was uneconomical. The new fridge hums along quietly and chews up a lot less electricity. I like my new fridge. Perhaps you like your new phone, or a new book, or your new App, or new clothes, or a new car. Well today's reading is about new. God is doing something new in and through Jesus. Chapter 9 is a bit like chapter 8 last week. Lots of healings and miracles. It's more of the same in this chapter but there are some new developments as we go along. So let's start with....

**1.Jesus is doing new things** – In v. 1- 7 not only is he healing a paralyzed man but he is forgiving sins in v.2. This is a new thing. Only God can forgive sins. In v.9 – 13 Jesus is not only calling someone who is an outcast, a tax collector, to follow him, to join him but he is joining in ceremonially unclean practices, eating with tax collectors. It would be a bit like today, Jesus calling a paedophile to follow him, and then encouraging him to invite all his paedophile friends to come over and eating with them. Many would question that. But Jesus is also not fasting in v.14 – if he was a religious leader he should be fasting and giving an example to his followers. And then another new thing – he is raising the dead. More signs of his authority. I love the way, in v. 25, that Matthew records this occasion – “After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up.” Boom, that's it! She got up! She was raised from the dead – she was dead, people don't come back from death. It's almost as if Matthew is wanting to cram as much as he can in so he just writes the bare details. But this is huge – he's raising people from the dead. And lastly he's calling others to work with him in v.37,38. Jesus is calling his followers to work with him in HIS harvest field. Jesus is doing new things.

And v.16,17 summarises this newness. It has to be new; the old garment won't work. He's just been answering questions about why he eats with tax collectors and why he doesn't fast. And Jesus answers these with the comment in v.15. He says how impossible it is to combine the

new things he's doing with the old way things used to be. You can't combine funerals and weddings: you can't be gloomy while you're celebrating a marriage feast. READ V. 15

Then in v.16 Jesus says, if you're mending an old coat by sticking a patch on it, make sure the patch is made of cloth that's already seasoned and has done all the shrinking it's likely to do. Otherwise, when it shrinks, it will just make the hole worse than it was in the first place. And you can't put new wine into old wine skins, or there will be an explosion.

What these two pictures of the cloth shrinking and the wineskins bursting have in common is Jesus' insistence that the old and the new won't mix. This doesn't mean, of course, that the old was bad. But now there is something better. Jesus came, Matthew insists, not to destroy, but to fulfil. The old covenant in the Old Testament was good but now there is something better, something new – Jesus. Jesus fulfils all of the old covenant, the old way of doing things. There is no more need for sacrifices after Jesus has died on the cross; he will make us clean through his death on the cross. Who is going to make it new – Jesus is, by his death and resurrection and his pouring the Spirit into us. It simply means that morning has broken on a new day, it's like it's God's new day, and the things that the Jews used to do, that were appropriate for the night-time, are now no longer needed.

In the middle of all this newness sits a surprised and grateful man, Matthew, the tax-collector, who includes his own story in the middle of all these healing miracles, in v.9. Why would he do that? Remember how much tax-collectors were hated by the Jews, they were traitors; they're lumped together with sinners. Then one day this man, Jesus, this man with authority and a new message of the Kingdom comes along and simply asks you to follow him. Yes: it would feel exactly like a healing miracle. Actually, verse 9 hints at something even more: it hints that it would be like a resurrection. When it says "he got up" it's a word that's used as a regular resurrection word – Matthew has been raised up, resurrected and now follows Jesus.

So all the more reason for him to celebrate with his friends. They were in the middle of God's renewing work, an outpouring of mercy. And Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 in verse 13 where God says, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." The times are indeed changing.

God's new world was being born, and from now on everything would be different. The question for us is whether we are living in that new world ourselves, or whether we keep sneaking back to the old one where we feel more at home. We've already seen some of this new life in the sermon on the mount haven't we and we will need to keep reading as we learn more about what Jesus says to us about this new life, this new kingdom.

## **2. Jesus is looking for people of faith, believers -**

Remember we said last week that faith is something very specific: it's recognising that Jesus has authority and trusting this truth. We said faith is not about being religious; it's not even about how many good things you do. Faith is purely and simply saying to Jesus, "I can see that you have authority, you have God's authority. I trust you. I believe in you and your authority." So Matthew has a whole bunch of more examples of faith here. So let's see what we learn.

In v.2 some friends bring a paralyzed man to Jesus. We read Jesus saw their faith, their trust in his authority to heal, Jesus forgives the man's sins and heals him.

It's the same with the synagogue leader in v.18. he kneels before Jesus and says, "My daughter has just died. But **come and put your hand on her**, and she will live." In other words I believe you have the authority to even raise someone from the dead. I believe. And Jesus goes with him and takes the daughter's hand and raises her to life.

And then while he's going to the synagogue leader's house, in v.21 a woman whose been haemorrhaging for 12 years touches Jesus. She has faith that if she only touches Jesus' cloak that she will be healed. She has faith in his authority to heal, to restore. And so Jesus says, "Your faith has healed you."

And it goes on; in v.28 2 blind men come to Jesus. He asks them, “Do you believe I can heal you?” And then in v.32 another account - friends bring a mute man who was demon-possessed to Jesus. Matthew reels off story after story one after the other. What are we seeing? People are coming to Jesus; they have faith in his authority to heal. Jesus is looking for people with faith. They might not understand exactly what that means. The woman with the bleeding maybe thinks that there is something magical about Jesus’ clothes; but she knows that he is the one with authority. So she comes to him. Her faith might be small and uncertain. She’s not sure about everything about Jesus. But she comes to him. She is one of the people who is asking, seeking, knocking. This is what Jesus is looking for. A faith that trusts and believes in his authority, that he is the king.

And lastly, in v.9 we read of Matthew getting up and following Jesus. It doesn’t mention his faith. But think about what was going on here. Matthew has a secure position, he’s making money. He’s got the protection of the Romans. Jesus is saying, “Leave that. Trust me; follow me”. Matthew already has many enemies among the Jews, they hate him as a tax collector. Now he will just walk out on his job – the Romans aren’t going to like that. Matthew doesn’t need more enemies. But Jesus has called him. He has seen enough of Jesus to know that he has an authority in which he can trust. It is more important to follow Jesus than to hang on to his worldly position. This is a faith that shows itself in action – Matthew responds to Jesus’ invitation. Now he will only have Jesus. His faith is in Jesus alone. This is the kind of faith Jesus is calling each of us to today. The possessions we have; the plans we have; the difficulties we have. Jesus says come to me. Trust me. You may lose everything. You may have more difficulties. But you will now be following the king; the one who is preparing a place for you at the feast in his kingdom; a kingdom in which you will know his love and peace in a way that the world cannot give.

### **3.Beginnings of opposition**

In this chapter we begin to see the opposition to Jesus that will grow and become more intense. The Pharisees, in v.11, question Jesus’ disciples about Jesus eating with sinners. And

Jesus in his typical way doesn't use many words but what he says is profound; it really is an earth-shattering truth. He says to the Pharisees, "It's not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick." I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Who's righteous? No one but God!! All of us are sick. We need the spiritual healing of Jesus. The tragic thing about the Pharisees is that they failed to see that they were sick. They needed healing, spiritual healing. There were many "good" people who came to Jesus to ask him questions. Do you remember the rich young ruler who said to Jesus, "I've kept all the commands. I'm a good man." Jesus said, "Go and give away all your money." Matthew saw that he was spiritually sick; he needed Jesus' healing – the healing that Jesus would do on the cross for us. He left his security, well what the world would see as his security, and followed Jesus, the greatest security ever.

In v.34 there is a tragic picture. There is healing after healing happening. Jesus has just healed a demon-possessed man. What do the Pharisees do? They say that Jesus is using Satan's power to drive out the demons. What!! That's ridiculous. Why would Satan fight against himself. The tragedy is that these Pharisees are so blind and unwilling to accept the fact that Jesus might be from God that they are thinking what's the worst possible explanation we can give this? Satan is giving him power. It's crazy, but they said it. Their minds are closed. And there are many people today who will go to similar lengths to dismiss the claims of Jesus. We're not sick. We're good people. We don't need Jesus.

But it doesn't stop Jesus. The conclusion in v.35 – READ IT.

Jesus is even calling us to work with him in his harvest field. As he changes us, as the Holy Spirit works in us, he gives us a love for others, we take on his compassion for those who don't know Jesus and we are able to join him in his work to call people to the king and his kingdom. In 2 weeks time Georgina will be looking at chapter 10 and saying more about this. Next week it's Trinity Sunday and we'll be thinking about the trinity, what it means when we say God is One and God is three persons and what that means for our relationship with God.

**4. Conclusion – the picture now** – what do we conclude about Jesus now – he has authority to heal, even infectious diseases; he has authority over nature; over demons; over blindness; over haemorrhages; over sin, authority to forgive; authority over death.

**What have we learnt on our journey through Matthew** – Jesus is calling us to come into the Kingdom; to do that we must repent; “seek first his righteousness”; ask, seek, knock; we have faith in him because he is the one with authority; we can come freely, just as we are. Jesus asks us the same question as he asks the 2 blind men, “Do you believe?”

Jesus is not looking for virtuous lives; he is looking for trusting, believing followers. He doesn't say, “clean yourself up and then you can come to me.” He says the exact opposite, “Come to me and let me clean you up.” Yes, you're going to mess up. You'll fail to live as Kingdom people. So come to me; let me change you. I am the only one who can change you. As the Holy Spirit works in you, you will be changed. Each day, **Come**, each moment of each day, **Come**. There is nothing too big or too difficult for our God.