

“God of Us All”
Rev. Becky Stephens

Text: Matthew 9:9-26 NLT God’s Word: Romans 2:1-11 NLT

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⁹As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector’s booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. ¹¹But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such scum?” ¹²When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” ¹³Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

¹⁴One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, “Why don’t your disciples fast[Ⓜ] like we do and the Pharisees do?” ¹⁵Jesus replied, “Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

¹⁶“Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before. ¹⁷“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the old skins would burst from the pressure, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine is stored in new wineskins so that both are preserved.”

¹⁸As Jesus was saying this, the leader of a synagogue came and knelt before him. “My daughter has just died,” he said, “but you can bring her back to life again if you just come and lay your hand on her.” ¹⁹So Jesus and his disciples got up and went with him. ²⁰Just then a woman who had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding came up behind him. She touched the fringe of his robe, ²¹for she thought, “If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed.” ²²Jesus turned around, and when he saw her he said, “Daughter, be encouraged! Your faith has made you well.” And the woman was healed at that moment.

²³When Jesus arrived at the official’s home, he saw the noisy crowd and heard the funeral music. ²⁴“Get out!” he told them. “The girl isn’t dead; she’s only asleep.” But the crowd laughed at him. ²⁵After the crowd was put outside, however, Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand, and she stood up! ²⁶The report of this miracle swept through the entire countryside.

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In our Gospel lesson for this morning, we see a beautiful picture of our God. We see Jesus Christ--God with us-- in the midst of the oppression of sin, the oppression of society, and the oppression of death and mourning. We find Jesus in the midst of people who feel unneeded, unloved, and unwanted.

Within the core of every person's life is a little bit of hell... *"for all have sinned and fall short of God's glory."* ...but, thanks be to God, we have a Savior who gets dirty in the process of making us well.

And this is what ministry is all about.... It's about meeting people where they are... and lifting them up.... not judging them. To be a sinner and to be invited into the household of God is a very healing thing....and this is something that we need to keep in mind as we go out into the world.... we are called to make disciples of all nations.... We are called to invite everyone in....no matter what their situation in life may be! We are called to bring hope in the midst of despair, and healing in the face of suffering.

Jesus *"saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him."* Jesus *"saw a man named Matthew."* The rest of the crowd...including the religious leaders saw a tax collector who had denied his Jewish heritage and betrayed his country. But Jesus saw a man.... a human being...Jesus saw his heart, his mind, his thoughts, his hurt, his pain, his loneliness, his lack of meaning and purpose in life. Jesus saw a life that was being wasted. Jesus saw a man who needed a Savior. Is this what we see in the faces of those whom we meet?

And when Jesus told him: *"Follow me,"* a dramatic change took place in Matthew's life. He left everything and committed himself totally to Christ. It is hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven because they are so attached to the material world. And Matthew was rich.... but Matthew was one of the few who had been willing to give it all up to follow Jesus!

Matthew's conversion shows us that Jesus saves anyone who will truly follow Him: the hated.... the bitter...the unjust...the non-religious...the traitor...the thief...the immoral.... the person without purpose or meaning.

And what did Matthew do as soon as he was saved? Well, he held a dinner party, where he invited all his sinful friends to come and meet Jesus. What a dynamic example in witnessing! Matthew began to witness immediately upon his conversion.

As soon as I got saved, I called up all my friends and told them about Christ. Most of them thought I was nuts, but that is what I did.

Jesus saved Matthew and Jesus even saved me because Jesus goes where the sinners are. Jesus seeks out those who are lost...who are oppressed by the weight of sin.... And Jesus enters the lives of those who will accept his invitation and He makes them well.

Now, the Pharisees didn't like this. They didn't understand the concept of the 'new birth.' They didn't believe that people could change. They prided themselves in being the ones who were right with God, and they felt it was their job to ostracize and judge those who didn't live up to their standards.

So, they asked Jesus' disciples: "*Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?*" Those people who are self-disciplined and religious are sometimes the most judgmental...and this judgmental spirit does more to hurt people than any other single thing!

The Bible makes it clear that those who judge others are condemning themselves. It is in showing kindness, tolerance, and patience we lead people towards repentance...according to Romans chapter 2.

So, when Jesus heard that the religionists were complaining about Him, He said: "*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*"

Sin is a sickness that we all have inherited. And there is no way that we can make ourselves well...we all need the Great Physician! But a person must acknowledge their sickness and ask the Physician for healing before they can be made well.

Jesus came to earth for the same reason that a physician enters a home or sets up a practice....to make those who realize they are sick.... well! And we are all spiritually sick. We all suffer from the fatal disease of sin. And we will all experience hell if we do not call upon the name of Jesus in order to be healed!

The great thing about the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that there is a cure for this fatal disease! Because of what Christ did for us on the cross...none of us need to die from it. But too many people...and the Bible makes it clear that it is the majority of people who are walking about with this fatal disease of sin, but they are.... ignoring it...feeding it...denying it...and abusing it. The self-righteous and the self-satisfied are only living under the delusion that they are A-Okay!

But the call of Jesus is the call to repentance: to a changed life. As the Bible says in 2 Corinthians: "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*"

This happened to Matthew, and this can happen to anyone of us who heed Christ's call in our lives! Jesus has come to save everyone.... only if we believe. Christ has the power to meet all our desperate and hopeless needs--because Christ goes where the suffering is. He is the God of the oppressed. He is the God of us all.

Just look at the woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years.... She had needed help for years and years. She was desperately hopeless, ashamed, and embarrassed. She was now poor because she had spent all she had been seeking to find a cure. Every day she had experienced the pit of loneliness, unacceptance, and low self-esteem. She was nothing--even in her own eyes.

According to the law, she wasn't supposed to be in the crowd that was surrounding Jesus at all! She was supposed to be isolated, but her desperation drove her to Jesus. She probably thought that Jesus would never touch her because she was unclean, but she had heard so many

wonderful things about Him--if she could only touch His garment, He would never know, and she would be healed.

Imagine her great faith! Imagine how liberating Jesus' response made her feel! Jesus turned to the woman. How could Jesus have felt her touching His garment? He was being pressed and pushed by the crowd, yet when she stepped up behind him and touched His robe--He knew it!

How did He know it? Because the woman's faith had touched Him. It is faith that touches Jesus and faith never goes unnoticed, it is never ignored by God.

For Jesus, the most important work in all the world is meeting a person's need! Nothing can keep Jesus from stopping and turning to a person who comes to Him. Jesus cares for all people, no matter how rejected, cut off, or ostracized we may be.

Mother Teresa once said: "Today it is very fashionable to talk about the poor. Unfortunately, it is not fashionable to talk with them."

And this woman was poor. A person may be considered by society as unclean, dirty, polluted, contaminated, and lost forever; but that person is very precious to our Lord. *"Jesus turned and saw her. 'Take heart, daughter,' he said, 'your faith has healed you.' And the woman was healed from that moment."*

Notice that Jesus called her daughter. Now, that's pretty heavy stuff. When Jesus was speaking to the religious leaders in John chapter 8, He called them children of the devil.... because they did not believe. *"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."*

Because of her faith in Christ, God adopted this poor, afflicted, oppressed woman....and made her a child of God! He gave her dignity and purpose, he healed her physically, emotionally, and spiritually.... she was born again into eternal life! Christ's power and life was infused into this woman.

She had feared facing Jesus because she had feared that she would be rebuked...after-all... isn't that how everyone else in her life had treated her? But she found an eternal truth! She found the treasure hidden in a field!

No matter how much the world rejects us, no matter what the world thinks of us, no matter how oppressed we are...Jesus longs to heal us! No person is too dirty, no person is too sinful for the God of the oppressed...the God of us all! Thanks be to God. Amen.