

Matt 9.1-17 – Jesus forgives sinners – trust that! Clint Le Page
Main point – Jesus brings forgiveness and joy to sinners who trust him

In 2019 Amber Guyger, a former Dallas *police officer* was found guilty of murdering Botham Jean.

Guyger was a *white* police officer; Botham Jean was an African American.
She shot and killed him in his own home—saying she had mistakenly entered the *wrong apartment* and thought he was a burglar in hers.-----

On the witness stand Guyger broke down in tears, saying, "I'm so sorry.
I never wanted to take an innocent person's life."

"I wish he was the one with the gun, that killed me."-----

Guyger was sentenced to 10 years prison.

Many people outside the courtroom decried the sentence, as far too lenient.
Inside the courtroom, *another* voice was heard, from the brother of Botham Jean.
Let's listen to what Brandt says.-----

Watch video (2.5 min)

That's really moving isn't it?-----

Out of evil and tremendous sadness came an extraordinary act of kindness & grace.-----

Brandt Jean's actions in that courtroom represent the heart of the Christian message, which is about undeserved forgiveness.-----

Why have we considered what Brandt said?-----

Because it shows how powerful it is to be told 'I forgive you'.-----

And today we hear Jesus offer that to us.

If we trust in him, he says us, "I forgive you", and it's powerful.-----

Remember in Matthew chs8-9 we're considering the signs which show Jesus is the King of God's Kingdom.

He has shown his power n' authority over sickness, nature, and evil.

He'd now he's back in Capernaum, where we see his authority to forgive sin.-----

Our first and longest of 3 points is, Forgiveness by faith.-----

Compared to Mark and Luke, *Matthew's* account of this famous healing of the paralytic is the shortest, and the emphasis is *really on* the forgiveness.

Some men bring their paralysed friend to Jesus on a mat, a stretcher bed.

We're not told here that they lowered him through the roof.

But 'When Jesus saw their faith he said to the man, "Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven"

Yes this paraplegic, surely came to Jesus seeking physical healing, yet Jesus deals with his greater need.

His need for forgiveness.-----

"Be encouraged, your sins are forgiven"

By 'sin' we don't mean what many in our society think, that *sin's* just an indulgence or minor transgression, like eating chocolate cake or ice cream at *midnight*.(SLIDE)

Like Magnum's old '7 deadly sins' ice creams

But sin cannot be trivialised by reducing it to some dietary indulgence that earns us the penance of a few extra hours on the treadmill.-----

Speaking of sin with contemporary Australians *won't often* be understood.

But talk of forgiveness and the cross of Christ makes no sense at all if we can't talk about sin.

So let's translate it and maybe say **sin is** the human propensity to Stuff things up.

Sin disregarding God, choosing our own way not God's way.

Sin is vandalising God's honour, failing to love him, and hurting others with our selfishness.

And all of us are guilty of that.-----

We're all guilty of *sin*.-----

If you cannot walk you may *think* your greatest problem is your paralysis, but Jesus sees things differently.

He knows the greatest problem every person faces, is the just judgement of God upon their sins, and suffering hell forever.

Being saved from judgement and hell is our greatest need.-----

But who can forgive our sins?-----

If I spout abuse at you, then later come to you in repentance, you can choose to forgive me. But I cannot forgive your brother or sister when they sin against you, for the sin was never against *me*.

But, every sin we commit is also, and always, against God.-----

So when Jesus says 'son your sins are forgiven', that's only something God can pronounce. So implicitly, Jesus is claiming to be divine, claiming to *be God*, and have the authority of God himself.

That's what the teachers of the law find so offensive, and blasphemous.-----

They think Jesus is speaking evil to God, but in v4 Jesus accuses them of thinking evil thoughts themselves.-----

And to prove that he has authority to forgive sins, Jesus miraculously heals the paralysed man's legs – so he gets up and goes home.

Everyone is awestruck and praises God; for they've witnessed the power and authority of *God himself* in the person of Jesus.-----

Jesus spoke and made the man's paralysed legs well, but it was harder to forgive sins *wasn't it?*

For what did Jesus have to go through to forgive our sins?-----

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus will cry, "My soul is overwhelmed to the point of death' (26.38).

He will be shamed, forsaken, beaten; flogged, stripped, crucified, until he cries out, 'My God my God, why have you forsaken me?' (27.46) then die.-----

Achieving our forgiveness, enabling sinners who deserve judgement to be pronounced righteous, forgiven before God, was very hard. Harder than we know.----

As Jesus said at the Last Supper, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (26.28)-----

Each time we follow our own way and not God's way, it's like a bit more **dirt gets flicked on our clothing.(SLIDE)**

As we get older our clothing becomes dirtier and dirtier.-----

Even if we choose to rebel once it's enough to make us too dirty to be in the presence of a perfect, holy God.

When Jesus came he was perfect.

It's as if his clothing was what colour?---- White!

When Jesus died on the cross it's like all our dirty clothing got piled on top of him and he was judged – given the death penalty for our rebellion.

He died and dealt with our dirty clothing.

And his resurrection proved he'd *dealt with it*.-----

Now we're all faced with a choice, we can all decide to wear our own clothing when we face God on judgement day.

Or we can give it to Jesus.

He is *willing* to exchange his clothes with mine if I put my trust in him.-----

You can do that today!-----

And when we place our faith in him, his perfect spotless clothes get *counted* as ours.

His righteousness gets counted as yours.-----

I don't know the Chinese language, but it's *amazing* to learn how some Chinese characters have a background in biblical truth.

I understand the **Chinese character for 'righteousness'** is made up of two parts. (SLIDE)
The character on the bottom is 'me' or I, and above it is the character for lamb.

The lamb is above me.

When I rely on myself to get right with God, His anger remains for he must judge my sin.

But if I accept and trust Jesus as the lamb of God, who died in my place, God sees the lamb over me.

He sees me as righteous, and I can have right relationship with God.

How wonderful is that!!

How do we receive this forgiveness?-----

Remember Jesus saw the faith of the men, presumably the paralytic's faith too, and said, Son your sins are forgiven.

Well in response to our faith and trust in Jesus, he will also, "Son, daughter, your sins are *forgiven*."-----

So put your faith and whole trust in him today.

And all your sins, past, present and future, will all be washed away.-----

As we read in **Psalm 130**, 'If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness.'----- There really is!-----

The trouble is many people *don't think* they really need forgiveness.

And we come to our second point, Forgiveness For Sinners.----- (SLIDE)

In **v9** Jesus just asks Matthew, a tax-collector, to follow him, and he does.

That shows Matthew's whole trust is in Christ.-----

It's amazing the Jesus bothers with such a despised person, viewed by all as a greedy person who's betrayed his Jewish people to serve their Roman oppressors.

The way the new series, The Chosen artistically portrays Matthew, and Jesus' calling him is so helpful and encouraging.----- (SLIDE)

Matthew's life is saved and transformed by Jesus.

And Matthew invites many to join the party at his house.

It seems he loves to introduce other sinners to Jesus.

But in **v11** the Pharisees exclude themselves from the party.----

It reminds me of the older son in the Parable of the Lost Son, **Luke 15** who also refuses to go into the party.-----

They say 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'

The undesirables, undesiring, unworthy people who don't make the grade.----

The Pharisees are happy to leave people to die in their sins.-----

And Jesus responds famously, 'It's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick... I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.-----

Remember sin isn't some small *naughty* indulgence, but violating God's honour and selfishly failing to love others.-----

In **Romans 1-3** the apostle Paul builds his case that everyone, whether pagan Gentile, good & religious, or Jew, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

No one is righteous, not even one (**Rom 3.10,23**).

So when *we*, Bible believing Christians hear Jesus' words we may think, *what does Jesus mean* when he says he's not come to call the righteous?-----

Jesus knows we're all sinners.

But the Pharisees were goodie-goodie religious people who thought they were good enough, and better than sinful tax-collectors like Matthew.

They condemned people who didn't measure up.-----

They'd failed to hear what God was saying in **Hosea 6**, 'I desire mercy not sacrifice'

In other words, treating *people* with mercy, compassion, love is more important than what you give to God.-----

So even the Pharisees were sick, spiritually sick with sin, but they didn't know it.
 And when you *don't think* you're sick, you won't go to the Dr.-----
 And when you don't think you're a wretched sinner, you won't turn to Jesus the Saviour.-----
 Jesus will save those who know they *need saving* and come to him in faith.-----
 Jesus is willing to say to you, Sinner, I forgive you.
 But we've gotta have admitted we have sins, and we need forgiving.-----
 Have you *admitted that*, and in your heart turned to Jesus?-----
 He is ready to forgive you.
 So come to him, trust in him.-----
 And when you know you are forgiven, it's powerful, and life-changing.-----

In the marriage course some of us have been hearing about how the door to *hope* is hopelessness.
 And the door to help for our relationship is confessing our helplessness, how much we need a Saviour, how much we need God's grace.
 And on this **Mother's Day**, Mum's need to remember that too.
 Don't be a parenting Pharisee, thinking you've done a good job, or you're *better than* that other parent at church, or school, or the playground.
 Don't compare yourself to other Mum's; but confess to Jesus your need, your need for help and grace. And but for the grace of God go we.
 Parents, Admit you can't save your kids by your efforts, you don't have the wisdom to deal with your child's issues or emotions.
 Turn the gracious King Jesus.
 Mum's, Turn to Jesus for the grace and wisdom and strength you need.
 And may all of us, reach out with mercy and compassion, to the needy around us.----

We also saw this mercy and love in **Brandt Jean at the start *didn't we?***-----
 Others thought he should never show mercy to and forgive a person labelled white racist murderer. But by the grace of God he did.
 And he wanted Amber to find forgiving grace in Jesus too, *didn't he?*-----
 Maybe you also know someone who needs to hear that Jesus is willing to forgive them too?

Finally, Point 3, Forgiveness Brings New Joy.----- (SLIDE)

V14, John the Baptist's disciples come to Jesus and ask, How come we and the Pharisees fast but your disciples don't?-----

Fasting was very important tradition for many Jews.

But in the OT fasting was only *commanded* for the Day of Atonement, once a year.---

Jesus responds that just like the guests at a wedding won't be fasting, but feasting n' celebrating while the groom is with them, it's the same with him.

Now is not the time for fasting and mourning, but joy.-----

In **Matt 25 and Rev 19.7** Jesus is described as the bridegroom.

He would shortly be taken away from his disciples in death, before rising then being taken away up to heaven.

And Jesus said his disciples will fast when that all happens.-----

Fasting is not commanded for Christians by Jesus here or in the NT.

We see NT examples of Christians fasting and praying (Acts 13.2-3;14.23).

And if we *fast* it's to be so we can prioritise & devote ourselves to prayer.

And when believers seek God's mercy or wisdom, many do fast and pray.-----

But it's not commanded, nor to be imposed on people.-----

Thinking about **v16-17** the *point is*, Judaism and Jewish traditions cannot *contain* the fullness and greatness of the Gospel of Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord Jesus is like that *new wine* that cannot be put into an old wineskin, for it'll ferment and burst it.

Trying to impose man-made customs n' traditions on Christianity will only destroy it.-----

Jesus is bringing something new, the *new covenant*, promised in the Old.

He is bringing and offering real forgiveness, and eternal life which starts now.-----

Jesus says, while he's with his disciples it's not the time to fast.-----

And Jesus is with us now, by his Spirit, *isn't he?*

Jesus promises he is with us always to the very end of the age, (28.20) which also gives us reason to be joyful.

Jesus brings new and lasting joy. And the joy Christ gives is real.

And we can have joy because of our forgiveness of sins, peace with God, the presence of God and promise of heaven.

Those things can give you a joy that remains deep in your heart, *even in* the storms, even in sickness, in grief, in sadness.-----

I'm mindful that we have brothers and sisters here enduring injuries, relationship crises, cancer diagnoses, and mental and emotional anxieties.

But in all that believers, *you can still have joy*.-----

Joy is not something we experience as a result of happy circumstances.

It's not that Jesus wants his followers just sitting on a beach with a cold drink in their hands.

As nice as that sounds. 😊

This joy we have because of Jesus is something we can experience despite our circumstances.-----

As Tim Chester says in his book, ***Enjoying God***, we always have a reason for joy that surpasses *everything else*, and that reason is Jesus.-----

If your child says they're hungry you might say, '*Make yourself a sandwich.*'

If you're hungry then feast on something good.

If you lack joy feast on someone good.-----

If you're succumbing to temptation, if suffering and loss are filling you with fear, if your service feels like drudgery, if your witness feels like duty, or your sacrifices feel like

sacrifices, you can find your joy in God by feasting on Jesus.-----

Tim Keller says in ***Walking with God in pain and suffering***, (SLIDE) we must not deny or try to create feelings, but in the Bible the heart is not identical to emotions.

The heart is the deepest place of our commitments, trusts and hopes.

From those commitments flow our emotions, thoughts and actions.-----

To rejoice in God means to dwell on and remind ourselves of who God is, who we are, and what he has done for us.

Sometimes our emotions respond and follow when we do this, and sometimes they don't.

But rejoicing in suffering happens within sorrow.-----

For example weeping can drive you into joy, and enhance your joy, *then enable you* to actually feel your grief without it sinking you.-----

We don't get lifted out of the darkness as soon as we pray.

Sorrow isn't replaced with happiness.

But when we sense Christ's presence, it helps us rise above the darkness.-----

So let God's word remind you of who Christ is and what he's done for you.

Then pray you'll remember Jesus is with you, so you can deep down, enduring JOY-----

What have we learnt in Matt 9 today?-----

We are all undeserving sinners.

And our sins have all been forgiven by faith in Christ.

And that's why we can be joyful.-----

Trust in Jesus for the forgiveness you need, for it will powerfully change your life forever, and can warm your heart now.-----

Let's pray.