

## Week of March 21, 2021

### Matthew 9:18-38

<sup>18</sup> While Jesus was speaking to them, a ruler came and knelt in front of him, saying, "My daughter has just died. But come and place your hand on her, and she'll live." <sup>19</sup> So Jesus and his disciples got up and went with him. <sup>20</sup> Then a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years came up behind Jesus and touched the hem of his clothes. <sup>21</sup> She thought, "If I only touch his robe I'll be healed." <sup>22</sup> When Jesus turned and saw her, he said, "Be encouraged, daughter. Your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that time on.

<sup>23</sup> When Jesus went into the ruler's house, he saw the flute players and the distressed crowd. <sup>24</sup> He said, "Go away, because the little girl isn't dead but is asleep"; but they laughed at him. <sup>25</sup> After he had sent the crowd away, Jesus went in and touched her hand, and the little girl rose up. <sup>26</sup> News about this spread throughout that whole region.

<sup>27</sup> As Jesus departed, two blind men followed him, crying out, "Show us mercy, Son of David." <sup>28</sup> When he came into the house, the blind men approached him. Jesus said to them, "Do you believe I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied.

<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus touched their eyes and said, "It will happen for you just as you have believed." <sup>30</sup> Their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly warned them, "Make sure nobody knows about this." <sup>31</sup> But they went out and spread the word about him throughout that whole region.

<sup>32</sup> As they were leaving, people brought to him a man who was demon-possessed and unable to speak. <sup>33</sup> When Jesus had thrown out the demon, the man who couldn't speak began to talk. The crowds were amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." <sup>34</sup> But the Pharisees said, "He throws out demons with the authority of the ruler of demons."

<sup>35</sup> Jesus traveled among all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, announcing the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. <sup>36</sup> Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his disciples, "The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers." <sup>38</sup> Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest."

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### There's No Pleasing Some People

No matter what you do, how hard you work, or how many changes you put in place, there are some people who simply will not be satisfied. If you ever are unfortunate enough to work in customer service, you know this all too well - there are some people who can be downright cruel no matter how much you try to be kind and helpful. It can be a hard lesson to learn, especially for those who find value in making others happy. I've had to learn this as a pastor - we're doomed to fail if we attempt to make everyone happy all the time. It can feel like you have a heart of stone, but sometimes doing the right thing means not trying to be everything to everyone, it's an impossibility. There is value in seeking to do right by people, but those who refuse to be satisfied will destroy you if you let them, and we must not.

The Pharisees were such people. Nothing Jesus did made them happy despite the wonder of his works. In the span of just a few hours he was approached by the poor and wealthy alike, commanding their devotion, healing all sorts of maladies, and even bringing a little girl from death to life. Any person should have been able to see why that made Jesus someone special, but the Pharisees wanted nothing to do with him. They were so threatened by Jesus' power that they did everything they could to turn people against him. If Jesus was who he said he was (spoiler alert, he was), and he willingly chose to interact with the least and the lost, then their whole way of life was wrong. And if their way of life was wrong, they lost hold of their power. So they had to decide - do we want to hold on to power or seek the truth? They chose power. They witnessed the resurrection of the dead and the healing of the sick beyond anyone's imagination, and they claimed he must be evil if he can so easily throw out evil. Worse than the Pharisee's demented attempts to hold onto their power was the fact that people believed all of their gaslighting. All

evidence clearly showed that Jesus was not only special, but divine, yet the Pharisees were so persistent in altering people's perception of Jesus' divine reality that they were able to get people to ignore seeing the truth in front of them.

These power dynamics still exist. Some people will simply never be happy unless they have absolute power and control, but absolute power and control belong to God alone. We have to contend with our own kinds of Pharisees who will say and do anything to hold onto power, even in the face of undeniable truth. To fight these battles, we must turn to Christ, who is the author of truth, not to those who claim to speak for Christ, when all they really speak for is their own selfish desire for power. Where does Christ lead? To the lonely, the lost, the ones in deepest need. Anyone who says otherwise hasn't heard the truth from our Lord. The work is great, and "the Lord of the Harvest" is calling.

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*Merciful God, we confess that we can get so caught up in the attempt to please others that we forget our only purpose is to please you by working for equality and justice. Help us to see your truth and tune out all those who try to usurp your message for selfish desires. May we answer your call and work for your harvest, for the work is great and there are too few willing to work for your kingdom. Amen.*