

June 11<sup>th</sup> 2023  
St Johns and CTK

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

May these words I preach be acceptable to you our Lord and Saviour; Amen.

I am such a sinner, as when I look at someone, my first impressions of that person can change my thoughts on how I think about them. For example - the person so drunk they can't stand up; the person I see passing on drugs to the addict who goes off quickly to get their fix; a person being walked out of the supermarket in handcuffs for shop lifting; the people who spend money freely whilst others are struggling. My list goes on.

So hold onto these thoughts in your head.

Jesus was enjoying a meal at Matthew's house and with other friends of Matthew, who happened to be tax collectors and other sinners, plus his disciples. The Pharisees see this and are appalled that he was there amongst them eating a meal. The Pharisees were seen as people of power, scrupulous keepers of the law. In fact they were self-righteous, hypocritical people, they judged people, condemning all those who did not measure up to their regulations and beliefs. So on this occasion they felt this was very bad sinful behaviour for Jews. They ask his disciples why was this Jesus, a Jew, is sat down with these Tax collectors as they worked for the Romans.

When Jesus over hears them asking his disciples why he is sitting down with such like, Jesus tells them, "I do not come for the righteous, but to call the sinners to repentance. For its not the healthy that need a doctor but the sick," then he tells them to go and learn what this means.

I can imagine the Pharisees going away muttering amongst themselves, questioning his words what does he mean by he comes to call the sinners not the righteous?

Then a ruler called Jairus came and knelt before his feet saying his 12 year daughter has just died, but appealing to him to come and place his hands on her and she will live. Jesus saw the faith that this man had in him and went with him, the disciples following and others.

But a woman who had been suffering from bleeding saw Jesus and the crowds following him so she sneaks up behind Jesus and thought if I just touch his cloak I will be healed. This woman who had been bleeding for 12 years would have been seen as ceremonially unclean by the Jewish laws, so she wouldn't have been able to go into the temple or be allowed to socialise with others, so would have lived a very lonely life. Although she had had all sorts of treatments they hadn't worked, but she had heard about Jesus and his healing power, so believed if only she could just get close enough to touch his cloak she would be healed for

she knew that she wouldn't be able to touch his hands. But the minute she touches that cloak, Jesus felt his power leave him so he asks, "Who touched me?" She comes from behind him and kneels at his feet and Jesus tells her "Take heart your faith has healed you."

Then, just when he arrives at the ruler's house, the servant dashes out to say not to bother the teacher for the girl is already dead. But Jesus sends the crowds away and tells Jairus, "Don't be afraid just believe and she will be healed ", for Jesus already knew the child wasn't dead but most probably in a diabetic coma, as he takes her hand he tells her to get up. Then he tells the servants to give her something to eat. He tells Jairus not to tell anyone but this news spread out far and wide.

Three very different people from the society in which they all live.

The tax collectors who were Jews who worked for the Romans, so this made them traitors as people resented paying taxes to the foreigners who ruled over them.

Then the woman, possibly a Gentile, would be outcast by the Jewish law as she would have been seen as ceremonially unclean, which meant she couldn't touch anyone or be touched so this was a her one and only chance to be healed but to touch his cloak as she would not have been in a position to fully approach Jesus himself for fear of reprisals by the people around her.

Then Jairus, a well-known religious leader from the local synagogue, yet he recognised the power of Jesus as being a higher power than his. So he knelt before Jesus to ask for his help.

Jesus was able to look beyond the tax collectors' sins as they also had the chance to redeem themselves by repentance, and he had come to save such as these.

Jesus saw and felt the suffering of the woman who had been outcast to the margins of society by her illness which was completely misunderstood, he also saw her faith in him.

Jairus who thought he was able to approach Jesus as he was recognised as a ruler, a leader in the synagogue, someone whom others looked up to.

But although Jesus saw this in them, he also saw that each one was made in God's Image and likeness, all were of free will but also each had the capacity to change their lives by repentance and faith.

Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, would have not stopped stealing and cheating people, but it was Jesus's acceptance of him, just as he was, that brought about his change of heart, he repented and made amends to those whom he had caused harm. You can find that story in Luke 19 verses 1-10.

The woman who had been bleeding for 12 years - in her faith Jesus healed her. Not only had she received physical healing but it also meant she had received salvation, that day her soul was saved. The peace that comes with the assurance of salvation was hers from now on. She was given that rest that Jesus promises to those who trust him with their whole hearts. Her whole life was healed because her faith spanned out into all aspects of her being.

Jairus learned a great lesson that day to not fear and only believe. Faith is a leap into the dark uncertainty, also a leap into the light where with Jesus we can find cleansing. and that's exactly what Jairus did that day.

So I come back to my sinful nature which I spoke about first of all.  
So where am I in all of this?

Would I sit down with a homeless person and share a meal with them? I am more likely than not to be afraid of them, and maybe just either pass them by, or buy them a sandwich, or even just give them some loose change. But do I see the image of God created in them? Do I look at the addict as the Jewish people looked upon the bleeding woman and think they are too sick to be helped? Do I see the image of God created in them? Do I think I am much better than the shoplifter as I pay for my shopping? Do I see the image of God created in them? What does it mean to all of us having been made in the image of God?

So I looked it up; it says  
"To be made in the image of God means human worth is not based on race, ethnicity, economic status, social standing, or physical attractiveness. Consequently the image of God disallows prejudice of any kind."

Jesus saw beyond the sins of the tax collectors, the suffering of the woman marginalised by society, he saw the leader trying to do his best. Jesus knew that they had all been created to resemble God in his likeness.

So I for one must try harder to see beyond the people in society that I marginalise in my head.

I must look at everyone, see that to be made in God's image is not of flesh but is human worth, not defined by gender, social standing, or race.

Next time when I see a shoplifter, a drunk, an addict, or anyone around me that I find difficult to love or see in a different way because of my own self-inflicted morals, I must see that I too am made in the image of God and I too am a sinner with the opportunity to repent and change. I ask each day that my sins will be forgiven in the Lord's Prayer, yet every day I still manage to sin.

So as often was written on my school homework I must try harder.

Let us pray

Thank you lord for drawing us near and opening our eyes to see the sins that enslave us,  
May we find joy in repenting of our sins in the knowledge that we have been forgiven and  
help us to change our thoughts and actions accordingly, knowing that you love us  
unconditionally and at the last, bring us home to you. Amen