Man Yet God the Son — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 9:1–8 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, September 13, 2026 · *What Man Is This?*

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If you've got a Bible, we're going to be in Matthew chapter 9. If you don't have a Bible, there should be one under the chair in front of you. You can take that. If you don't own a copy, you can take that with you. We are making our way through the Gospel of Matthew as a church, studying the life of Jesus, asking the question: what kind of man is he? And there's a renewed interest in this guy in our culture. So we're trying to get the answers from the source text.

As you're turning to Matthew chapter 9 — I don't know about you, but it's somewhat a human tendency, from my perspective, for people to size others up when you first get into conversation with them, especially if it's a new person in your life. Maybe a new coworker. Maybe a daughter's boyfriend. Maybe someone new in the marketplace — you're a competitor or something like that. And so you find yourself analyzing them, looking at their personality, trying to figure out what makes this person tick: what do they like, what do they not like, what can they do, what can't they do. And we just cannot help ourselves other than to make those judgments — those first-impression judgments. I've done it. You've done it.

And I also know that the tendency we all have to do that can sometimes prove itself inadequate. And so what we actually read a person to be turns out they are not quite what we thought they were going to be. Or maybe they're something way more than what we thought. Or maybe they're something a little less than what we thought. But the reality is: they weren't exactly what we first imagined. **Things are not always what they seem.** Sometimes they can be better than what they seem. Sometimes they can be worse.

I've certainly, as a pastor over the years, seen times where the church will be doing well and times where the church is struggling. And sometimes people leave and sometimes people stay. And I've always been amazed by the people who stay. I think some people would never leave — and those people end up leaving. Sometimes not always because they're mad, but just because sometimes people go. But sometimes I've been shocked by who stays. And so the people you thought were against you can sometimes be more for you. Sometimes the people you thought would never disappoint you can be the ones that disappoint you. And that's just the way that it is. Your first impressions can often be inaccurate — or at minimum can be inadequate.

And what we do to people, I think we can also have a tendency to do with God. And specifically, as you think about the first century in the life of Jesus, people made inaccurate assessments about the person of Jesus of Nazareth when he walked the earth. They had incomplete judgments of who Jesus was.

Set the table

And we've seen over the last couple of weeks how Jesus would often say things and do things that took people by surprise. The way that Jesus lived was constantly shocking people left and right — because he would say things that no one else would say. He would do things that no one else would do. He would go places that no one else would go and make claims that no one else would claim.

And over the last four weeks or so we've been in Matthew 8 and 9. And in Matthew 8 and 9, Matthew really zeros in on that. After Jesus gives this teaching called the Sermon on the Mount, he does these bewildering

things — like touching a leper who was unclean and then cleansing him with just a touch. And then he commends a Roman centurion who, for Jewish people, was the enemy — like the occupying army. And yet he commends this Gentile pagan for his amazing faith. And then Jesus heals someone with just a word. And then he touches Simon Peter's mother-in-law and she is immediately cured of her fever. And then they bring all the sick people in Capernaum and he just heals every single sick person, crazy person, demented person overnight — just like that. And constantly people are wrestling with this question: What kind of man is this? And that's the question of our series: **What man is this?**

Because he wasn't just doing things no one else would do. He was able to control the weather. No one else could do that except God alone. He was able to cast out not just one demon or two demons, but a horde of demons — thousands — and they went into these pigs and went off a cliff. And so he's demonstrated authority over evil. He's demonstrated authority over sickness. He's demonstrated authority over disease. He's demonstrated authority over nature. And people are trying to figure out: how can a man possess this kind of authority?

And what we see in our text today is Jesus ups the ante one more time. And not only does he have authority over nature and sin and sickness and disease and Satan and demons and evil — he even has authority to forgive people of their sins. And it is this surprising thing, when Jesus does it, that sends people over the edge and causes them to accuse him of blasphemy — namely, claiming to have the things that God alone should have, or claiming the authority that God alone possesses. And we're going to see that in our text. And that Jesus does that, I think, is intentional — because he's trying to show us something that people weren't willing to see.

Reading the text

So let's pick it up starting in chapter 9, verse 1. Jesus, remember, had just cast out some demons from this guy in the region of the Gadarenes. They asked Jesus to leave. And so in verse 1 he got into the boat. He crossed over the Sea of Galilee and then he came back to his own town. That wasn't Nazareth. That was Capernaum. That was where Simon Peter lived and where Jesus did most of his home base of ministry.

Just then, some men brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Have courage, son. Your sins are forgiven." And at this, some of the scribes said to themselves, "He's blaspheming." Perceiving their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts? For which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — then he told the paralytic, "Get up, take your stretcher and go home." And so he got up and he went home. And when the crowd saw this, they were awestruck. Some translations will say they were very afraid. And they gave glory to God who had given such authority to men.

You may underline this last phrase — "given such authority to men" — because that's unique to Matthew. As is a lot of things in chapters 8 and 9 of Matthew, he tells these stories that are present in other Gospels. He tells them slightly differently for a very specific purpose.

So Jesus is back home in Capernaum. If you remember the last time he was in Capernaum, he healed every sick person, crazy person, and demon-possessed person overnight. And so he had gained a reputation as someone who was incredible. And so when he gets back into town and people catch wind — Mark's Gospel and Luke's Gospel tell us that it was so crowded that these people who bring the paralytic could not even get into the door. And so they had to go up on the roof and then tear a hole in the roof and lower the paralytic man through the hole in the roof to get him in front of Jesus.

Matthew leaves all of that stuff out. He goes immediately from the guy being on the stretcher in front of Jesus to Jesus extending the forgiveness. And so just that alone — it's much more boring to tell. It's not the version you would tell the preschool kids back in the preschool wing. You would want all the other stuff in there so you could really play it up. But Matthew's purpose is not to teach preschool children all the neat things. Matthew's purpose is to persuade us of one big truth about Jesus: which is he has authority normal men don't possess. In other words, he's not just a man. He's not like other men. He's something more than a man. **Jesus is a man. And yet he's much, much more than a man.**

And Matthew is going to try to show us that at least three different ways in the text — or in your notes. I'm going to put them under three banners. He's more than a man because of what he sees. He's more than a man because of what he says. And he's more than a man because of what he shows. What he sees, what he says, and what he shows. And all of that Jesus is demonstrating: yes, he's the Son of Man. He is this prophesied Messiah figure — this king, this ruler, this person who will establish God's kingdom. But he's not just the Son of Man. He's also God. He's also God. And now we would say God the Son — because Christians have this developed theology called the Trinity where we believe God is one God and three persons: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

And every Christian I know is a super expert on the Trinity. They've got it down just like that. They never commit heresies. They never get confused. And of course I'm joking. I know like a ton of us are probably heretics accidentally. We're accidental heretics when it comes to the Trinity. It's a very confusing thing. And some people struggle to comprehend it. And if you think you struggle, just imagine being a first-century Jew committed to monotheism. The Lord our God, the Lord is one. There is no other. He is spirit. He's not flesh. And then seeing Jesus make these claims that suggest not only does he come from God, come from heaven, but that he possesses the very attributes of God himself. And so this is part of the reason why these committed monotheistic Jews became followers of Jesus and worshiped him as God. It was a passage like this. It was an experience like this where Jesus demonstrates authority that does not typically belong to men.

What he sees

And so the first thing that you see is what Jesus sees that no one else saw. Jesus sees it and calls it out. And in the text, the two things that Jesus sees that other people don't is the faith of the men bringing the guy on the stretcher and the sin of the guy beneath the stretcher.

The guy's a paralytic, which means he can't move his arms and legs. He's unable to do any of those things. Maybe we don't even know if he could talk. These friends are carrying him on some kind of a mat, some kind of a stretcher. And as Mark and Luke show, they lower him down through the ceiling. And so you put yourself in that scene. Everyone is surrounding Jesus. They're wanting what he has to give — his teaching and whatever. And this man comes down through the ceiling. Everyone's focused on the stretcher. Everyone's focused on the fact that this man cannot walk. None of them are thinking he needs to have his sins forgiven — other than the sin of rudely interrupting what was going on. And yet Jesus doesn't point out the stretcher. He doesn't say, "I heal you in Jesus' name." Well, he probably wouldn't say that. "I heal you. Get up and walk." He says, "Your sins are forgiven."

So Jesus sees something that no one else can see. He also sees the faith of the men who bring the man — as well as, I think, the faith of the man himself. None of the men say anything. None of them ask for a healing. None of them do any statements at all. It just goes straight from his getting into the room to Jesus saying, "You are forgiven."

And so the first thing that I want you to notice about why Jesus is divine is because Jesus can see the things that hide beneath the surface. And in your life and in my life, that's one of the reasons that you shouldn't just think of Jesus as a good teacher, but as God in the flesh — because he can see things no one else can see. He sees the things in your life that are hidden beneath the surface. And in the case of this man, what he saw was the sin beneath the stretcher that the man was wrestling with.

I don't really know why the man was a paralytic. I'm sure that for many people in the room, they would have assumed that it was because of his sin. Jesus does not say, "Your sins are forgiven," and that the reason you're in the stretcher is because of your sins. It very well may have been that he was a paralytic for some other reason — not because of some personal sin, but some sin committed against him. Whatever the reasons were for his paralysis, the man doesn't bring it up and Jesus doesn't bring it up. What Jesus addresses is obviously what the man was wrestling with, which was some kind of sin or shame in his life that he could not unburden. And the tenderness with which Jesus speaks the words — how he says, "Have courage, son. Your sins are forgiven" — leads me to think that this man was battling shame. He was battling this "I am undeserving." And maybe that's the reason that I'm stuck in this state — just like many other people in that room would have imagined that the reason your life is so bad is because you deserve it. And Jesus sees that man in that condition and, before even addressing his stretcher, he addresses his sin.

And I think what's so instructive about that, as we think about our relationship with Jesus and how we think about Jesus as both God and man, is we can often have a tendency to bring into the presence of God the reality of our stretcher instead of the reality of our sin. And again, as a pastor, this is something I see a lot when people are sinned against or when people are suffering because of being victimized by whatever. There can be a tendency to downplay the sin that's beneath the surface. And there's a lot of finger-pointing and there's a lot of judgment and there's a lot of "I'm in this place because of X, Y, or Z." And there's not a lot of inclination to examine their own condition. And what's so fascinating about Jesus is he doesn't start with the stretcher — because the thing that he knows which is most important is the sinner beneath the stretcher. Every person who's in suffering — whether it's self-inflicted or not — every sufferer is also a sinner, and those sins are in need of being addressed. And so instead of our tendency to come into the presence of God and focus mostly on the suffering, I think Jesus is inviting us in this moment to allow him to address the sin beneath the stretcher.

And notice he does it with a tenderness and a gentleness that is unique. He doesn't condemn him. He doesn't say, "Serves you right. You're in this place because of your sin." He says, "Have courage, son." Maybe words he hadn't heard in a very long time. Maybe his own parents had abandoned him because of his helpless condition. It's a word that you would speak to young men. So we don't know how old this guy is. Maybe he's a teenager. Maybe he's twenty. We don't know for sure. But he was young and he was insecure. And he was battling the shame of his sin in his heart. And Jesus says, "I see you. I don't condemn you. Your sins are forgiven." And that's what he would say to anyone who would come into his presence with the kind of faith of this paralytic.

But he doesn't just see the sin beneath the stretcher. He also sees the secrets of the scribes. You notice it says in verse 3 that the scribes hear Jesus give this guy forgiveness and then they think to themselves, "He's blaspheming." Some of the scribes said to themselves, "He's blaspheming." Some translations make it sound like the scribes are talking among themselves. But the Greek literally means talking inside of themselves. And so they are thinking secret thoughts — and Jesus still addresses them. He says, perceiving their thoughts, "Why are you thinking such evil in your hearts?" And so not only does Jesus see the sin beneath the guy's suffering, he also sees the unbelief and the skepticism in the heart of the scribes. And their skepticism was not well warranted. It was certainly incorrect because they were misreading who Jesus was. Their unbelief was motivated by what he calls evil.

And the same thing is true in your life and in my life. Not only does Jesus see the sin beneath our suffering, he can also see the secrets that you kind of try to keep from everyone else — especially when those secrets are at the source of your unbelief. You read something in the Scriptures, you know that it applies, and yet you reject it. You suppress it. "This doesn't have anything to do with me." But you never really broadcast that. You never bring it out into the open. You kind of almost silently deceive people into the reasons why you're not a Christian — or maybe you are a Christian, but the reasons why you're not obedient, or the reasons why you're not fully on board with Team Jesus. And the reality is that Jesus sees all of that beneath the surface. The things that you try to hide from everyone else — he can see inside your heart.

And so since he can see those things, what Matthew I think would have us to see is: we should just stop hiding that and bring it out into the open. Bring into the open the sin beneath your suffering and bring into the open the secrets that you're kind of holding to your vest — the reasons why you're struggling with following Jesus, the reasons why maybe you're not just a victim, the reasons why, yes, your suffering may be a tragedy and it was something that you didn't deserve, but there's still a reality in your heart that even though they should not have done that to you, nor should you have such resentment in your heart, nor should you have this own kind of sin that's welling up within you that's maybe being dismissed and justified because of the resentment in your pointing the finger. Both of them Jesus sees. And in both cases what Jesus wants is to deal not just with the suffering but the sin that drives all of it. And so he sees what no one else can see. **So since he sees — just stop hiding.** Stop hiding. Present it before the Lord and let what he wants to say become what is submitted to in your life — which is where Matthew goes next.

What he says

It's not just what he sees. It's also what he says. And he says, "You're forgiven, son. Have courage. Your sins are forgiven." And at this the scribes said, "He's blaspheming." Perceiving their thoughts, Jesus says, "Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts? For which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?" And so Jesus is not just God because of what he sees. Jesus is also God because of what he says.

These scribes accuse Jesus of blasphemy. If you don't know what that word means, it just means to take credit for God. And so God, being God, has certain prerogatives. He has certain attention that is reserved uniquely for him. And when you try to edge in on the glory that God deserves, or when you try to kind of capture for yourself the authority that God alone possesses, then that's called blaspheming. You're taking what belongs to God.

And they're not really completely wrong in their accusation. If Jesus was not more than just a man — if he was not truly possessing this kind of authority — then he is blaspheming by professing to forgive this guy of sin. And I think we all know that intuitively if you think about it for just a minute, because we all intuitively recognize: not just anybody can forgive people of sin. Like if some stranger went up to you and smacked you in the face and then I watched the whole thing go down and I say to the guy, "Hey, it's cool. You're forgiven, right? He's forgiven." You'd be like, "No, he is not forgiven. And nor are you, you idiot. You can't forgive. You can't forgive him. I can. Only I can forgive him because he slapped me in the face." It would be crazy for me to say something like that — because the person who has the right to forgive is the one who was offended.

And that's just common sense, but it's also Jewish theology in the Old Testament. The way that they understood sin in the Old Testament is that the person who's always most offended is God himself. That when we sin against each other, yes, we sin against the other person. But even in sinning against the person, we're sinning against God — because that person is created in God's image. And so when you sin against someone created in God's image, you're sinning against him. That's why the famous confession of David in Psalm 51 — David makes this odd statement: "Against you, God — against you and you only have

I sinned." And you read that and you go, "Well, what about Bathsheba? She was pretty jacked up because of what you did. What about Uriah? He's pretty much dead. Not nothing pretty much about it — he's dead. Dead. Does he not get an apology?" Of course he does. David is not saying, "I didn't sin against Uriah." He's not saying, "I didn't sin against Bathsheba." He's saying that my sin at root is first and foremost against the Lord. And because sin is always first and foremost against the Lord, **God alone has the right to forgive it.** Now, you can forgive people when they sin against you, but God is the one who really possesses the ultimate reins. God is the only one who can forgive people in that way.

And so when Jesus claims to have that authority, they say, "You're blaspheming. You're acting like you're God. You ain't God. There's only one God and you're not him." And so Jesus is making claims that imply a sovereign status. They imply a status of divine authority. How he justifies it is what is so fascinating. He says in verse 6, "So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — watch this. That phrase, Son of Man — we've seen it before. The last time we saw it was in chapter 8 with these would-be disciples. And so Jesus has these two guys. They say, "I want to follow you, Jesus." And the first guy says, "I'll follow you wherever you go." And Jesus pushes back and says to that man, "Foxes have holes. Birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

And we said then that this phrase, Son of Man, is not Jesus just saying, "Hey, I'm just a normal dude." This is Jesus making an invocation of a certain title — an Old Testament title that applied to the Messiah. The Messiah was a king. He was God's anointed king who was going to come and establish God's kingdom. And everybody knew it and everybody was waiting for it. That's why in the first century there were many so-called messiahs who were claiming to be that deliverer. So Jesus is doing that. He's saying, "I'm the Son of Man." But he's messing with their heads a little bit by saying — and he doesn't have a place to lay his head. It'd be like saying the President of the United States has no place to lay his head. Well, of course he does. He's in the White House. He has the best place to lay his head. And Jesus is saying, "You think that — because you don't. The Son of Man, the Messiah, has not come for what you think he's come to do. He's more than the very narrow thing that you are forcing him to fit. The Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

And now he's also saying: not only do I not have a place to lay my head, but I also have the authority to forgive sins. And so he's busting their paradigm two different ways. **The Son of Man is both less impressive than you thought that he would be, but he's also more authoritative than you thought he would be.**

Because if you look at Daniel chapter 7 — if you go to the next slide — even in Daniel 7, the description of the Son of Man in no way has authority to forgive people of their sins. He has dominion, and a kingdom of every people, every nation, every language will serve him. His dominion is everlasting. He'll have an everlasting dominion that will not pass away. But nowhere in Daniel 7 does it say to forgive people of sin. And so what Jesus is doing is he is filling in those gaps and he is broadening their understanding of what it means for him to be the Messiah. As the Messiah, on the one hand, he's going to be resisted, rejected, beaten, tortured, crucified on a Roman cross. And yet at the same time, he has authority — all authority in heaven and on earth. Not just over wind and waves and sickness and disease and evil, but even over your sin and my sin — the authority to forgive. And it's actually because he is both of those things. He is both the Son of Man and the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. It's actually because he suffers that God gives him the authority above every name. It's because Jesus is obedient to die that he inherits his kingdom of every tribe, tongue, and nation. It's actually through his redemptive purposes on the cross — through his life of mission that ultimately terminated with death — that God gives him this Son-of-Man-like dominion. And Jesus is trying to help these people connect those dots.

And so on the one hand Jesus says things that imply a sovereign status and his authority scales to include even your sin, your sin, their sin, my sin, all sin — which means Jesus is God and has that God-like

authority. But that authority — he was not going to come into possession of that authority the way that they imagined, through political violence and force. He was going to come into possession of that authority because of the unique nature he had as the Son of God and his unique mission to die for sinners.

Now the people who are listening to Jesus say these things — they do not have categories for all of that. And so Jesus is going to basically help them connect the dots. And so he raises this question: which is easier to say? Which is easier to say: "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? If you go to the next slide — the way he frames the test is: you accuse me of being a blasphemer because you think I'm not God. But if I can tell this guy to get up, take up his mat, and go home, that would demonstrate I'm more than just a man, and you would be wrong. You accuse me of being wrong. But if I am who I say I am, I'm not wrong. You're wrong. You see what he's doing?

So which is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But so that you may know — in other words, to prove that what I'm saying is true — in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth — notice that phrase: he's already had the authority in heaven, but so that I can show you that down here I have the authority to forgive sins — he tells the paralytic, "Get up, take up your stretcher, and go home."

So what Jesus is doing is he's turning the tables on the scribes and he's giving the paralytic reason to trust in his word. He's telling the scribes: you accuse me of blasphemy, but if I am divine, you're actually the ones who are stubbornly refusing to believe what God is obviously trying to do in the world. And he sets all of that up with one simple test. If I can tell this guy, take your mat and walk, then it's actually you who deserve the judgment. And so Jesus is not just having authority that scales to cover your sin and my sin. He's also — because he has authority to forgive people of sin — he also has the authority to sentence people to judgment.

And that's what a lot of people don't want to accept about Jesus today. They like to think of him as a good moral teacher and interesting in historical ways. But he's not the Son of God. He doesn't have authority to judge me of my sin. And what he's showing these scribes is the exact opposite of that. **If I do have authority to forgive him of his sins, I also have authority to condemn you for your unbelief.** And because he has that kind of authority, what you and I should respond with is a spirit of submission. Not only should we stop hiding the things that we try to hide — we should also stop fighting Jesus on this authority that he has in our life.

And what so many of us are prone to do is to hide the sins that we don't want Jesus to see. Or those things that Jesus forgives us of — we have a tendency to fight with him on. And we'll say, "Jesus, I can't be fully forgiven. There's no way that I can be free from that bondage or shame." Jesus says to you, "Have courage, daughter. Have courage, son. You are forgiven." But because you're not willing to submit to that word, you keep carrying the chains of your brokenness. And you say, "If you only knew, Jesus, the things that I've done. If you only knew the kind of person that I am." And he would say, "Oh no, I know. I know more than you can even begin to understand. And I'm telling you: have courage. It's forgiven. You're free. Stop fighting me on the redemption that I'm bringing into your life. Stop fighting me on the forgiveness that you're in desperate need of receiving. Bring it before me. Lay it on the table. Confess it — not because I don't know. I do know. I need you to know that I know so that I can heal you. And submit to the word that I'm speaking over your life. Have courage, son, daughter. You're forgiven."

What he shows

But he doesn't just say it, does he? He sets up the test. If I can do this, then you're incorrect. He tells the guy, "Get up. Take up your mat and go home." Actually, he doesn't say, "Take up your mat." That's in Luke

and Mark. Matthew leaves it out for whatever reason. He says, "Get up. Go home." The guy gets up and he goes home. And then the people, when they see it, they were awestruck. Some translations will say they were gripped by great fear. And they gave glory to God who had given such authority to men.

And so Jesus demonstrates with his actions why he had the authority he claimed to possess. And in some ways this is obvious. This is true in every case. If you're going to make outlandish claims, you need to give incredible evidence. Jesus is making an incredible claim to possess divine authority. And now he's demonstrating that claim with this incredible miracle. The miracle in that way serves to substantiate the claim that Jesus is making. It gives substance to the claim that Jesus is making about himself. And that's true for really anybody who can get it done. If someone says, "You got a broken bike — I can totally fix that bike." They can say they can fix your bike, but until they fix your bike, you don't really need to believe them. But if he says he can fix your bike and then he fixes your bike better than any bike has ever been fixed, then you're like, "Okay — I can trust what this guy is saying." And Jesus is saying, "I can forgive your sins. Watch this." He heals the guy of his physical brokenness and says, "If I can do that, I can forgive his sins as well." It substantiates his claim. And in one way in the first century, this would have been game over.

But he doesn't stop there, does he? This points to something else. The miracle — every miracle of Jesus, but specifically this miracle — every miracle is a sign of something greater. That's why Jesus says in verse 6: this is so that — the purpose of this miracle is not just to heal the guy. I don't really have to heal the guy. The thing the guy needs is forgiveness. But let's say I heal the guy. I'm healing him for a reason. The reason I'm healing the guy is so that you will know. So that you will know I have authority on earth to forgive sins. Get up and walk. It's a sign for something else. What's it a sign of? It's a sign of his authority. It's a sign that he possesses authority that no other man has. Just like a signature points to the guy who signs it, this miracle is pointing to the fact that Jesus can save, that Jesus can heal, that Jesus can forgive, that Jesus can redeem. **Every miracle is a sign of something greater.**

And that is true in our lives, not just because of this miracle that's recorded in history, in the Bible, but it's actually in our life because of the reality of the resurrection. When Jesus dies on the cross — I think a lot of people don't understand this — the reason that Jesus had to die is because of the nature of sin. In the Old Testament, there's a passage that says without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness of sins. It's an interesting thing. A lot of people wonder: why is there so much sacrifice in the Old Testament? Why so much blood? Why are they like sprinkling bull blood and goat blood and dove blood on people? Isn't that kind of — I would say don't knock it till you try it. But no, I'm totally joking. Of course it's nasty. It's gross. It's horrific. That's the point. What God was trying to graphically instill in the hearts of his people in the Old Testament is the ugliness of sin — the deathly nature of sin — that God has a good design and when you transgress it, it doesn't just make your life more difficult, it brings death and brokenness. Everything is ruined.

And I think intuitively we all recognize: when someone transgresses the rule, you don't just get to forgive them — especially when that transgression is a serious offense. Like you can't just kill someone or rape someone and the judge say, "I can tell you're really sorry, so you're forgiven." No. Your transgression had implications. Cascading implications. You don't just get to let that person off because they're sorry. The wages of sin need just penalty. And if there's a good God, a good God would not let a guilty person off. And that's why the Bible carries this tension: that God — he's abounding in steadfast love and mercy, and yet he by no means clears the guilty. And so they're wrestling with this tension. How can God be just and holy and yet be merciful and loving? And the only way that he can be just and still justify sinners is if someone steps in and takes the penalty. But the only person sufficient to make that kind of a sacrifice isn't another human. And it's certainly not an animal. It's not the blood of bulls or goats that can take away human sin. And there's no human good enough or perfect enough to justify the price.

And so the reason that Jesus took on human flesh is for the express purpose that he could lay down his flesh. God had to take on mortality so that as a mortal he could receive the penalty of sin. What's this? The penalty of sin is death. You have to bleed. There has to be blood that is shed. Why? The life of a thing is in the blood. And so Jesus took on — God in heaven took on — flesh so that he might absorb the full penalty that your sins and my sins deserve. And so it's actually because Jesus is human that he has this authority to forgive people of sin — because only he has the right to do it. And so **because he's the Son of Man, he can shed his blood. But because he's God the Son, his sacrifice is sufficient.**

Jesus was not just another man. He's not just a good man. He was a sinless, perfect, spotless sacrifice who willingly laid down his life. And as man, he was tortured and beaten within an inch of his life. And he died by asphyxiation, executed by the Romans. But on the cross, he was not just receiving the physical punishment for sin — and not just sins that he did not commit. He was actually bearing the cosmic guilt and shame that your sins and my sins deserve against a holy God. And the wrath of that holy God was exercised on Jesus. He absorbed it into his own body so that it could be made right — so that it could be atoned for and you and I not have to receive it. And in that way, God is both just and justifier of those who believe.

Invitation

And so this morning, as you think about why Jesus is not just any man — it's not just because of what he sees. And it's not just because of what he says. It's because of what he's demonstrated and shown in his life, death, and resurrection. And because God has demonstrated his great love for you in sending his Son to live the life you and I could not live. And then that Son willingly laid down his life on a Roman cross. And three days later, God raised him from the dead. You and I don't have to wonder, guess, or hope, or wish, or dream. We can have confidence that Jesus is the Son of God. And because he's the Son of God, when he says you are forgiven, you can trust him and you can receive it and your life can be different as a result. And you don't have to go to heaven and hope and wish and pray, "I hope I did more good things than bad things." You can stand secure in his grace. You don't have to stand secure in what you've done. You don't have to stand secure in your striving and effort. You can stand secure in the grace of God demonstrated for you in the person of Jesus Christ. His blood was shed so that you and I could be forgiven. And if you would repent and believe in that gospel truth, then the Bible says anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

So if you've never had a time in your life where you've made that decision, this morning is an invitation for you to do that. If you've maybe been a Christian for many years, but you are secretly harboring rebellion in your hearts — you are like the — what people see and what's in here are not the same thing. You've been living as a hypocrite. And this morning, the invitation is for you to bring it out on the table. Confess to Jesus what he's known all along. And start living as if his words are powerful enough to be believed. And change the way that you're living so that it's fully submitted to what God has spoken.

And so I don't know what that looks like in your life, but we're going to take some time to respond. You can right there where you're seated respond to the Lord. I'm going to ask you to bow your heads and close your eyes and you can just, in an attitude of prayer, ask the Lord to speak to you. The Holy Spirit is certainly in this. And Paul said that the Spirit of God alone knows the mind of God. And so as the Holy Spirit brings to your mind those things in your life, would you just commit to having a spirit of humility and repentance? And if you would say, "I got Jesus wrong. I misjudged him. He's so much more than what I've given him credit to be" — repentance is just agreeing with God about the facts. It's changing your mind so that you agree with God about what's true. And if there's a way that that repentance needs to be visibly demonstrated today, you can indicate that in the connection card or you can come down here to the front. I'd be happy to pray with you or for you about whatever's going on in your life, or we can follow up with you this week as you fill out that connection card.

Father in heaven, we thank you for this passage. We thank you for the Gospel of Matthew and how he is so gifted at making the main thing the main thing. And Lord Jesus, we ask for your forgiveness where we have diminished the greatness of who you are and what you've done — and the tendency that we have to do that because of an effort to conceal our own brokenness. Would you give us eyes to see how wonderful you are, how great, how awesome, how holy you are — how you are sovereign, how you are God, how you are majestic and grand. And we can believe you to be all of those things and yet not be destroyed — because in your great love you laid down your life so that we could be reconciled to God. And so help us to see that gospel reality, not to shrink back from it, but to press deeply into it and that our lives would be transformed as a result. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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