

At this Table – Prayer and Healing

6/9/2024

Welcome to “At this Table” part 3. Our dream for the summer is to have the Summer of 1000 tables, where every follower of Jesus says “I will share my life with someone who does not know Jesus by sharing a table with them.” Some are taking that challenge once this summer, some once a month, and some every week. The idea is relational proximity over food. In our second part of the series, we added to that concept the idea of conversationally moving everybody one step to the right. Wherever they are in their journey, you don’t need to be the hero... just help them take one clear step toward Jesus.

Well today, we are going to build on that, so lets move forward. Open your Bible to Matthew 9 p. 680 And we will look at yet another passage that Jesus met people. While you are turning there, I have a theory to propose.

This is Matthew’s book. And Matthew happens to be a stickler for detail. He is also the foremost expert on... himself. And his journey with Jesus. In chapter 9:9, just one page earlier, Matthew is standing at the tax collector booth when Jesus says “follow me.” There must have been something magnetic about Jesus because he just closed up shop and went to follow Jesus.

And then he has a party. He invites all of his tax collector buddies, throws in a few prostitutes and then invites Jesus and his gang. And get this... Jesus comes! You see, Matthew instantly makes a table... he knows how this relational influence works. He wants his friends to meet Jesus so bad that he sets a context for them to be together... he did not need a sermon series, he just did it.

But peeking in over the wall is team way-too-religious, aka, the Pharisees. So the Pharisees see Jesus and ask his disciples “Hey, how come Mr. Messiah is eating and drinking with the swindlers and hookers?” Jesus hears them and says “It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but the sick. **I did not come to call the righteous to change... I have come to call the sinners to change.** Matthew 8:13b MEA”

So then, you have Jesus living that phrase out. Those who are sick, he literally heals. Those who are far from God, he invites to reconciliation. Those who are sinning, he calls to change. And it all happens in Matthew 8 and 9, where Jesus heals a leper, then heals Peter’s mother-in-law, then some demon possessed guys, then calms a storm, then a

paralyzed guy, then the Matthew Party, then he raises a girl from the dead and heals a woman bleeding for 12 years. He is on a roll.

Here is what I think Matthew is saying “I was there for this part. I saw these miracles. They all happened in Capernaum. You would follow him too if you saw this stuff. Seriously!” I saw sick people healed and God’s love on display.

They are in Jesus’ ministry headquarters, Capernaum... which is also Matthew’s hometown. You all know where Capernaum is, right... Oh, let me show you on the [MAP!](#)

More recorded miracles happened in Capernaum than any other city... including Jerusalem

Matthew 9:27 *As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”*

Messianic Language – Son of David, not Joseph... means “We believe in you!”

28 *When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”*

“Yes, Lord,” they replied.

29 *Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you”; **30** and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.” **31** But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.*

OK, lots to unpack here. Interestingly, he was outdoors when the two blind men were calling to him. Jesus waited until he had gone indoors to talk to them. Now, we don’t really know what the inside of the house looked like. But it was normal that a table was the centerpiece of Jewish homes, so you may have to use a little plausible imagination to connect this with the “At this Table” theme.

And Jesus asks a powerful question “Do you believe I can do this?” Why? Because there is something about belief, or faith, that unlocks God’s wonderworking power. God’s power is released by faith! And then when he touched their eyes, he said “According to your faith let it be done for you. Boom. Jesus heals.

I want you to note this: Jesus always had two prongs to his ministry – One: proclaiming that the kingdom of God is here. Two: Healing diseases and sicknesses and throwing out demons. Read the gospels with eyes for this and you’ll see – yup – it is just everywhere.

There is always word and works side by side. Good news and good deeds. Proclamation and Demonstration. It has to be both.

Now, there is something a bit mysterious about what Jesus says here. First, he does not do the miracle outdoors, then he tells people not to say anything. Jesus wants to bless these guys, but not make a big spectacle about it. Now, honestly, it is pretty unreasonable to expect two recovered blind guys ‘ah, don’t tell anyone that you can see now.’ Ya know, Uncle Josiah, how come you can tell what color that is now? Cousin Zeek, how come you stopped using your cane?

But here is the point. Jesus is trying to keep a lid on this movement. He doesn’t want the Israelites trying to take him as king and he doesn’t want the Romans to even know he exists! He is still a couple of years away from the crucifixion and he doesn’t want the movement to grow prematurely.

So, if that is what Jesus did, what does that mean for us? Well, I think it means that we appeal for the supernatural healing power of Jesus to intervene in our friends life. How do we do that?

I learned this the first time walking down fraternity row at the University of Illinois. I was a senior and pretty bold in my faith, but what I saw in front of the Sigma Phi Epsilon house stopped me in my tracks. It was a Saturday night and the parties were on tilt. You could smell the beer smell and people had to yell over the 80’s rock. I saw Debbie Meyer – one of our chapter’s all star women leaders, sitting on a curb next to another female student praying for her. I decided to awkwardly stand close by until Deb said “Amen” to see if they needed something. They didn’t, but I could see the other woman’s tear streaked makeup running down her face. I talked to Deb about it later.

Deb said “I was just walking down the street and she was obviously upset. So I just sat down and asked “you want to tell me about it?” And she opened up about a boy who brought her and was very rude and how her friends abandoned her and now she is all alone. So Deb just said “Well, I think that God sent me here to tell you that you are never alone and that he is always with you.” And after a few minutes, she said “Can I pray for you?” The other student said “Yes, Please” and Deb just prayed for her – with music blaring all around and drunk students sloshing up and down the streets.

Deb walked her home, got her number and made a new friend. And that new friend took one step to the right.

Application 1 – Pray for people and pray with people

Christians, I think, underestimate how much people are open to prayer. And I think this is more so than 20 years ago. According to Barna.com **94% of Americans** say they have prayed in the last 3 months. According to **Pew Research, 55%** say they pray every day. So you know people are open to it. But only 2% say they pray out loud.

Here is the point – most people are really open to YOU praying out loud. Why you? Because you are an (Drawl) evangelical Christian who goes to church on Sunday morning. Now that seems kinda funny to you. But to the rest of the world you are extra special. You have Jesus on the main line. The bat-phone straight to the throne room. And it is actually kinda true. Because you are one of God’s kids and he loves to have his kids come and ask.

I mean, imagine you have a five year old who is used to raiding the fridge. They bring their five year old buddy in the house unannounced and your kid asks “can we each have a gogurt?” Oh, for sure... you love that and love his generosity. But if the other kid who you barely know comes in and says “hey, can we each have a gogurt?” Well, totally cute, but a little weird. You may say yes, but it is just not in the flow of the norm. That is how your non-Christian friend probably feels about you praying on their behalf.

Worst case scenario is usually that people think your little prayer thing is quaint. Just a cute platitude. Like when someone says “I am sending vibes your way.” Like you aren’t mad about it, you just sense the good will. But a more likely scenario is that people sense a bit of God’s presence when you pray. They get a window into your relationship with God. They learn a little about how prayer works... and just maybe they have a real experience with God in that moment.

Lance and Marie were in their late 80s and they lived across the street and 4 down. Lance loved to sit in his lawn chair so we chatted a couple of times a week. I used all of my tools and even some tricks to get into spiritual conversations, but neither Lance or Marie ever bit.

It may be more ordinary moments. One of our ministers, Allison, seems to have a radar for this. She will pray in bite sized moments – like noticing that the HyVee employee is having a bad day, she might just pray one sentence out loud – no eyes closed or holding hands, just “Jesus, would you have mercy on Dan and comfort him in this tough time.”

Friends – prayer is not always appropriate. But as you have friends around your table, and as they share the ups and downs of their life, there will be open moments to pray. For healing, for opportunity, for provision. I always ask permission – Is it OK if I pray for that? And 99% chance, people will let you. So, your homework this week is NOT to pray for someone, but it IS to listen for the Holy Spirit... if he prompts you to pray with someone, then have the boldness to ask. And be ready if they say yes.

Application 2 – Trust God for Healing

You know, just like God is all about healing, so are we at CCC. And, we believe that God still heals today. He heals physical issues, emotional issues, psychological issues and spiritual issues. This idea of Jesus healing power is why we opened CityCare Counseling

about 10 years ago. With mental health issues at an all time high, followers of Jesus can help people find healing. So now, we have over 50 counselors in 6 locations doing just that.

But we believe that God still heals today as well... Physical stuff. We see it a lot. In fact, Wendell says he has seen more supernatural moves of God in the last 2 years than in the 20 years before that! Now, a couple of comments about prayer for healing.

- 1) God is not obligated to heal just because you ask. Sometimes he says no... and people stay sick or even die. Sometimes God uses just good ol doctors or dentist to do the work of healing through medicine or surgery. Sometimes, God just wants us to focus on nutrition and exercise and sunshin
- Physical Healing
 - Video Story – Name?
 - Dan – Crossfit Story
 - Ron Baker – Cancer of the tongue
 - Jean Baker - Fibromyalgia
 - Ethan – Severed spinal cord
 - Infertility – twins story
 - Video
 - Emotional and spiritual healing
 - Forgiveness in general
 - Forgiveness for a particular thing
 - Relationships that are broken
 - Damage done by a past person

Music begins

Caution – God does not have to heal because we ask. He is good and sometimes heals miraculously. Sometimes he allows infirmities to stay for a while. Sometimes for a lifetime. Sometimes he uses medicine or supplements or exercise or vitamins or counselors. These vocations are God-ordained means to bring the kingdom.

Pray with people

- What do you want Jesus to do for you?
- Anointing with oil

Matthew 10 – Compassion, like sheep without a shepherd

Come to the front for prayer. Come Prayer team. Come those with emotional, physical or spiritual needs for healing. Just come.