

John Wesley's Explanatory Notes - Matthew 9

by John Wesley

John Wesley's sermon on Matthew 9 emphasizes Jesus' authority to forgive sins, His compassion for sinners, and the urgent need for laborers in God's harvest.

Topics: "Evangelism", "Faith", "Mercy"

Description

John Wesley expounds on Matthew 9, illustrating Jesus' authority to forgive sins and heal the sick, emphasizing the faith of the paralytic and his friends. He highlights the contrast between the reactions of the scribes, who accused Jesus of blasphemy, and the people, who praised God for His miracles. Wesley also discusses Jesus' call to Matthew, a tax collector, and the significance of mercy over sacrifice, urging listeners to understand the importance of compassion in their faith. The sermon concludes with a call to recognize the urgency of the harvest and the need for laborers in God's work.

Transcript

IX. 1. His own city - Capernaum, Matthew 4:13; Mark 5:18; Luke 8:37.

Verse 2. Seeing their faith - Both that of the paralytic, and of them that brought him. Son - A title of tenderness and condescension. Mark 2:3; Luke 5:18.

Verse 3. This man blasphemeth - Attributing to himself a power (that of forgiving sins) which belongs to God only.

Verse 5. Which is easier - Do not both of them argue a Divine power? Therefore if I can heal his disease, I can forgive his sins: especially as his disease is the consequence of his sins. Therefore these must be taken away, if that is.

Verse 6. On earth - Even in my state of humiliation.

Verse 8. So what was to the scribes an occasion of blaspheming, was to the people an incitement to praise God.

Verse 9. He saw a man named Matthew - Modestly so called by himself. The other evangelists call him by his more honourable name, Levi. Sitting - In the very height of his business, at the receipt of custom - The custom house, or place where the customs were received. Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27.

Verse 10. As Jesus sat at table in the house - Of Matthew, who having invited many of his old companions, made him a feast, Mark 2:15; and that a great one, though he does not himself mention it. The publicans, or collectors of the taxes which the Jews paid the Romans, were infamous for their illegal exactions: Sinners - Open, notorious, sinners.

Verse 11. The Pharisees said to his disciples, Why eateth your Master? -Thus they commonly ask our Lord, Why do thy disciples this? And his disciples, Why doth your Master?

Verse 13. Go ye and learn - Ye that take upon you to teach others. I will have mercy and not sacrifice - That is, I will have mercy rather than sacrifice. I love acts of mercy better than sacrifice itself. Hosea 6:6.

Verse 14. Then - While he was at table. Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33.

Verse 15. The children of the bride chamber - The companions of the bridegroom. Mourn - Mourning and fasting usually go together. As if he had said, While I am with them, it is a festival time, a season of rejoicing, not mourning. But after I am gone, all my disciples likewise shall be in fastings often.

Verse 16. This is one reason,-It is not a proper time for them to fast. Another is, they are not ripe for it. New cloth - The words in the original properly signify cloth that hath not passed through the fuller's hands, and which is consequently much harsher than what has been washed and worn; and therefore yielding less than that, will tear away the edges to which it is sewed.

Verse 17. New - Fermenting wine will soon burst those bottles, the leather of which is almost worn out. The word properly means vessels made of goats' skins, wherein they formerly put wine, (and do in some countries to this day) to convey it from place to place. Put new wine into new bottles - Give harsh doctrines to such as have strength to receive them.

Verse 18. Just dead - He had left her at the point of death, Mark 5:23. Probably a messenger had now informed him she was dead. Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41.

Verse 20. Coming behind - Out of bashfulness and humility.

Verse 22. Take courage - Probably she was struck with fear, when he turned and looked upon her, Mark 5:33; Luke 8:47; lest she should have offended him, by touching his garment privately; and the more so, because she was unclean according to the law, Leviticus 15:25.

Verse 23. The minstrels - The musicians. The original word means flute players. Musical instruments were used by the Jews as well as the heathens, in their lamentations for the dead, to soothe the melancholy of surviving friends, by soft and solemn notes. And there were persons who made it their business to perform this, while others sung to their music. Flutes were used especially on the death of children; louder instruments on the death of grown persons.

Verse 24. Withdraw - There is no need of you now; for the maid is not dead - Her life is not at an end; but sleepeth - This is only a temporary suspension of sense and motion, which should rather be termed sleep than death.

Verse 25. The maid arose - Christ raised three dead persons to life; this child, the widow's son, and Lazarus: one newly departed, another on the bier, the third smelling in the grave: to show us that no degree of death is so desperate as to be past his help.

Verse 32. Luke 11:14.

Verse 33. Even in Israel - Where so many wonders have been seen.

Verse 36. Because they were faint - In soul rather than in body. As sheep having no shepherd - And yet they had many teachers; they had scribes in every city. But they had none who cared for their souls, and none that were able, if they had been willing, to have wrought any deliverance. They had no pastors after God's own heart.

Verse 37. The harvest truly is great - When Christ came into the world, it was properly the time of harvest; till then it was the seed time only. But the labourers are few - Those whom God sends; who are holy, and convert sinners. Of others there are many. Luke 10:2.

Verse 38. The Lord of the harvest - Whose peculiar work and office it is, and who alone is able to do it: that he would thrust forth -for it is an employ not pleasing to flesh and blood; so full of reproach, labour, danger, temptation of every kind, that nature may well be averse to it. Those who never felt this, never yet knew what it is to be labourers in Christ's harvest. He sends them forth, when he calls them by his Spirit, furnishes them with grace and gifts for the work, and makes a way for them to be employed therein.

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