

Many members. One body united in Christ.

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity

St. Matthew 9:1-8

11 October, Anno Domini 2026

Beloved in the Lord,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” These few words of our Lord are astounding and would be good for us to hear every day. They are filled with rich comfort for hearts that are heavy and weary from the strain of battle.

The Greek word we have translated as “Take heart” doesn’t really carry a promise of an immediate improvement in the situation, which is most often what we are hoping for. Rather it is meant to bolster and stir courage in the heart of someone who is facing danger or some kind of adverse condition. It is meant to help that person persevere in hardship rather than look for an end to it. It reminds them of the goal they are striving after, the prize for which they fight. Our Lord said the same thing to the disciples when He walked to them on the water as the wind and the waves threatened to capsize their boat and drown them. He similarly strengthened Paul’s heart during his persecution by the Jews, promising that Paul would also testify of Christ in Rome.

Jesus wanted to give the paralytic something that would strengthen him and help him to stand in the midst of all his afflictions, not just a temporary fix to one problem. I’m sure the paralyzed man and his friends desired for Jesus to restore the man’s ability to move. However, we should not be so quick to overlook that fact that Jesus said these words after He “saw their faith.” I would submit that these men were true sons of Abraham who wanted far more from Jesus than we typically assume and so often short-sightedly seek from Jesus ourselves. They wanted from the Lord’s Christ exactly what God had promised long ago, God’s glorious deeds and wonders of which their faithful fathers had taught them from the Scriptures. They wanted salvation. They wanted the gift of a conscience cleansed from its sin by the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus gave them ex-

actly what they had come look for - the promise and assurance and forgiveness, something that the healing of the man's body would do nothing to accomplish and might have even distracted them from.

Children of God, how often do you seek little more from Jesus than relief from the pains and discomforts and sufferings of this life? How often we want nothing more than for Jesus to give us more money or our side to win the next election or healing for our sickness because we are convinced that those things will make our life better? Worse yet, how often do we stand before Jesus under the vain assumption that we have something to give Him? "Aren't you proud of me Jesus? I prayed. I tithed. I volunteered. I came to church. I read the Bible." That is sheer blasphemy and mockery of God who gave His only-begotten Son into death to pay for all those wretchedly filthy rags we so often like to take pride in. If you comfort yourself with anything except the Blood of Jesus, then tremble in fear because you seek to stand before the judgment seat of God holding in your hands only those things that condemn you.

To have faith in Christ in the midst of this fallen world is not to be free of suffering or affliction or sorrow or fighting. It is to be an enemy of demons and unbelievers. As such, you will suffer. The devil will not sit by quietly as you are taken out of his kingdom. He will make you suffer as deeply and as painfully as he possibly can in order to fill you with despair and drag back under his tyranny. The unbelievers will not quietly tolerate you pointing out the demonic lies they believe and repeat, unmasking their idols, or calling evil all the things they love and and take pleasure in. They will mock and reject you. They will isolate you. They will threaten to expel you or fire you or put you in jail. They will exclude you socially. They will threaten your spot on the team if you don't skip church for a practice or a game.

There are only two ways that a Christian escapes this suffering. Either you must deny Christ, return to the devil's kingdom of death, and join the world in its destruction or your Heavenly Father delivers you from this valley of sorrow and takes you to the eternal rest of heaven. Barring those to things, like our Teacher and Master, we must take up our cross and suffer in this life.

But, take heart! Be of good courage! Your sins are forgiven! Jesus has suffered under and satisfied the one thing that we actually do need to fear - the wrath of God judgment of our sin. The Son of Man, God's Son, has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, including over sin and the devil and death and all your enemies. He says to you this day "Take heart! Be courageous! Though you suffer now, though your enemies attack you, though the way is painful and you must undergo sickness and sadness, poverty and persecution and weakness, none of these things can take away My forgiveness and My promises. Fight on. By my cross I have prepared a kingdom and a home for you and a crown of glory that will never fade away." Your enemies roar and spit and rage and seek to drown you in misery and despair. They would have you believe that they have power and authority over you and that it is useless and impossible to resist them. They lie. They have been crushed forever under the feet of your Brother and Savior, Jesus Christ. They would lure you away from Christ with offers of ease and pleasure and fun if you would just stop resisting. But all they have to give is death and destruction.

Christ has come to give you life and strength by giving you peace with God through the forgiveness of all your sin. He fills you with His life and His Spirit to strengthen you and bolster your courage as you with the whole Church Militant continue your march toward the victory hall of heaven and eternal feast of her triumphant King. He arms you with the all-powerful weapon of His divine Word which no enemy can withstand. He cleanses and binds up the wounds you have suffered at the enemy's hands, forgiving your sins and strengthening you with the food of His Body and Blood so that you may return to the battlefield with courage, weapons and armor at the ready, assured of victory.

The battle is fierce. The warfare is long. But it is not eternal. One glorious day you will be delivered from all the sorrows and suffering of this life. And to all His warriors who have served faithfully on the battlefield where He sent them, who counted even their suffering as a good gift from their heavenly Father who sends such things to test and strengthen His dear children, who see even their afflictions as God's gracious deliverance, and who, with the paralytic and his friends seek from Jesus the true and eternal healing of Jesus cross, Jesus says "Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven."

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In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.