**Small Groups Discussion**

“The Healer”

Matthew 9:1-8

**Opening Question:**

* What is the most painful physical illness that you have ever experienced? How was it eventually cured? (Leaders: most people will answer with something that is in the past; but be mindful of those who may still be suffering something in the present, and tread tenderly).

**Intro**: We’re in a sermon series that’s spanning the academic year, called “The Big Story.” We’ve been walking through the Bible, seeing the ways that it’s one big story of redemption. Between now and Easter we’re looking at some of the key elements of how Jesus went about the rescue that he came to accomplish. This week, we’re looking at Jesus as Healer: what he heals, why he heals, and how he heals.

**Read Matthew 9:1-8**

**What Jesus Heals:**

* Now read the first part (Luke 5:17-20) in the parallel passage in Luke. How does this complete the setting for you?
* What does Jesus see (in Matthew, v. 2a) that moves him to speak to the paralyzed man? Why is this observation noteworthy? (Or, what implications does it have for praying for healing?)
* The preceding chapter contains remarkable examples of Jesus bringing immediate physical healing. On the heels of such healing, what is surprising about Jesus’ first words to the paralyzed man in this story?
  + Hint: The obvious need of the man—as everyone present can see—is that he cannot walk, and thus he cannot work or earn an income.
* Why does Jesus address the man’s spiritual condition before his physical condition? What does Jesus see about our spiritual vs. physical needs that is hard for us to see? Why is it so hard for us to see this?
* Jesus emphasizes his “authority” to forgive sins. In the two prior passages, Matthew showed us Jesus’ authority over nature (calms a storm) and over the spiritual world (casts out a demon). What is Matthew trying to communicate here and what difference does this make to his readers?
* What difference does the vast range of Jesus’ authority make to you personally?
* In this week’s sermon, Andy mentioned that sometimes we suffer as a direct result of our own sin (or someone else’s sin), and at other time we suffer as an indirect result of sin—i.e., living in a world that is marred by the effects of sin. This distinction is very important to grasp, because it affects how we view God and how we approach suffering. If suffering is a direct result of sinful choices, then confession and repentance are a necessary step to healing. But if suffering is an indirect result of living in a sinful world, then insisting on confession and repentance before healing can lead to unnecessary heartache. Because of this important distinction, let’s wrestle with a few examples of suffering and see into which category they would fit. Are the following a direct result of sinful choices, or an indirect result of living in a fallen world?
  + A man who gets behind the wheel of a car while intoxicated and crashes, causing an injury which takes his ability to walk.
  + A child who is born with spina bifida, and is unable to walk from birth.
  + A woman is diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer and has a grim prognosis.
  + A tsunami contaminates the water supply of a major city and infects thousands of people.

**Why Jesus Heals:**

* In Romans 3:23, The Apostle Paul says, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” and in Romans 6:23 he reminds us, “The wages of sin (or the price of sin, the cost of sin) is death…” What does this tell you about why God heals?
* Andy also reminded us that throughout the Old Testament we see the word that describes God’s love, it’s a Hebrew word HESED. A loyal, endless love that is always as strong as it gets, not just an emotional love that waxes and wanes. What more does this tell you about ***why God heals***?
* Look how this story finishes, verse 8: “When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe, and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.” What further reason or reasons does this give you for why God heals?

**How Jesus heals**

* In v. 3, the religious leaders express outrage at Jesus. What is so outrageous about his remark, which provoked them to anger?
* In a Jewish system where the forgiveness of sin required laborious, bloody sacrifice, elaborate ritual, and qualified priests, what is implied by Jesus claiming authority to forgive sins? (Leaders: He will be the sacrifice, and his blood will pay the cost of sin).
* **Read** Isaiah 53:4-6. What does Isaiah’s prophecy tell us about how Jesus would heal?
  + Andy pointed out, “Jesus came not to cancel the cost [for our sins], but to pay it for us. The death sin results in, the rejection and the painful separation from God - the consequence of sin – Jesus chose to accept it on our behalf.” *What are the implications that Jesus came to pay our sin debt, not simply to cancel it?*
* What does the resurrection of Jesus show us about how God ultimately heals?
* In Sunday’s sermon, Andy used *The Walking Dead* (a TV show) to remind us that we are all “infected” with sin, both spiritually and physically. James, the brother of Jesus says, “**13**Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. **14**Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. **15**And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. **16**Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:13-16).
  + Share at your own level of comfort, but is there any sin or ailment about which you would like healing and prayer?

**Share concerns and pray for one another.**