

FORGIVENESS: THE POWER THAT DRAWS



"Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show by what death he was to die.

John 12:31-33

If there's any passage in scripture which needs to be received as light to search out the dark difficult passages it is this one. "I will draw all men (women)." "From my cross I will draw all." This does not mean that all the fish which are drawn into the net survive the final judgment. There will be a separation at the end.

But all will be drawn.

They are being drawn to him by a desperate need which is being taken care of on that cross. They may not all accept what is being offered on the cross, but they are going to see it and at least taste it, so that they will never again be able to say, "*But Lord, I never realized such a gift could be mine.*" "*Nobody ever told me.*" "*It was never made clear to me.*"-

And so the fishing chapter of Luke 5 proceeds with a sign which makes clear exactly what it is that draws the fish into the net.

On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And behold, men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they sought to bring him in and lay him be-fore Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this that speaks blas-phemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts?"

Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" --- he said to the man who was paralyzed -- "I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home." And immediately he rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."

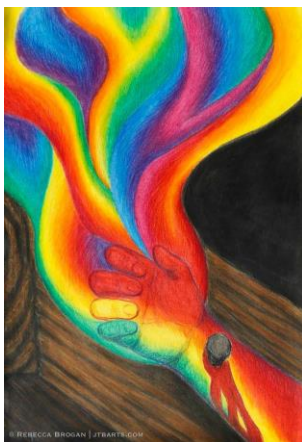
Luke 5:17:26

They bring a man for healing for his paralysis but cannot penetrate the crowd. What is it that has drawn such a crowd? What is it that causes these men to go to such lengths to get their friend in there? Jesus pulls back the veil and shows us. ***"Man, your sins are forgiven you."*** "But Lord, that's not what he came for. He came to be healed. Besides who can forgive sins but God alone?"

***"Why do you question in your hearts?
Which is easier to say? But that you may know that
the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins...
Rise, take up your bed and go home."***

Behind every step toward Jesus that anyone takes for whatever reason, whether it's for healing or for teaching Nicodemus asking questions or the woman at the well asking for living water...

... is the underlying thirst for the forgiveness of sins.



"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth

(on the cross) will draw all men (and women) to myself"

"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"

John 1:29

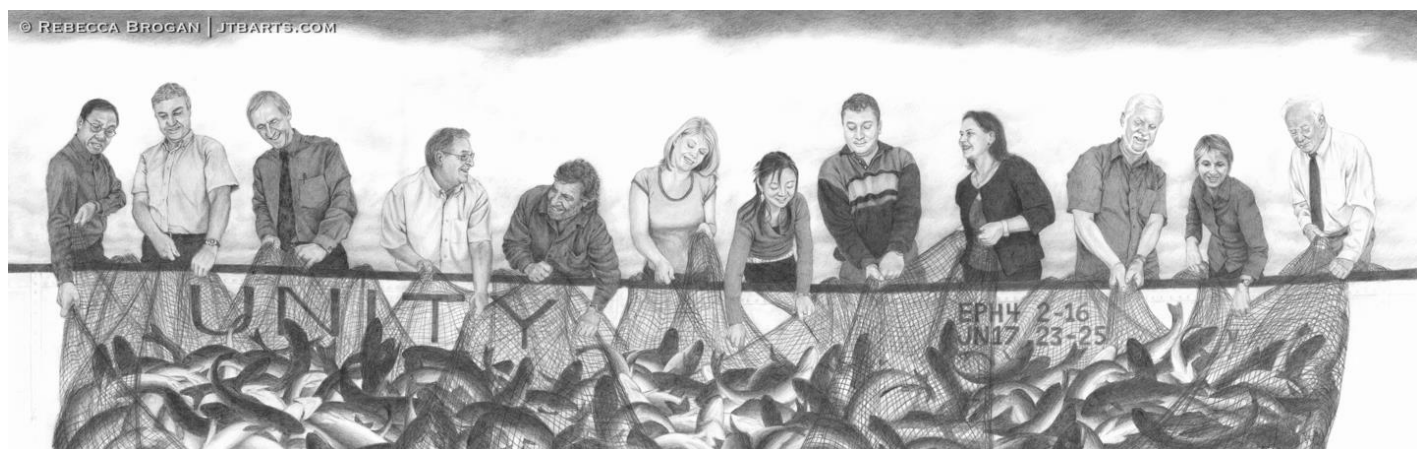
The fish are swimming into that net to be unburdened.

Human souls are coming to Jesus to be delivered of their guilt...to be forgiven. That's how we got to him. What else was it that drew us to Jesus of Nazareth but our need of forgiveness?

We found peace at his cross. And as long as our vision of Jesus' cross remains fresh we continue to have peace. We keep bringing our broken hearts and our needy lives to the Lamb, and his forgiveness makes us whole.

Moreover, we find that as long as the Spirit of Calvary's forgiveness remains on us ---

people are drawn to us



--- drawn by the forgiveness of God which is on us and in us and overflowing us.

But a strange thing often happens to people who have been to Calvary and tasted God's forgiveness. It happened to the believers in Galatia. It has happened, at one time or another, to most of us.

... Instead of seeing that our need of God's mercy never stops...even when we're walking in the Spirit, even when our lives have undergone marvelous changes... that we're still drawing our life from the Lamb that was slain.

... Instead of seeing this and living by faith in thanksgiving and praise to God for his kindness...

... We make the subtle switch into an attitude and a life where our confidence is in *our* insights, *our* victories, and *our* spiritual achievements.

... We look at how we've changed and what we've accomplished with considerable satisfaction.

... And we look with growing impatience at the sinners and the struggling saints around us who are still blowing it.

"Man", what's the matter with them?"

"God I thank thee that I'm not like that!"

And as soon as we start thinking along those lines the fish are no longer drawn to us. Nor do our minds enjoy the peace they once had.

If only we could see how desperately we need to get back to Calvary.

***"Two men went up into the temple to pray,
one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector..."***

Luke 18:10

They were both drawn to the temple by the same need.

There was a burden, a weight pressing down on their heart.

The Pharisee tried to ease this burden by *justifying himself*.

"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are."

The tax collector cried out to *have the burden lifted by the hands of God*.

"God, be merciful to me a sinner."

If only the Pharisee could have admitted that this burden pressing on him was a burden of guilt and that his despising of other men was only increasing it...and that only God could remove it.

You take a plane to Jamaica for a few days' vacation. But when you enter the airport terminal you know there's been a mistake: this isn't Jamaica! You're in a world stranger than a dream. Every soul in sight is walking, in a stooped position, bent under the weight of a huge burlap bag filled with something heavy. Old women, young children, well-dressed executives. As you enter the hotel lobby everyone stares at you from under their burdens. You mutter to your self, *"Don't stare at me you dummies. You're the fools, not me."*

The desk clerk has the weight on his back encased in velvet and em-bellished with sequins. The young woman singing in the lounge is bent over the microphone with her burden covered with shiny pink satin. After a night's sleep you gather up the courage to go out once more among these strange people with their everlasting burdens.

In the restaurant you come across a well-dressed young man who is stooped over like the rest, but his burden seems to be much smaller.

"Could you please explain to me why your burden is smaller than all the others I've seen?"

"I've been to a shrink who brought my burden down to a more convenient size. Don't you think it's an improvement? See how much better my clothes fit."

"And I suppose," you reply, "your burden is also much lighter?"

"Ah," he answers, "there's the rub. It still weighs exactly the same. It looks better but it weighs the same."

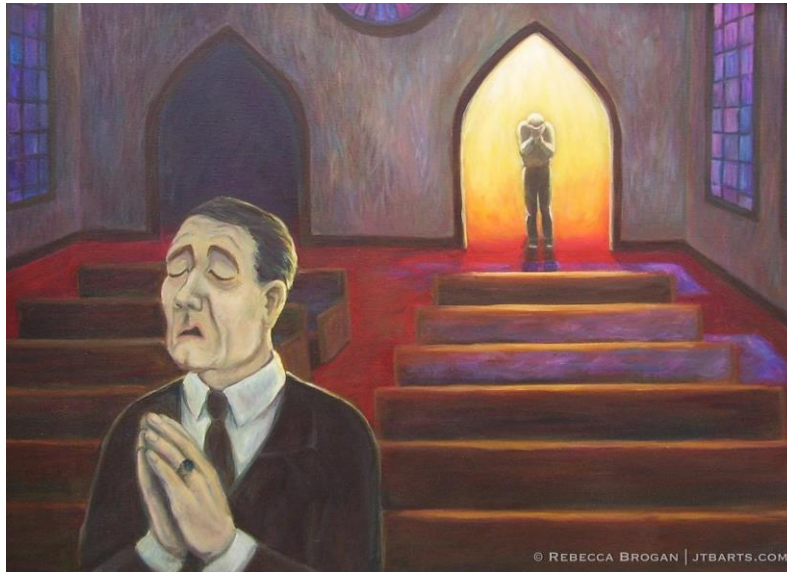
"But I don't understand," you cry. "Is it really necessary for you folks to carry these burdens? Why don't you simply dump those weights from your backs and set yourselves free?" The man looks you in the eye and answers,

"For the same reason that you, and all the people where you come from, carry exactly the same burden we do. That lady's burden is big, mine is small....yours is invisible, but they all weigh the same."

And suddenly you realize as you stand there talking to the man that you're as stooped over as he is! Just then your young friend points to a crowd that is coming together across the street in a little park, drawn to a man standing under a sign, "BURDENS LIFTED FREE OF CHARGE" *"Is it possible?"* shouts your friend and runs to join the crowd. Minutes later the man returns standing erect and free. *"Wonderful! It really works! Why don't you go have your burden lifted?".....*

"What burden?" you reply.

"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are...."



It can happen even to Christians who have been to the cross and have laid their burden down.

If they're not living in the forgiveness of God with thankful hearts and mercy toward those around them... they've taken their burden back, they've turned from the Spirit back to the flesh.

0 foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so many things in vain? --- if it really is in vain. Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?

Galatians 3:1-5

"Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified...."

When they put their faith in that their sins rolled away and the Spirit came. When they return to that they will revive.

We don't just go to the cross once.

We live at the cross.

We keep turning to it as long as we live.

But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14

People are drawn to the crucified Lamb because he takes away their burden. He forgives their sin.

If they are going to be drawn through us....

... We have to be living in that forgiveness ourselves,
constantly, day and night.



"God, be merciful to me, a sinner...."

"Lord, have mercy on me."

"Not my brother, nor my sister, but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer."

It's when we live at the cross ourselves that the burdened ones are drawn and forgiven and healed and changed.

God help us to put behind us today and everyday our flesh's endless lust to justify itself by passing judgment on every life that falls short of our standards.

God help us to turn to the cross right now and to keep turning to the cross and be justified, forgiven, healed, quickened by the Lamb so that when we go forth in his mercy and proclaim his forgiveness to those for whom he died they may be drawn by the forgiveness which rests on us and rules our hearts.

Prayer- Lord we come to your cross in such need of your forgiveness, again and again you forgive us, you heal us, you take our broken lives and make us whole. You have been so merciful to us, we have no right to our self-righteousness. Lord forgive us for this. Help us to live in the power of your forgiveness, never letting go of it as we touch each person in our lives.

Maranatha Mirror

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN