

Today, we have the story about Jesus as no ordinary man. It is the story from the section of time where Jesus' ministry really starts to take off. John the Baptist started up Jesus' ministry with his message of repentance—Repent and prepare the way for the Lord!

Jesus took the ministry baton from John the Baptist and started His ministry of forgiveness to forgive those who repented and give them life and peace. This is the same message God has for God's people since the first two humans, Adam and Eve, went against God and introduced sin into humanity. God has constantly been calling God's people back to Him by saying, "Return to me! I am gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, and relenting of evil" (Joel 2:13).

The God of the Old Testament spoke about forgiveness and instructed God's people on how to forgive and be forgiven. The book of Leviticus spells out how to return to God and make right with God. However, God's people did not understand it.

So, here's what God did. The Gospel of John, chapter 1—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In Him was life and peace (Malachi 2:5). The Word became flesh and made His dwelling. God tabernacled with us. We want to follow God's Word, but we don't know what that looks like even though God spoke about it. So, God said, "Okay, I'll become a man, and I'll live it out for you. So that you can see what it looks like to forgive and be forgiven. By doing so, you'll have life and peace."

And so, Jesus made all these extraordinary claims like our sins are forgiven. Jesus' ministry of forgiveness scandalized the Pharisees, the church leaders, because of the types of people He forgave and the fact that only God was authorized to forgive sins.

The churches in Jesus' time still practiced the old atonement system—making a sacrifice at the temple to be forgiven (Leviticus 4-5). People needed to bring a lamb or a goat to church as a penalty for their sins. If anyone couldn't afford it, they were to bring two doves or two young pigeons. Those sinners who could not

even afford those were doomed. There was no way for them to be forgiven. They were the poorest of the poor.

For those poorest of the poor, without receiving any sacrificial offering or bloodshedding, Jesus forgave them, such as the paralytic (Mark 2:5), the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), and the bent-over woman (Luke 13:10-13). He even forgave the criminal who was hung on the cross next to Him (Luke 23:43). Jesus forgave those “unforgivable” people. Jesus was no ordinary man.

Going further, Jesus did not only forgive sinners but ate with them (Luke 15:2, Luke 7:34). If I were to summarize Jesus' ministry, I would say it with one Hebrew word—סולחה (sulha). It's the peacemaking procedure without bloodshedding but with breaking bread. Being forgiven or having salvation in Jesus Christ is **"not"** the highlight of Jesus' ministry, even though those are very important. The outcome of Jesus' ministry God seeks is to give us life (Malachi 2:5).

Jesus came to show us how to have life and have that to its fullest. That's what John 10:10 says. Jesus' ministry is not just about how we get out of this sinful life or being forgiven. It's also about what we do with our forgiven life. What will you do with your forgiven life? Today, as a community of faith, we break bread together to have life and have it to its fullest. Amen.