

Heal Us Lord Jesus!

[Read Mark 2:1-12 NRSV]

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. ³Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. ⁵***When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."***

⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" —he said to the paralytic— ¹¹"I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." ¹²And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Opening Image

Today our Lenten Journey takes us to the village of Capernaum.

Capernaum is a small fishing village on the Sea of Galilee. It's the home of Andrew and Simon Peter.

I have recently visited what is left of the town of Capernaum. There is a modern church built on top of what is thought to be Simon Peter's house. Just a short distance away is the remains of a Jewish Synagogue. It was amazing to be there in person and realize that this is the place where Jesus made his home base for his ministry on earth!

Intro to Scripture

Jesus begins his ministry in Capernaum by teaching, casting out impure spirits, healing Simon Peter's mother in law (Mark 1:31), casting out demons (Mark 1:34), curing leprosy (Mark 1:42), and healing many with various diseases (Mark 1:34). Soon Jesus could no longer enter the town of Capernaum without a crowd forming.

When the people heard that Jesus was at the home of Simon Peter they gathered in such numbers that there was no room left not even outside the door. But this did not deter four determined and faithful men.

Four men are carrying a beloved companion who is paralyzed. They are literally carrying this man's physical burden and trying to place his illness before God.

Barriers

They are determined to see Jesus. But there are many barriers that confront them. One of the barriers is the disease itself. The paralysis prevents the man from physically being with Jesus. He needs the faith and help from others to seek healing.

Another barrier is the crowds. The house is so crowded with people that even the front door is blocked and overflowing. With no other obvious way to get to Jesus what will they do? How will they reach Jesus? Even though their friend is paralyzed and the front door is blocked, the four men are not discouraged. They have faith that God will provide another way.

God Provides Another Way

They go around the house and find the steps that lead up to the roof. They carry their companion up the stairs to the rooftop. Now the only barrier is the rooftop.

Palestinian Rooftop

Palestinian homes in the first century had roofs that were made of a thick layer of clay supported by mats of branches across wooden beams. The men began to dig through the roof. They attached ropes to the mat holding the paralyzed man. They then lowered the man down to Jesus.

Breaking Through

They made it! They broke through the barriers! They didn't let anything stop them from getting to Jesus. So now the man is lying on the floor of the house. Everyone is quiet. The crowd is waiting. The Pharisees are scowling. The four friends are looking down through the hole they just made. Everybody's holding their breath, waiting, anticipating, and hoping to see another dramatic healing miracle. And then Jesus does a very curious thing.

Sins are forgiven

He looks at the paralyzed man and says, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). Now this seems to be a strange reaction to the faith of the four men and the paralytic. The Paralytic did not ask for his sins to be forgiven.

He came to be physically healed. What does Jesus mean when he says your sins are forgiven?

Healing and Forgiveness

Jesus knows that healing and forgiveness are intertwined with each other. The world is a fallen world because of sin. Our problem today is that we view sin as simply the wrong decisions and wrong actions that individuals take. Sin is much larger than this. It is a power that infects society, pollutes nature, enslaves the human heart, and destroys life.

When we sin we are captivated and captured by larger forces that oppose the will of God. It is God's will that all nature exists in harmony. It is God's will that we live healthy and productive lives. Yet sin uses bodily illness and death to oppose God's will. Our world is not what God intended. God's creation did not start off with sin, disease, and death. Our disobedience to God brought disease and death.

So when Jesus tells the paralytic that his sins are forgiven, Jesus is attacking the root cause of all that ails our world. By forgiving sins, Jesus destroys the power of sin. By destroying the power of sin, Jesus makes healing possible.

Authority to forgive sins

But does Jesus really have the authority to forgive sins? That's exactly what the Pharisees were wondering that day. When they heard Jesus say,

"Your sins are forgiven," they were upset. Only God can forgive sins. Jesus is speaking blasphemy since he is claiming to do what only God can do.

That's why the next thing Jesus does is so important. First, he challenges the teachers of the Law to see the truth about who he is. He says, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'" (Mark 2:8-9)?

And then, to show that he does have authority to forgive sins, he looks at the paralytic, lying there on the floor. All eyes are on Jesus as he speaks, with boldness and confidence, and says, "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home" (Mark 2:11). And Mark tells us that "he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We have never seen anything like this" (Mark 2:12)!

So today's scripture is more than just healing. It *is* about healing, but it's also about forgiveness. Two things we all need. Two things that are intertwined with each other. Two things we see in the ministry of Jesus.

Holy Communion and Anointing with Oil

Today we're going to offer you two ways to experience the forgiveness and healing of Jesus. Through Holy Communion, we remember that Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice so that we could be forgiven. And through

healing prayer, we place ourselves before Jesus, just like the four friends placed the paralytic before Jesus that day in Capernaum.

Healing

Let me say a few words about healing. Every Wednesday night we come together as a congregation here in this sanctuary and pray for the healing of others.

There are various people in our community with different types of illnesses that come to our Oasis Service of Holy Communion and Healing. Some have cancer, some have paralysis, some are facing surgery, some are suffering from mental anguish, while others have spiritual doubts.

Since there are many illnesses there are also many types of healing. Illnesses can come in the form of physical pain and suffering, mental anguish, emotional sorrows, and spiritual pain. Thus healing can be for mind, body, and spirit.

Scripture strongly affirms ministries of healing. The New Testament word for healing is *sozo* which can mean salvation or wholeness. The Old and New Testaments are filled with men and women of God that perform many types of healing. We all know what it means to be physically healed but the most important healing is spiritual healing.

Spiritual Healing

Spiritual healing is God's work in giving persons proper life balance with God and others. Sin causes an imbalance in our relationship with God

and others. Spiritual healing involves wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships through confession, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

Healing is not magic. We know that all healing is of God and comes from God. Again there are many types of healing: spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental. Having faith in God is an integral part of healing. And sometimes faith means continuing to trust God even when it seems like your prayers have not been answered.

Invitation

In a few minutes we're going to invite you to come forward and receive the forgiveness of Jesus through Holy Communion. Then, if you would like, you're invited to go to one of our Stephen Ministers and they will anoint you with oil and pray for you to receive the healing of Jesus.

But before we do this, I'd like you to go back and think about those four friends in the story who broke through all the barriers to get to Jesus. How many of us have tried to reach for God only to let some barrier get in the way? There are many barriers or closed doors that get between us and God. Some barriers include but are not limited to: time, pride, doubt, fear, anger, or just tired of trying.

Your Barrier

Maybe *your* barrier that gets between you and God is time. Some of us are thinking, "God if I only had time to pray to you." "God if I only had time to read your word." "God if I only had time to go to church."

Maybe your barrier is pride. You don't want to take Communion and ask for forgiveness because you don't think you need it. Maybe your barrier is doubt. You don't want to ask for healing prayer, because you're not sure God will answer. Maybe your barrier is fear. Maybe it's anger. Maybe it's that you're just tired of trying.

Don't let these barriers get in your way. Don't get discouraged on your first try. Recognize the barriers in your life that keep you from spending time with God. God will open other doors. When God opens the door God is calling you to step through that open door.

Jesus is present

As United Methodists, we believe that Jesus is really present in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. That means Jesus is here, here now, here in a special way. This is the time to meet him. This is the time to receive forgiveness. This is the time to ask for healing. Don't let barriers get in your way. **In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.**

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