

LESSON TWO

HEALING AND FORGIVENESS

“Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”

MARK 2:9-10



REFLECTION

Most of us know someone who has been healed physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Perhaps that someone is the person we see in the mirror. What were the circumstances surrounding that person's healing? What was more amazing to you: the fact of the healing or the way it came about? Why?

SITUATION

As we saw in the last lesson, Jesus could hardly turn around without meeting people with needs. The audience pressed in and sometimes crowded out those with very real needs. The following event illustrates how far some friends were willing to go to get help for someone they loved. It also demonstrates that Jesus sees past the obvious needs to the deeper ones.

OBSERVATION

Read Mark 2:1–12 from the New International Version or the New King James Version.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

¹ A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because

of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, ¹¹ "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

NEW KING JAMES VERSION

¹ And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. ² Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. ³ Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

⁶ And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

⁸ But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you

reason about these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk?’ ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” ¹² Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

EXPLORATION

1. What risks did the men who carried the paralyzed man take in bringing him to Jesus?

2. In what ways did their act demonstrate their faith in Jesus?

3. Why were the scribes upset when Jesus forgave the paralyzed man’s sins?

4. Why did Jesus forgive the paralyzed man’s sins first before healing his body?

5. How did the people respond to the miracle? How is their response different from the way people respond to God’s work today?

6. In the light of this passage, what does it mean to be healed spiritually?

INSPIRATION

Whether [the man] was born paralyzed or became paralyzed—the end result was the same: total dependence on others. . . . When people looked at him, they didn’t see the man; they saw a body in need of a miracle. That’s not what Jesus saw, but that’s what the people saw. And that’s certainly what his friends saw. So they did what any of us would do for a friend. They tried to get him some help. . . .

By the time his friends arrived at the place, the house was full. People jammed the doorways. Kids sat in the windows. Others peeked over shoulders. How would this small band of friends ever attract Jesus’ attention? They had to make a choice. Do we go in or give up?

What would have happened had the friends given up? What if they had shrugged their shoulders and mumbled something about the crowd being big and dinner getting cold and turned and left? After all, they had done a good deed in coming this far. Who could fault them for turning back? You can only do so much for somebody. But these friends hadn’t done enough.

One said that he had an idea. The four huddled over the paralytic and listened to the plan to climb to the top of the house, cut through the roof, and lower their friend down with their sashes.

It was risky—they could fall. It was dangerous—he could fall. It was unorthodox—de-roofing is antisocial. It was intrusive—Jesus was busy. But it was their only chance to see Jesus. So they climbed to the roof.

Faith does these things. Faith does the unexpected. And faith gets God's attention . . .

Jesus was moved by the scene of faith. So he applauds—if not with his hands, at least with his heart. And not only does he applaud, he blesses. And we witness a divine love burst.

The friends want him to heal their friend. But Jesus won't settle for a simple healing of the body—he wants to heal the soul. He leapfrogs the physical and deals with the spiritual. To heal the body is temporal; to heal the soul is eternal . . . All of heaven must pause as another burst of love declares the only words that really matter: "Your sins are forgiven." (From *He Still Moves Stones* by Max Lucado.)

REACTION

7. In what ways can you identify with man who was paralyzed?

8. Think of a time when you experienced Christ's healing touch in your life. How did it affect you?

9. Many people need God's spiritual, emotional, or physical healing. In what ways can you share God's love and forgiveness with them?

10. Jesus' attitude and the Pharisees' attitude varied greatly. What does this story illustrate about attitudes that honor God?

11. The friends of the paralyzed man displayed great determination in their mission. Why do you think they were so determined to get the man to Jesus?

12. When has God exceeded your expectations and provided more than you expected?

LIFE LESSONS

When we look at the results of Christ's life and his mission in the world, we are overwhelmed by the central place that forgiveness takes. Like the paralyzed man, we come to God with many needs, but the deepest is the need for forgiveness—the ugly stains and deformities that sin leaves on our souls need healing most of all. How sad that people go a lifetime without having someone show them the kind of love these friends demonstrated for their friend. We need to experience Christ's forgiveness and then, if necessary, carry our friends to meet him too.

