

Mark 2:1-12 **Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man**

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ²They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴Since 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. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

⁶Now 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?”

⁸Immediately 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? ⁹Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? ¹⁰But 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.” ¹²He 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!”

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Picture inside: Healing of the Paralytic at Capernaum (one of a set of 12 scenes from The Life of Christ). Flemish, Leuven; Panel; Glass-Stained; circa 1525-30. Metropolitan Museum of Art / CC0

Daily Reflection From Pastor Mark



Monday
March 23, 2020

The Faithfulness Of Staying In

In my first year of Seminary, my New Testament professor said this: “Scripture is always a word on target.” Her words were like a sudden burst of enlightenment in that moment, and have *unnervingly* continued to be so to this day. Observe:

Mark 2:1-12 is a passage that I always use when I talk to church groups that come to volunteer at the Mission. The story speaks to the very heart of the work of Community Missions.

The most significant ways the story does this is that it describes how The Mission helps individuals and families become reconnected with the community after the experience of homelessness or mental illness. The staff and volunteers at The Mission *are exactly like the four friends who carry the Paralyzed Man to Jesus* (vs 3-4). The forgiveness and healing Jesus gives *could not happen without those friends taking collective action and working together*. The Paralyzed Man *would not* have been able to “pick up his mat and go home” but for his friends, *their* faith, and *how they used that faith collectively*.

That is what The Mission does—help people get home and back into community.

Do you remember what I said at the start, *scripture is always a word on target*? Well, today it dawned on me that there is a special message here for those who are currently staying in the shelter at Community Missions (or in any of our other programs for that matter).

Because of the Coronavirus, your search for a new home has been complicated and delayed. You suddenly find yourselves being asked to limit your movement (and so your progress), to help stop the spread of the Coronavirus *and the sickness it causes—a sickness so that is so very dangerous to the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions.*



Staying in, limiting our movement is frustrating, and kind of a bummer, but it is so important!

In fact it is so important that it turns out the story of Jesus healing the Paralytic Man *is a “word on target” for this very particular moment!*

Right now *all of us* are in the place of those four people in the story who carried the Paralytic Man on his mat to Jesus. But the physical action it points to is reversed!

They carried him out and through crowds so that he could be healed.

WE need to stay put—not be out and about—so we do not come in contact with this virus and ***help it spread to those who are most vulnerable.***

Staying in, (this restriction on all of us) IS the faithful effort needed right now to help keep the most vulnerable safe... to bring them healing by helping them avoid the virus in the first place.

Oh it sure is frustrating. And yes, it is a total bummer when all you want is to just find a new home for yourself, or get on with the regular routine that helps you manage your mental health. Nevertheless *staying in* is exactly what scripture is calling us to do today.

Mark 2: 3-5

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.”

Remember this too: you can be sure those four friends that carried the Paralytic Man were ***frustrated more than once*** in their journey! He was probably heavy. It was probably awkward carrying him on that mat. *Then* (in vs. 4) there was a crowd in the way! They probably were like:

“Now what? Guess we have to get him all the way up on the roof???” Oh man. Our arms are *tired!*”

Then after they get up to the roof, they had to make a hole in it and then, *finally*, they had to lower him down *without* dropping the poor guy! Yes, they were frustrated alright. But to live their faith and help the Paralytic Man, that is what they had to do.

Just like the Paralytic Man’s friends, we all have to act now, we have to live faithfully now!... by staying in.

So, people staying at the shelter, essential staff who are on an off rotation, people in CMI mental health or youth programs who do not have to be out for essential treatment, today is the time to act faithfully and with urgency... by *staying in* to prevent vulnerable people from becoming ill and dying... to give them *healing in advance*.

Scripture is always a word on target. We need to heed the lesson. My prayer is that all of us, no matter who we are or where we are, will live faithfully to protect the most vulnerable, not by going out to them, but instead by staying in.... No matter how frustrating it may be.

Pastor Mark