

Jesus Wow! Series Part 10

Jesus Forgives a Paralysed Man

Mark 2: 1-12

Pastor Andrew Neville 14/6/20

Sermon Summary

Many, perhaps most, of the stories surrounding the 3-year ministry of Jesus have a deeper meaning than a cursory reading indicates. While most versions entitle this passage, “Jesus heals a paralytic,” Pastor Andrew prefers the expression, “Jesus **forgives** a paralytic”, since the deeper understanding of the story is about what’s most important in the Kingdom of God.

The passage begins: “A few days later, Jesus entered again into Capernaum....” Capernaum was Jesus’ base during his preaching tour of Galilee. The moment He arrived home, people started gathering to see and hear Him. Jesus was popular. Not only were His words different from the Rabbis, His healing powers were miraculous. As Andrew said last week, the primary purpose of Jesus’ ministry was to preach the Kingdom of God – not to perform miraculous healings. Despite the large crowds that flocked to Jesus, rarely did they repent *en masse* and turn their lives around to **follow** Him. The people were very keen – they were **fans** of the man – but once the message of the Kingdom, with its sufferings and death, began to sink in, the crowds began to dwindle.

The Russian Leo Tolstoy rates among the great literary giants of all time. Even if you have not read it – it is a long read – *War and Peace* probably rates as his greatest work. He became a fan of the teachings of Jesus in his 40’s. In an understanding of the Sermon on the Mount, he became an ardent pacifist, then an anarchist, desiring the overthrow of society, replacing it with a system that Jesus advocated in His teachings.

However, despite his being a fan of Jesus, Tolstoy was not what we call today “born again”. Fellow writer and compatriot Maxim Gorky wrote of Tolstoy that he had no fire to love Jesus; he was a **fan** but **not a follower**. Tolstoy was echoing the mood of many of Jesus’ early fans. They loved his free meals and healings, but were not too keen on the suffering that had to be borne for the sake of the kingdom. Only those names of **followers** of Jesus are recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Revelation 18:20).

The story of the paralytic man and his healing is really about 5 men: the cripple and his 4 faithful friends. The hurdles these men overcome to get their friend laid at Jesus’ feet is a testimony to their faith and determination. Certainly, the roofs of buildings in ancient times were relatively easy to break through; nevertheless, there is an audacious element to the way these men went about their effort. It really is an example of faith overcoming obstacles. Faith is not easy to come by; it requires diligence.

When Jesus realized what was happening and how it happened, the first words He said to the man were, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Why did Jesus say these words when the patient came about his paralysed legs? Jesus saw a saving faith being worked out by these men. While physical healing is great – and overwhelming joy is the result of such physical healing – yet the greater healing is spiritual. The former is temporal and only lasts a lifetime; Forgiveness is for eternity. That is the message Jesus is trying to tell them – and us.

It is quite likely that many people who were physically healed by Jesus never had saving faith.

Mark 2:6-12 shifts to describing the cynical teachers of the Law among the audience. They called Jesus blasphemous for telling the man his sins were forgiven because only God could do that. They had no idea of the truly divine nature of Jesus. In some ways you can understand that thinking because nowhere in the Old Testament is there any prophecy that links Messiah to being very God. The whole nature of Jesus’ 3-year ministry was to prove his incarnation – that God and He were one in each. Verse 8 shows this ability working, when Jesus knew, in His heart, what they were thinking. Only God is capable of that.

Then Jesus heals the man by telling him to get up and walk. Before that, he asks the teachers which is the easier to say? Obviously to say to someone your sins are forgiven is easy because there are no visible signs of the result. But to tell a cripple to get up and walk – and he does so – the result is not only tangible, it’s also miraculous.

Today, we are out of lock-down. Have we given thanks? Are we here in church today as **followers** of Jesus – or just **fans**?

Discussion Questions

Read Mark 2:1-12.

1. Did the lockdown affect your spiritual condition more negatively or positively? How so?
2. Who in the story do you relate to the most: the crowd, the paralytic, the four friends, the teachers of the law, the homeowner? Why?
3. Do you think all 5 men in the story got saved? Explain why?
4. Can you think of creative and compelling ways that we in the church might bring those who are lost and hurting to Jesus today?
5. What was the paralytic’s greatest need? Do you find it hard to address this deeper level of need with those you might visit in hospital or prison (for example)?
6. What insights into Jesus’ character do you have from this passage?
7. What is the difference between being a fan and a follower of Jesus? Do fans often become followers? Explain your response.