

MARK 2:5-12

A PEOPLE HEALED

⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "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 the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?' ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" He said to the paralytic, 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!"

The connection of proclamation, teaching and demonstration continue in this story of Jesus and the paralytic. Like any good teacher, Jesus seizes on the situation presented and uses it to instruct his audience about the truth. In this case, he makes the connection between faith in him and forgiveness by using his unusual response to a request for healing to stimulate a discussion with the religious leaders after which his point is made clear through the demonstration of his authority. The physical healing becomes not an end in itself, but rather a sign of the greater reality (and greater need) of the healing of our relationship with God. As we have come to know by reading the "end" of the biblical story, it is also a prophetic act; an act pointing to the ultimate nexus of faith in Christ and forgiveness leading to reconciliation with God found at the cross.

A lesson to be learned from this episode is that the focus is not on the individual. We have a tendency to "miss the forest for the trees." Yes, the paralytic is healed, but except for the statement that his sins are forgiven, and the command to get up and go on, Jesus is dealing with a community. Note that in verse 5 we read, *When Jesus saw their faith.* Also, the ultimate response in verse 12 is that *This amazed everyone and they praised God....* All this also happened in the context of the community gathered around Jesus. We follow Jesus as a community and in a community. The Church is important as Jesus' chosen vehicle for the message of forgiveness. It is in the context of community that we need to make our requests to Jesus, and our motivation is to be what is best for the witnessing community and the greater community to which we witness.

Lord, as I live out my relationship with you, help me to remember that it is not all about me. Teach me to keep in balance the knowledge of your love for me and the reality that you have called to yourself a people, of which I am to be a part. Guide my focus off of me and on to you and my neighbor. Amen.