

Day 1: Mark 2:1-2

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So 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.

Capernaum is on the Sea of Galilee and was the village where Jesus stayed when he was not traveling. The house probably belonged to Peter's mother-in-law. The Synagogue where He taught, though in ruins, is not far from the house. His fame preceded Him before going to Capernaum. Jesus had been teaching and healing in the region of the Galilee.

Question: How would people at that time know Jesus was in town?

Challenge: Do a little research to see how big the house might have been.

Scripture: Mark 2

Day 2: Mark 2:3-4

Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And 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.

The crowd is a barrier to the man's healing just as his illness is a barrier to the man's full participation in the life of the community. In Jesus' time having physical access to places was not considered, by Jesus, as the problem with being paralyzed. His main concern has to do with the lame man not allowed to be a full member of the community. He would not have been allowed to be in the priesthood. In the Qumran community he would be excluded, period. In our time we have passed laws to lessen the exclusion of persons who are crippled to buildings and other public services. Jesus knows that there are some barriers that cannot be eliminated, however those erected to benefit the few are to be taken down. The issue of accessibility is not just one of a physical nature but also of attitude.

Question: Why were there four men carrying him?

Challenge: How do you feel about visiting folks in the hospital? Does it do any good for the patient? Why or why not?

Scripture: Mark 3

Day 3: Mark 2:5-7

When Jesus saw their faith; he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 'why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'

It is the faith of those helping the paralyzed man that is affirmed by Jesus. We ought not to think that the paralyzed man did not have faith, but that for some reason he could not use it, even for his own healing. When Jesus questioned the disciples for having little faith during the storm at sea he was not saying that had no faith, but that they were not using it. Their barrier to faith was the worry about being drowned. The crippled man believed that because of some sin he was now paralyzed and therefore could not be restored fully to the community. Jesus forgives his sins not because sinning caused the crippling but to show that the real barrier in life is our separation from God. Jesus restores the cripple to full relationship to the community and with God.

Question: Jesus does heal the man but why do you think he said your sins are forgiven first?

Challenge: What should be first - sins forgiven or physical healing?

Scripture: Mark 4

Day 4: Mark 2:8

At 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?'

When Jesus uses the word "heart" he means the whole person - the mind, spirit and emotions. Jesus can tell by the way they are looking at each other and by the expression of superiority on their faces that they think He did something wrong. He can also tell that they were about to begin a discussion on things that had nothing to do with the man's illness. One of Jesus' complaints about the religious leaders was their inability to see God working outside of their narrow parameters. They refused to see God in Jesus and in His actions. This inability (or unwillingness) to see who Jesus is led them eventually to call for His crucifixion.

Question: Why do you think they were unwilling to see Jesus for who He was?

Challenge: What verse comes to mind when you think about the definition of the term "heart" above?

Scripture: John 14:1-24

Day 5: Mark 2:9

Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven', or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'?"

Everybody present at this event knew that Jesus could heal for they have seen Him do it for a number of people. Jesus does not want the crowd or the leaders to be amazed at His healing ability but to see that the Kingdom of God is present. Jesus does all His great works so that we might understand that He is the Son of God and with Him is the salvation we have been looking for.

Question: Which is easier - to forgive someone or help them to get physical help?

Challenge: If the crippled man needed to be forgiven what do you think his sin or sins might have been?

Scripture: Acts 3:1-10

Day 6: Mark 2:10-12

But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins—he said to the paralytic— 'I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.' And 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!'

Jesus gives the religious leaders the opportunity to witness the kingdom in their presence by asking the man to walk. It is sad that the healing diverted people's attention from the importance of the event. We today must guard against being so excited about the dramatic events of God's presence that we miss what they mean. The healing was a sign - a sign that points to something greater than itself. Don't get diverted by the sign so that you miss what it is pointing to.

Question: Why does healing the man show that Jesus had the power to forgive sin?

Challenge: This week look about you and try to see evidence of God's kingdom.

Scripture: Luke 5:16-26, Matthew 9:1-11