

Text: Mark 2:1-12

Theme: Take Comfort in Jesus' Miracles

Date: February 6, 2022 (Epiphany 4C)

In the name of our Epiphany Savior, Jesus Christ, Dear Christian Friends,

The miracles of Jesus have fascinated many throughout the ages. In Jesus' day people would travel across the miles just to see him perform a miracle. Bible scholars today still marvel at the frequency and purpose behind the miracles of Jesus. How many miracles can you remember? Which one do you think was the greatest?

Jesus performed miracles of all types.

- You may recall the miracles of healing Jesus performed: the official's son (John 4:46), the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5), Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14), the blind, the deaf, and the mute (Matthew 9:27), and the ten lepers (Matthew 8:3).
- Jesus also performed miracles that provided for the physical needs of others. He fed thousands (Matthew 14:15,15:22). He changed water into wine (John 2:9). He calmed the storm (Matthew 8:23). He filled the nets of the disciples with large amounts of fish (Luke 5:6).
- Jesus even performed the miracle of raising the dead to life. He raised the daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9:18), he raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11), and he raised his dear friend Lazarus (John 11).
- There are also many other miracles concerning the person of Jesus himself: Conceived by the Holy Spirit; True God taking on human flesh and bones (we call that the miracle of the incarnation); his own resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven in a bodily form.

All of these miracles offered comfort to God's people. For some it was physical comfort, for others it was much more. Today as we study the Word of God may the Holy Spirit cause us too to **Take Comfort in the Purpose of Jesus' Miracles** as they 1) proclaim his power to help and as they 2) authenticate his authority to forgive sin.

1. Jesus' miracles proclaim his power to help

Miracle Watchers

Jesus had been performing miracles in and around the city of Capernaum. The news of this miracle-worker was gaining momentum throughout the region of northern Galilee. But Jesus downplayed the spectacularism of his miracles. In fact, we hear Jesus telling a man who has just been healed of leprosy, "*Don't tell anyone, but go show yourself to the priest.*" In an attempt to elude the entertainment seekers, Jesus often withdrew to a quiet place and prayed. In the midst of this growing popularity of Jesus' miracles, the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, and the Scribes, those entrusted to the copying of the Scriptures, were keeping their eyes on Jesus and those who were following him. They were suspicious of Jesus. He made them uncomfortable because his teachings often challenged their teachings and their reputation in the eyes of the people.

Faith In Action

On this particular day, Jesus was preaching and teaching in the city of Capernaum and a large crowd had gathered around the home where Jesus was. The size of the crowd made it impossible for one of the listeners to get close enough to Jesus because he was a paralytic. Since this man could not walk, his friends put faith into action when they lowered their paralytic friend through the roof of the house and set him right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said: **FRIEND, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN.**

Jesus Is Accused of Blasphemy

Never before had Jesus done something to enflame the Pharisees and Scribes like this statement: **YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN.** Throughout all this time the Scribes and Pharisees didn't know exactly what to make of Jesus. They knew he was a man with unusual power for he had healed the sick and raised the dead. That they could swallow, but when Jesus said: **YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN,** that was just too much. That was the so-called straw that broke the camel's back. In the eyes of the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus was only a mere man and nothing more. They denied his deity. They rejected the thought that he is God or that he should have the power that only belongs to God: namely, the power to forgive sins. And so, they thought to themselves that Jesus had committed the sin of blasphemy. The teachers of the law, thinking to themselves, asked: **WHY DOES THIS FELLOW TALK LIKE THAT? HE'S BLASPHEMING! WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS BUT GOD ALONE?** The sin of blasphemy is attributing divine powers to those to whom they don't belong. So, in the minds of the Pharisees, Jesus was assuming something that only belonged to God: the power to forgive sin.

Jesus Proves His Divinity

Jesus' response immediately proves that he is more than a mere man. Bear in mind that the Pharisees only thought to themselves that Jesus had committed the sin of blasphemy. They didn't actually speak it aloud. Yet, Jesus responds to their thoughts. In our text we read: **JESUS KNEW WHAT THEY WERE THINKING AND ASKED, "WHY ARE YOU THINKING THESE THINGS IN YOUR HEARTS?"** Jesus used his divine power to know exactly what it was that the Scribes and Pharisees were thinking.

Jesus' Power to Help in Time of Need

While Jesus used his divine power to know the minds of the Pharisees and call them to repentance, he also uses his divine power to know what we are thinking. Yes, it is true – Jesus knows when we are sinning in our thoughts and for that and every other sin, he calls us to repentance and greater faith. But he also knows when we need his power to help. Jesus knew exactly when and how that paralyzed man was going to find his way in front of him. And Jesus' power assured him: I TELL YOU, GET UP, TAKE YOUR MAT AND GO HOME. As with the paralyzed man, so also with us. Jesus knows our thoughts when we are hurting and feeling alone. He knows when we are in need. He knows when we or a loved one are struggling with health issues. He knows! He knows when the demands of being a parent are weighing us down. He knows when we're feeling the stress of making financial ends meet. He knows when the responsibilities of our jobs are putting a strain on our family, on our marriage, and on our physical well-being. Because Jesus is more than a mere man, he has the power to know and the power to help. Because Jesus is true God, he gives us this invitation, "*Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you (Psalm 50:15),*" and he also gives us this promise, "*All things are possible with God.*" (Mark 10:27).

Jesus' Power Overcomes Our Doubt

Yet, how often don't we find ourselves doubting Jesus' divine power as did the Pharisees? At times we doubt whether Jesus knows our needs or whether he has the power to help us. How often aren't we skeptical of his promises, especially when we don't see immediate results? Today our doubt is replaced by the comfort that Jesus offers through his miraculous power; Not only does this miracle show his power to help, it also shows his authority to forgive sins.

2. They authenticate his authority to forgive sin

Our Greatest Need

While we have many needs in our earthly lives, the greatest need is not a physical need like food, shelter, or clothes. It's not about making enough money to have a comfortable retirement. It's not about living in certain neighborhood or driving a certain type of vehicle. One would like to argue and make the case for these needs in life but in all honesty, these physical needs are not our greatest need. Why? Because they are only temporary. They only touch our earthly lives. Our greatest and most far-reaching need is spiritual. It is the need for the forgiveness of sins. Every person has this need no matter how old or young, no matter what economic or social status or race they are, no matter when they lived. Every person is in great need of God's forgiveness. Today we can also take comfort in Jesus' miracles because they bear witness to his authority to meet our greatest need, the forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus Shows His Authority to Forgive Sin

After Jesus exposed the evil thoughts of the Scribes and Pharisees, he asked them a question: WHICH IS EASIER: TO SAY, 'YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN,' OR TO SAY, 'GET UP AND WALK.' With this question Jesus is not asking them to debate which is easier to actually do because both are equally difficult to do for a mere human being. They both require divine power. But what Jesus is really asking is, which is humanly easier to say and get away with? In other words, which of these two statements is easier to say and not be proven to be a liar? Anyone can say, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN, and because there is no visible or physical change to witness, it is difficult to disprove. On the other hand, it is much more difficult to say, GET UP AND WALK, without being made out to be a liar. With this claim there must be a physical change. The paralytic must get up and walk to prove Jesus to be authentic.

Having guided the Pharisees through this type of thinking, Jesus now turns to the paralytic and says: I TELL YOU, GET UP, TAKE UP YOUR MAT AND GO HOME. Immediately he stood up in front of them and went home praising God. Jesus proved his authenticity as the one who not only heals the lame but also the one who alone has the authority to forgive sin.

Jesus' Power Meets Our Greatest Need

Why did Jesus do this miracle of healing the paralytic? Jesus did all of his miracles for the very same reason – so people would know he is who he claimed to be – the Son of God and the only Savior of sinners. As true God, Jesus knows our greatest need: the forgiveness of sins. But our true comfort lies in much more than his knowledge of our sin. Our comfort lies in his authority and power to remove that sin. So, when Jesus told the paralytic man, "*Take heart, your sins are all forgiven (Matthew 9:2),*" he meant it and had the power to prove it. It's easy to feel as if Jesus may forgive the sins of others, but how do I know he really forgives me; especially when I see bad things happening in my life? When this happens Satan is right there accusing us of committing some sin that not even Jesus can forgive. Or maybe it's because we committed the same sin so many times that Jesus just gave up on us. When such temptations come our way, we remember the powerful Word of God recorded by the Apostle, "*There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:1). God's Word of truth is clear, "*The blood of Jesus, God's own Son, purifies us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7).

Conclusion

When forgiven sinners hear the good news of complete and free forgiveness in Christ Jesus, it is only natural that they respond as did the people who witnessed Jesus' amazing power and authority: THIS AMAZED EVERYONE AND THEY PRAISED GOD, SAYING, "WE HAVE NEVER SEEN ANTHING LIKE THIS." Today we take comfort in Jesus' miracles as they show his power to help and his authority to forgive sin. To God be the glory! Amen.