

10.26.2025 Trinity 19 (Ephesians 4:17-32; Matthew 9:1-8)

Our Gospel lesson this morning is St. Matthew's account of a paralyzed man, lying on a bed, being brought to Jesus. Matthew is concise in his description of this event, but another Gospel author, St. Mark, provides us with a few more details, and a more complete picture of this scene. Mark tells on that on that day, as Jesus preached the Word of God, so many were gathered together that there was no more room, not even at the door, and that the paralyzed man was brought to Jesus *"carried by four men. And when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay"* (Mark 2:3-4).

The Gospel according to St. Mark is the shortest of the canonical Gospels, known for its fast pace and brevity, but here Mark slows the pace of the narrative considerably to describe what you may have noticed looks a lot like a burial scene. Consider the image that comes to mind when you read the passage, an image of this paralyzed man, unable to move, being carried on a bed by four men like a dead man is carried in a coffin by pall bearers. After the procession a hole is made in the roof, and the man is lowered just as the dead are lowered into the grave. Notice however, it's not an empty tomb into which the paralytic is lowered, but instead the man looks up to find himself in the presence of our Lord and God - where he is met, not with a stone-cold, six feet under, separation from the living, but instead with warmth of fellowship, forgiveness, and healing. Jesus said to the man, *"Son, your sins are forgiven... rise, pick up your bed, and go home... And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all"* (Mark 2:5,11-12).

St. Mark is known for the fast pace of his Gospel account, but he breaks from that pattern here to the end that he may carefully present us with a powerful image, an image not only of a paralyzed man who was carried to Jesus and received physical healing, but an image of a man who was truly restored to perfect health through the forgiveness of sin. Yes, this man was healed

physically, but far more importantly, he was made right with God. His relationship with the Almighty was restored through the Divine forgiveness of sin, and this burial scene that doesn't end in death and isolation, but in life and fellowship with God, is meant to point us all to the perfect health and abundant life that is found only in Christ our Lord.

We should recognize the truth that physical healing, even this type of miraculous physical healing, is only a temporary remedy. Whether it's the paralyzed man we're reading about this morning, the blind, the lame, the leper, or any number of examples we could cite from our own personal experience, we know that even people who are miraculously healed are still, like you and I, destined for the grave. St. Augustine pointed out that fact when he spoke about the physical healing Jesus provided, saying that "the eyes of the blind, that were (miraculously) opened were again closed in death; and the limbs of the paralytics that received strength would fail again in death..." (Tractate 17).

Physical healing is only a temporary remedy, one that we may or may not receive, a short-term remedy given in this world that is meant to point us toward the eternal remedy that we all so desperately need - forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God. Eyes that were opened will again close in death, limbs that were given strength will fail again, but like the paralyzed man in this Gospel account, through the Divine forgiveness of sin our Savior Christ has healed our greatest affliction, He has set us free from spiritual paralysis and the death of separation from Him.

The forgiveness Jesus offers has been spoken to us just as it was spoken to the paralytic. Our Lord speaks to every one of us, saying, "Son, daughter, be of good cheer, *your sins are forgiven*," or to use the familiar, liturgical language of the Prayer Book, God has "given power, and commandment, to His Ministers, to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins." Almighty God, "of His great mercy," has "promised forgiveness of sins to all those who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto Him." The penitent are pardoned. The

faithful are delivered, confirmed, strengthened in all goodness, and brought to everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

St. Mark slows the fast pace of his Gospel account that he may carefully present us with this message of forgiveness and healing. Like the paralytic, through the Divine forgiveness of sin, we are healed, and we are healed from our spiritual paralysis, just as St. Paul stated in the Epistle, that we may now walk, but “*not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God...*” (Ephesians 4:17-18). No, Christians rise and walk a different path, the path of righteousness and holiness that leads to our Father’s house, because Divine forgiveness has set us free to rise and do the good work that God has ordained for us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10).

So, at our Lord’s declaration, “*Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven,*” like the paralytic we rise and walk, and like this man who took up his bed and walked home, we recognize that we walk not by our own strength, but by the power of Christ working in us. Remember, at the time the paralyzed man was carried to our Lord, he was unable to do anything. Before he was brought to Jesus with faith that he could be healed, he couldn’t move, and like that man, we are now able to move only because of our healing encounter with Christ, and His mighty power working in us.

Our Gospel lesson today paints a beautiful picture of the way God’s forgiveness not only heals us, but then empowers us, providing us with His grace and strength to move, to bring about faithful works of love that through the Spirit are pleasing to Him and a blessing to the world the Father gave the life of His Son to save. St. Paul tells us to walk, and to walk worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1), but before we can take even one step of that worthy walk we need to have a personal encounter with the Risen Christ. We need to be healed by the One who gave His Body and shed His Blood to the end that we may, in this world, rise and walk and do all those good works, and in the world to come, rise to life eternal among the angels and saints and all the company of heaven.

Jesus said to the paralytic, “*Your sins are forgiven,*” and He speaks the same words to you and I, “*Your sins are forgiven... rise... walk...*”