

Jesus Heals A Paralytic Luke 5:17-26

I'll go through the text, connect the ideas, point out some details that might otherwise go unnoticed. And then we'll pivot and move toward understanding how this incredible story is imminently relevant for us today.

17 On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. So we know from Mk. that Jesus was in Capernaum, a city on the west side of the sea of Galilee (pic). After Jesus was run out of Nazareth, he set up shop in Capernaum and did a ton of ministry there, to the point where he even calls it his own city in Mt. 9:1. Because it was set on a highway and trade route, it's not surprising to see a lot of people in attendance—specifically 3 groups of people.

We've got the **crowds** from Galilee Judea and Jerusalem—he's gained quite a reputation. And you've got the **Pharisees and teachers of the law** (scribes). Scribes and Pharisees were experts in the law, and Pharisees in particular exercised a lot of authority in the Jewish world and this is their first run in with Jesus of Nazareth. And there's a third group of **friends**—Mark says 4—who are trying to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus. But they're a little late to the party. Mk tells us that Jesus was in a house—and it was packed out, not even standing room—and vs says that bc of the crowd they couldn't find a way to bring him in ~~19 but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd,~~ no one would scooch over to let them by.

But they've carried this guy all the way here and they're not about to turn back now, so they come up with a strategy and 2000 years later Mission Impossible stole it—dropping down from the ceiling! **they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus.** Most houses were two stories with living space and shaded rooftop above. This rooftop was often accessible through outside steps...so these guys decided they're going to go up there and do some demolition work. This wasn't a little incision. Mark 2 literally says they unroofed the roof so they could lower their buddy down.

Now you know I love trying to think about these things from every perspective. Crowd is wondering what's going on. Perhaps their even frustrated that these men are barging in and disrupting Jesus's teaching, mad that dirt is falling on your head. I love Spurgeon here, **"I always feel pleased at the idea of the dust and the debris of the roof coming down upon the heads of the Pharisees and doctors of the law."** If you're Jesus you've lost the crowds attention. That's so frustrating—youth ministry, kid farts. If you're the homeowner, you're horrified. And if you're the man on the mat, you're wondering how's this going to end. You're looking up at your friends lower you down, is Jesus offended, will he rebuke me for interrupting and vandalism, will he help me?

20 And when he saw their faith, he said, **"Man, your sins are forgiven you."** Now, this sounds like something we'd expect to hear Jesus say, but for the Scribes and Pharisees you have to understand how shocking and repulsive and out of bounds a statement like that was. And vs. 21 describes their reaction **21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"** Blaspheme was directly speaking or acting against God and according to Lev. 24 punishable by death. And in their minds, he is defaming God by claiming that he has the authority and ability to forgive sins. And here's the thing, these Scribes are right in saying that only God and not a man has authority to forgive sins—that's why you don't need a priest to forgive your sin btw. They simply don't realize that God—the only one who can forgive sins—is the one standing right in front of them doing it. And Jesus senses this...

22 When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, “Why do you question in your hearts?” Simply note that the Scribes aren’t voicing these questions and accusations. They are questioning in their hearts. And Jesus responds to them. What does that tell us, we worship a God who hears and responds to *thoughts*. This should encourage you in your prayer life. Didn’t express yourself well today in prayer—If you thought, he heard. These are people who aren’t even trying to communicate with Jesus and he heard and responded—he accommodates their unbelief by doing a miracle. How much more is he inclined to listen to his children. “God please help me” ventriloquist style.

And so Jesus responds 23 Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk?’ The crowd is left to speculate whether or not this man’s sins are really forgiven. I mean, how could they really verify that besides just taking Jesus word for it? So to verify and substantiate this invisible grace he pairs it with a physical grace 24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.” I think it’s funny how Jesus reminds him to grab his bed on the way out. 25 And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. So the mat carries him into the house and by the Lord’s grace, he carries it out. An incredible healing to be sure..

But don’t miss this the reason Jesus heals this man’s disability is to reveal his own identity— vs. 24 that you may know that the Son of Man have authority on earth to forgive sins. That’s why he healed this guy—to reveal to this regional crowd something about himself. Last week we saw how Jesus took on the divine name—the I AM—from Exodus 3. This week he claims another title for himself—the Son of Man. Now when we hear the title “Son of Man” we tend to hear it as highlighting his humanity. But it’s actually the opposite. The title “Son of man” reveals Jesus’ deity—his divinity— in a profound way.

And to understand this you need to rewind to Daniel chapter 7 where we see what Jesus is referring to with this Son of Man language. 13 “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. And so when Jesus claims to be the Son of Man who can forgive sins, he is not just claiming to be a miracle worker. He is claiming to be the one who was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, served by all people and nations and exercising an everlasting dominion that will never pass away. In that Galilean house before a crowded room, Jesus healed a man to substantiate the claim that he was the son of Man who came before the Ancient of Days. Sovereign over sin, thoughts, illness. These people thought they were standing in front of a teacher. They were standing in front of God.

26 And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today.” This word “amazement” is most often translated “trance”. Same word used of Peter when he fell into a trance at Simon the Tanner’s house in Acts 10. They were stunned, filled with awe Mt. 9 says they were afraid. Not like spooky afraid, but like standing at the bottom of the Hoover Dam and looking up—overwhelmed with the magnitude of what’s in front of you.

I should be honest this is exactly what I’m trying to facilitate as a preacher. Jesus teaches displays his power and love and the people are overwhelmed with fearful astonishment and give glory to God. My goal isn’t primarily to give people lifehacks and advice. We certainly do application at New Century. My goal is facilitate your worship of God. My goal to set Christ before you in his power and authority and beauty and love and compassion to that you leave here you don’t say, “What a great sermon” but “What a great God.” So where does this story that happened 2000 years ago intersect with my life? What does a group of friends

and hole in a roof and a healing story back then meaningfully relevant to me now? And I want to offer 3 exhortations toward that end. **Pray.**

We must go to great lengths to bring people to Christ.

2019 year of disciple-making: Vision leaks. Have to revisit because this is the mission of the church—we're not doing this, we're failing. And the four unnamed men in this story give us a wonderful, convicting reminder about the urgency and determination we should characterize our efforts to bring people to Christ. They go to great lengths to get this dude to Jesus. Three characteristics of their devotion: **(1) Inconvenience**—crowds, time, effort, sweat. **(2) Risk**—What would people think? Vandalism? **(3) Creativity**—Coming through the roof. All of this for one purpose—to bring this man to the person he needed.

And yet when I think about how we approach evangelism and making disciples it's seems that our approach is the opposite—least inconvenience, least risk, not a ton of thought. And I think one of the reasons is that we just don't love seeing sinners come to Christ as we should. Look at the crowd's response to God's forgiveness mesmerized. Awe. Wonder. Our response—"Cool. Welcome to the club." If we can be apathetic about salvation, we are on dangerous ground and need to question whether or not we belong to Christ. DO you love seeing people come to Christ? Do you sense a burden to bring the people around you to Christ? Joseph did...

Masai warrior named Joseph. He turned up at an Evangelist's conference in Amsterdam run by Billy Graham. His story is retold here by Michael Card: "One day Joseph, who was walking along one of these hot, dirty African roads, met someone who shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with him. Then and there he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. The power of the Spirit began transforming his life; he was filled with such excitement and joy that the first thing he wanted to do was return to his own village and share that same Good News with the members of his local tribe. Joseph began going from door-to-door, telling everyone he met about the Cross of Jesus and the salvation it offered, expecting to see their faces light up the way his had. To his amazement the villagers not only didn't care, they became violent. The men of the village seized him and held him to the ground while the women beat him with strands of barbed wire. He was dragged from the village and left to die alone in the bush. Joseph somehow managed to crawl to a water hole, and there, after days of passing in and out of consciousness, found the strength to get up. He wondered about the hostile reception he had received from people he had known all his life. He decided he must have left something out or told the story of Jesus incorrectly. After rehearsing the message he had first heard, he decided to go back and share his faith once more. Joseph limped into the circle of huts and began to proclaim Jesus. "He died for you, so that you might find forgiveness and come to know the living God" he pleaded. Again, he was grabbed by the men of the village and held while the women beat him, reopening wounds that had just begun to heal. Once more they dragged him unconscious from the village and left him to die. To have survived the first beating was truly remarkable. To live through the second was a miracle. Again, days later, Joseph awoke in the wilderness, bruised, scarred—and determined to go back. He returned to the small village and this time, they attacked him before he had a chance to open his mouth. As they flogged him for the third and probably the last time, he again spoke to them of Jesus Christ, the Lord. Before he passed out, the last thing he saw was that the women who were beating him began to weep. This time he awoke in his own bed. The ones who had so severely beaten him were now trying to save his life and nurse him back to health. The entire village had come to Christ."¹

¹ John Piper, 'Why God Appoints Suffering for His Servants,' *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, eds. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Crossway, 2006), pp. 99-100, citing Michael Card, 'Wounded in the House of Friends,' *Virtue* (March/April 1991), pp. 28-29, 69.

He was willing to go to great lengths to bring people to Christ. Might we say the same thing about us. In our jobs, friendships, neighborhoods, gyms and salons—in the places God places us are we doing everything we can to see people come to Christ.

We need to realize that often times, the distraction is the appointment.

When you read the Gospels and see the way Jesus interacts with people one question you can always ask yourself is, “What does Jesus’ response teach me about wisdom?” Because without exception, everything Jesus says, everything he leaves unsaid, every action way he responds to every situation is always a display of wisdom. And this scene is no exception. Jesus response in this situation teaches us something very valuable and timely.

Vs. 17 specifically tells us that Jesus was teaching. Mk specifically says he was preaching the Word easily one of the most important things he came to do. And in moment dirt is falling on everyone’s head, on one’s paying attention and there’s what seems to be an unplanned something right in front of his. And rather than trying to make this interruption go away and get back to what he was doing he takes what has been placed in front of him and uses it as an opportunity to display his love and power. Why? Because for Jesus the distraction was the appointment. In the middle of doing something extremely important, something—in this case someone—was set in front of him and rather than treating him like an obstacle to navigate he saw it as an opportunity to love and heal and glorify his father. Not only that in God’s sovereignty, not only was this not a distraction, it was the biggest point.

In fact if you read 17 you’ll remember the text says the power of the Lord was with him to heal and after he does vs 26 people say that was amazing and the story ends. Nothing about Jesus finishing up his sermon or picking up where he left off. Why? Because the entire thing was a build up to this moment. It wasn’t a distraction. Jesus had an appointment with a paralytic man.

And what we know in hindsight about this story, we can in the present about ours. And I want to suggest that for you and I many of the things that we see as distractions are appointments. Certainly, some things are *just* distractions. But I’m convinced that like this scenario here there are many things that we see as annoying, exhausting, obstacles that don’t at all seem to advance our agenda in our life but are absolutely meant to advance God’s. Things that you and I see as something to get around so we can get back to our normal scheduled programming rather than seeing it a God’s divinely scheduled programming.

Coronavirus. Unique challenges—You were going along doing very important things and God has placed something in front of you at your feet that would appear to be distracting—business problem, family, person who needs you and I’m begging you to ask, what if the distraction is the appointment. What if the unique obstacle impeding your normal is the divine opportunity for God’s glory?

That’s how Jesus saw it. Wasn’t surprised at all—just on time. Your pain isn’t an inconvenience to Jesus. In Mt. he calls him “child” or “son” (*teknon*). This man might have wondered about how he’d be received but you don’t have to. God help us respond with this kind of wisdom and love, so that through our faithfulness to what you’ve placed in front of us, people might give you praise!

Our biggest need to is be rescued from our sin, not our situation.

Now I want you to think about how this guy might have felt. He’s paralyzed he spends his life laying down. He has no job. He depends on people’s charity. Not a big contender for marriage. It’s a bummer to be paralyzed in 2020, but in the 1st century? Quality of life isn’t very good. BUT...you hear that there’s someone who can change all that!! And you ask your friends, and brave the crowds, and wait on the roof

and as you're lowered down, you think this is it—I've dreamed about walking for years if this guy is the real deal he's about to give me a new lease on life.

He looks up at Jesus who says in Matthew's version, "Take heart, my son...your sins are forgiven." The text doesn't say how he responds, but if it was you and you're being honest—you be a little disappointed. Doesn't Jesus know that's not why you came. Jesus I'm glad you've dealt with my sin problem but aren't there a little bigger issues to address here? And Jesus' actions say no. There are other issues to address, but not bigger issues. Your biggest problem isn't your physical condition but your spiritual condition. And thus your biggest need is not to walk but to be delivered from sin's penalty and power. Jesus does heal this man—the story isn't over. He gives this man saving grace and healing grace and they are not equal graces. Both are wonderful, one is primary.

The most urgent need that you and I have on a daily basis is not something that is outside of us, but inside of us. My love for the world. My kingdom coming. My apathy. My relentless focus on myself. My belief that joy lies in success and achievement. That what I need is more comfort and ease. And thus my biggest need is the grace of God to tune my heart for the 10000 time to sing his grace, remind me why I'm here, remind me where my value is, remind me satisfaction is in his presence. Luther said I preach the Gospel to myself everyday because I forget the Gospel everyday. I do before lunch. My biggest need is to be rescued from me. And this is hard for us—I mean who did that this week?

And if you don't feel that, Jesus will hardly seem relevant to your day to day and his grace to you will feel like a let down that doesn't understand your real life needs. Christ is will only be seen as beautiful to people who know that they need rescue from their sin. It's not that God only cares about one thing and nothing else. He does—finances, family, school, dating, moving—but under all of those financial stress, family turmoil, uncertain job—in all of that is a heart that is at war with sin constantly being assaulted with lies, distorted desires, and if that heart foundation is compromised and I have misplaced my hope and worship—everything else will come crashing down. Do you see your sin as your biggest problem? Because it's only when you do that you'll see Jesus for how beautiful he is on a day-to-day basis. It's only when you do that your hearts biggest desire is for God to increase your faith—that's how the benefits of the Gospel come to us.

20 And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." Faith—not incredible effort—saves.

Perhaps you've seen your appointment as a distraction. Be faithful. Let's be to others as Jesus has been to us.