

I.N.I.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany
Feb. 16, 2020
Mark 2:1-12

In Christ Jesus, the Great Physician of body and soul, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Almost hidden away in a secluded corner of a New York cemetery is a small gravestone polished smooth by the wind and weather over many, many years. The stone has no name, nor is there any date inscribed on it. The name and date have been worn away. However, still legible on the face of that little stone, in letters that neither the wind nor the weather has been able to erase, is one solitary word, "FORGIVEN." No large monument, no ornate mausoleum marks the final resting place of the anonymous person who lies buried there--only a simple stone with the single word, "FORGIVEN."

Yet could any epitaph be more eloquent, more rich in meaning, more appropriate for the child of God. The monuments and tombs that the great and mighty of this world have erected, frequently record in large letters their heroic deeds and many achievements, so that generations yet unborn may read of their brilliant accomplishments. But a far greater glory was etched in that little stone that marked the humble grave of that nameless person in the New York cemetery. To have received forgiveness from a loving heavenly Father, to have basked in the forgiving love of a Savior who lived and died for us, to have died in the assurance of being forgiven of all sins forever --could any life have ended in greater glory?

The paralyzed man in our text experienced that same great joy and so have each of us who know Jesus by faith. What could be greater?

Well our day and age would say the needs and the welfare of our body is far more important. We have health clubs and exercise centers scattered all over the country. We are bombarded by commercials to buy exercise equipment and stationary bikes. Magazines are filled with articles on diets and exercise programs for every age. Even our fast food restaurants are now making more health conscious foods. And as Christians we should be aware of our health and be good stewards of the one body that God has given us.

But we also need to be aware that we can overemphasize the needs of the body and neglect the greater needs of the soul. In our mixed up world, where immorality is defended as one's right and morality is looked upon as narrow minded, bigoted and loveless, we need to get our priorities straight in our own lives as well. How many of us know our cholesterol count, our blood sugar count, our blood pressure, our calorie intake? But how many of us know our cholesterol sin count, our faith level, or our Scripture intake? **WHAT?** We need to be even more concerned about our spiritual welfare than our physical. Who says? Jesus says!

Our text begins: **AND AGAIN HE (Jesus) ENTERED CAPERNAUM AFTER SOME DAYS, AND IT WAS HEARD THAT HE WAS IN THE HOUSE. IMMEDIATELY MANY GATHERED TOGETHER, SO THAT THERE WAS NO LONGER ROOM TO RECEIVE THEM, NOT EVEN NEAR THE DOOR. AND HE PREACHED THE WORD TO THEM.**

Unfortunately some who had gathered to hear Jesus were not there to be edified, but to criticize, to spy on Him and to try to catch Him in some false teaching or immoral act. Luke tells us that Pharisees and teachers of the law were there. Matthew and Mark tell us that scribes were also there. Five men were not there yet---a paralyzed man and his four friends.

When they heard that Jesus was in the house they came carrying their friend on a cot. When they got to the house they couldn't get in. There was no room. But these men were not deterred. They went up the stairs (no doubt on the outside of the building, as most houses were built that way) and walked on the flat roof.

They began to remove the tiles of the roof. Some wooden or tiled roofs were covered with sod and perhaps this was one of them for our text says **WHEN THEY HAD BROKEN THROUGH, or literally AFTER DIGGING THROUGH.** This no doubt took some time, removing the dirt, taking up the tiles, possibly even removing some of the boards to make a hole big enough for the man to be lowered parallel to the ground. Imagine the astonishment of the crowd as they saw what was happening. But they hadn't seen nothing yet!

As the man was being lowered down Jesus not only saw him, but He saw into him. He saw into his heart and the hearts of his friends. He saw hearts of faith. Our text says, **WHEN JESUS SAW THEIR FAITH, HE SAID TO THE PARALYTIC, "SON, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU."** Matthew adds the words, **"SON, BE OF GOOD CHEER, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU."**

What amazing words. **SON**=child, a word of tenderness, like that of a father or mother for their child. By using that word, Jesus assures this man that he is a child of God and that He, Jesus, knows his needs and is now acting out of love for him.

YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU=literally your sins **ARE SENT AWAY**. Scripture says our sins are **CAST INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA,...AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST, SO FAR HAS HE REMOVED OUR TRANSGRESSION FROM US,...HE BLOTS OUT OUR TRANSGRESSIONS AND WILL NOT REMEMBER OUR SINS**. What more blessed words could this man have heard?

Well how about **BE HEALED!!** That might be what we would think. But Jesus knew this man, and He knows each of us better than we even know ourselves. And the greatest need we have is not **HEALTH, WEALTH, LONG LIFE, HAPPINESS, and RETIREMENT BENEFITS** and so on; our greatest need is **FORGIVENESS OF SINS**. What good would healing do this man if his sins still burdened his soul? What good would it do this man, to be able to walk, run, jump and sprint and still go to bed every night with an accusing conscience? What good would physical healing do if he were still spiritually sick?

Others that were there were also surprised by Jesus' words. Surprised because they felt He was taking upon Himself more power and glory than He ought. The scribes, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there thinking to themselves, **WHY DOES THIS MAN SPEAK BLASPHEMIES LIKE THIS? WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS BUT GOD ALONE?** Part of what they said was true. God alone has power to forgive sins. But because they did not believe Jesus was God, their conclusion was wrong. Jesus did have the authority and power to forgive sins. In fact forgiveness has been earned by Him, by His atoning sacrifice on the cross, by His taking our place and paying for the guilt and punishment of our sins. He has merited forgiveness for us all.

Jesus used His omniscience to know their thoughts and must have shocked them and the whole crowd with these words, **WHY DO YOU REASON ABOUT THESE THINGS IN YOUR HEARTS? WHICH IS EASIER, TO SAY TO THE PARALYTIC, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU, OR TO SAY, ARISE, TAKE UP YOUR BED AND WALK?** In Matthew we read Jesus also saying, **WHY DO YOU THINK EVIL IN YOUR HEARTS?** In other words Jesus is asking them, "If you do not question My ability to do what seems harder to you, performing miracles (for surely they had seen or heard Him do these things), then why would you question My authority when I do what seems easier to you, forgiving sins?"

Jesus did not wait for an answer. He turns to the paralyzed man and said, **I SAY TO YOU, ARISE, TAKE UP YOUR BED, AND GO YOUR WAY TO YOUR HOUSE. AND IMMEDIATELY HE AROSE, TOOK UP THE BED, AND WENT OUT IN THE PRESENCE OF THEM ALL...**

The Pharisees and scribes could not see the effect of Jesus' saying: **YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU**. But they could see the effect of His second command, **ARISE AND GO TO YOUR HOUSE**. They would have to admit that Jesus not only had the power to heal, but had the power and authority to forgive sins.

Others who were in that crowd **WERE AMAZED AND GLORIFIED GOD, SAYING, WE NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE THIS!**

Do we get the point of this Bible lesson?

WE NEED JESUS!

I: FIRST FOR THE SOUL--FORGIVENESS OF SINS

II: FOR THE BODY--HEALING OUR ILLS.

This morning Jesus has already announced to us in our confession of sins, **YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN!** All of our evil, lustful thoughts, all of our sinful, hurtful words, all of our selfish, self-centered actions have been nailed to the cross and removed. They have been cast away, blotted out, covered. We have been given perfect righteousness through Christ, we have been given the

assurance of everlasting life, and we have peace with God and will enjoy eternal glory with our God in heaven.

To all of you out in the pews who are hurting physically: with arthritis, colds, flu, aches and pains, or more serious ills and diseases, **BE OF GOOD CHEER, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU!** Why is that such good news? We have an eternity assured us where there will be none of these ills, and we are assured that if Jesus can take care of our greatest problem, **SIN**, He surely can take care of, remove and see us through our physical ills.

To all of you out in the pews who are hurting mentally and emotionally from depression, loss of loved ones, problems with raising children, marital strife, stress, job turmoil, aged parents, loneliness, anger, jealousy, burnout, fear, lack of purpose and a sense of worthlessness, **BE OF GOOD CHEER, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU!** Why is that such good news? We have an eternity assured us where there will be none of these ills, and if Jesus can take care of our greatest problem, **SIN**, He surely can take care of, remove and see us through our emotional and mental ills.

To all of you out in the pews who are tempted--to worry, to lust, to laziness, to despise God's Word, to speak profanity, to disobey your parents, to hate someone, to gossip about others, to lie, to practice hypocrisy, to abuse your spouse or children spiritually, physically or emotionally, to exact vengeance, to get involved in pornography and sexual immorality, to get drunk and abuse drugs, to covet, to gamble and be filled with greed and deceit, **BE OF GOOD CHEER, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU!** Why is that such good news? We have been redeemed from the punishment of our sins, we have been set free from the power of sin, we have been given power over sin through the Holy Spirit. Jesus has taken care of our greatest problem, **SIN**, and in and through His Word gives us the power to say **NO** to sin and live for Him.

Jesus wants us to remember everyday that it is He who provides for our greatest need, **FORGIVENESS OF SINS** and it is He who then also, according to His will, in His time and in His own way, also provides for all of our needs.

Peter says **CAST ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM, FOR HE CARES FOR YOU.** The friends of the paralyzed man did not give up when they first couldn't get into the crowded home, they went through the roof. Neither should we give up in seeking Jesus' help, daily turning to His Word for forgiveness, guidance and strength and turning to Him in daily prayer.

Jesus knows our greatest need. He has satisfied that greatest need with His shed blood and we can be assured that if the Son of Man has the power to be able to do that, He also has the power to help in all of our bodily needs as well.

Forgiveness is ours. May that epitaph await each of us at our journey's end-**PARDONED (FORGIVEN) OF ALL SINS, CLEANSED OF ALL SPIRITUAL DISEASES, REDEEMED OF ALL UNGODLY DEEDS** by the precious blood of Jesus who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Yes, **JESUS THY BLOOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS
MY BEAUTY ARE, MY GLORIOUS DRESS;
MIDST FLAMING WORLDS, IN THESE ARRAYED,
WITH JOY SHALL I LIFT UP MY HEAD.**

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, may I live every day in the full assurance that You have forgiven all my sins through Jesus Christ, my Savior. May that assurance be mine, not only in health but also in sickness, not only in life but also in death. Let me always find my highest joy in your unending grace and forgiving love. Amen.

