



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

My 6-year-old daughter just had surgery after which she was not allowed to put weight on one of her legs for two weeks. Over the past several days, we've been carrying her to plenty of places she would not otherwise be able to go. Imagine my surprise to be writing about this particular passage of scripture this week.

This story is really two stories wrapped up in one. In the center of this healing stands a controversy about Jesus' authority to forgive sins. When challenged by the local religious leaders about his ability to do this, he responds in a way that clearly and forcefully demonstrates his power. Just as Jesus can restore a person's ability to walk, Jesus can wipe away the stain of sin from our souls.

The sandwich around the meat of this story is the paralytic man and his friends. We know nothing of what the paralyzed man has or hasn't done to deserve healing and grace - it's unimportant to the author, and presumably to Jesus. His friends have a desire to see their friend healed that's matched only by their faith in this healer from Capernaum.

They couldn't heal their friend. They didn't have that power. So instead, they moved heaven and earth to get their friend to the one who could...removing a thatch-and-mud roof to lower him down to see Jesus. Jesus responds by moving heaven and earth for the paralyzed man, absolving him of his sins, and giving him the capacity to walk.

And in this, everyone present was transformed, as *"they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'"*
 — Robin Levins, *First Church member*

Consider the Source Mark 2:1-12

A Family Affair

Have you ever had an awful scraped knee or even a broken bone? Perhaps your wound just needs a band aid and a kiss or an ice pack. Sometimes a visit to the doctor for a cast is needed to heal the bone. Once your wound is healed, you have brand new skin and an even stronger bone. It's like a brand new you and you feel better.

Read Mark 2:1-12 together. Discuss how the friends had to have been exhausted physically from carrying their friend up the steps of the house and then on to the roof. It may have seemed impossible to get their friend through the crowd. Still, they didn't give up because they knew God would be with them.

The paralyzed man experienced physical, emotional, and spiritual rebirth when Jesus gave his body the ability to walk again. His friends were renewed emotionally and physically upon seeing the miracle of their friend healed. Both the man and his friends felt like they had new faith.

Once the paralyzed man was healed, his whole life must have seemed new and refreshed. Discuss together: do you think the healed man stayed quiet or shouted out and told everyone he met about Jesus' miracle?

Just like a wound or broken bone is stronger after it heals, our hearts are stronger with Jesus. He can heal our heart and soul when they get hurt. God's healing love is everlasting.

Dear Lord, thank you for being with us every day and your healing power in our lives. Amen.

— Tammy Parks, Elementary Coordinator

Monday: Mark 1:40-45

The story immediately preceding the healing of the paralytic is the healing of a leper, who is ordered to be silent about the miracle given. Instead, the leper tells anyone and everyone about what he has experienced.

- Why is Jesus going around and healing people in the first place? What's Jesus doing here on earth anyway?
- Why do you think the leper "spread the word" about what Jesus did for him, despite being explicitly told by Jesus not to tell anyone anything?

Tuesday: Mark 2:1-4

Thanks to the blabbermouth leper, Jesus is now mobbed by people wherever he goes, which is why the paralyzed man and friends have to find a unique way to get near Jesus.

- Why do you think the man's four friends did what they did?
- When was the last time you went to such lengths to bring someone closer to God? When will the next time be?

Wednesday: Mark 2:5-12

Some religious leaders are present and listening to Jesus "speaking the word". Yet when Jesus claims the agency of God for himself, their hackles are raised. Jesus knows this immediately.

- Is the concern of the religious leaders a reasonable concern?
- Jesus recognizes that the scribes need a bit more convincing. How does Jesus meet their needs as well as that of the paralyzed man?

Thursday: Mark 2:13-17

Apparently, Jesus didn't sway all the Pharisees, but he does pick up some more disciples. We get a bit more insight into the healing and forgiveness story we've just read.

- Jesus makes explicit that his call is to those who are in need. It's clear in Mark's story that this really means everyone. We are all in need of the grace that Jesus brings, and forgiveness of the sins we carry. Given this, why are the Pharisees here not receiving Jesus' grace?
- What does this tell us about the pride of self-reliance?

Friday: Mark 5:24b-34

Mark has several stories where faith and healing are connected. In this one, there are throngs of people surrounding Jesus which makes it hard to get to Him. Yet still this woman in need persists, believing if she can just touch his clothes, she'll be healed.

- The woman had spent all she had in search of what she needed, but everything else she pursued just made her worse. Given her destitute state, where would she be if access to Jesus wasn't freely available?