

Luke 5:17-26 Jesus Heals a Paralytic

¹⁷ One day, while [Jesus] was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting nearby (they had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem); and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.* ¹⁸Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus;* ¹⁹but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd* in front of Jesus. ²⁰When he saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend,* your sins are forgiven you.’ ²¹Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, ‘Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ ²²When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, ‘Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ²³Which is easier, to say, “Your sins are forgiven you”, or to say, “Stand up and walk”? ²⁴But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he said to the one who was paralyzed—‘I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home.’ ²⁵Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. ²⁶Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, ‘We have seen strange things today.’

Sermon Reflection:

We read this story in Luke of Jesus healing the man who was paralyzed. The story is also told in Matthew (9:1-8) and Mark (2:1-12).

Four friends carry their friend on a mat. He is paralyzed. Jesus offers healing to him. There is a dispute in the story with the Pharisees, who question whether Jesus has the power to forgive sins. They’re more concerned about keeping the rules than anything else.

Jesus asks, ²³Which is easier, to say, “Your sins are forgiven you”, or to say, “Stand up and walk”?

²⁵Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God.

And did you notice the conclusion of the story?

²⁶Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, 'We have seen strange things today.'

The people who were present had no explanation for what they had seen right in front of them. They were amazed and were filled with awe.

- "We have seen strange things today."

Yeah, that's for sure.

If the people who were there and witnessed the event could not explain it, but were amazed, then I know I can't offer an explanation.

This is one healing story among many in the gospels. If we were to read just one story and focus on that one and extrapolate from there, we would be more prone to thinking that a healing story works like a formula or a recipe. You do this and add that, and a healing occurs.

It's not like that. Healing does not always occur as we wish. Healing is still a gift from God. There is not a formula or recipe to follow, as though all we have to do is follow steps 1, 2, and 3, and "poof" this will happen, like baking a cake is preheating an oven, adding ingredients to a bowl, stirring, and pulling out a baked cake 40 minutes later.

A Prayer for Healing: It is more like our opening prayer expresses:

- By your power, great God, our Lord Jesus healed the sick and gave new hope to the hopeless. *Though we cannot command or possess your power, we pray for those who want to be healed. Mend their wounds, soothe fevered brows, and make broken people whole again. Help us to welcome every healing as a sign that, though death is against us, you are for us, and have promised renewed and risen life in Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.*¹

To note in this story:

- A crisis, including medical uncertainty, physical pain, or emotional distress, can cause us to feel isolated from our community.
- This man could not have come on his own. He was physically isolated and likely experienced other forms of isolation as well.

¹ From Prayers and Ministry with the Sick in the Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship*, Westminster John Knox Press, 1993, p. 988. Originally appeared in the *Worshipbook.*, The Westminster Press, c. 1970.

- This man was blessed to have four friends who literally walked alongside him. They were determined to see Jesus.
 - Did you notice v. 20?
 - ²⁰When he saw *their faith*, he said, ‘Friend,* your sins are forgiven you.’
 - Interesting shift from “their faith,” to the impact on that man.

Healing is a gift of grace and may also come through the skilled and compassionate care of caregivers and doctors and nurses and therapists of all kinds.

Thanks be to God for the gift of healing.