

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, October 10, 2010

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Hymns: 18, 34:1, 321, 380, 342.

Lessons: Ezekiel 17 : 22-24, Acts 14 : 8-22, Mark 1: 14-45.

Sermon Text: Mark 2:1-12

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In The Name Of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Jesus of course, as you know and believe, is true God as well as a genuine, true human being. In our text today you see several proofs of the fact that he is true God. He knew for a fact what people were thinking. He physically heals a man who was paralyzed. And he forgives sins.

Today let's be reminded of

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST, THE "SON OF MAN"

- 1. He has power and authority to forgive sin.**
- 2. He has power and authority to heal disease.**
- 3. He shows us what is really important.**

Capernaum was Jesus' home area, and you heard in our Gospel lesson this morning that "*News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.*" Mark 1:28 AND "*The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.*" Mark 1:33-34. AND "*So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.*" Mark 1:39 AND "*Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.*" Mark 1:45.

So when he came back to Capernaum – and was apparently staying with disciples – people heard where he was and so many gathered around him in this house that there was no room left. Of course, he was healing them of their diseases and demon-possession, and perhaps that brought many to him, but we know that they heard the gospel preached unto them. And what is the summary of the gospel? What does the gospel do for us? In three words the gospel "shows our Savior" after the law "shows our sins".

It is easy to assume that the Jewish people among whom Jesus lived knew about the laws of God. Although they may have come to believe – falsely – that many of the laws and rules which their leaders, like the Pharisees, made up and added to the laws of God were what God himself had given, they still should have known right from wrong. The law should have been engrained in them. There is very little reference to the true knowledge of the gospel except what Jesus himself proclaims. Even on this very day, "*some teachers of the law were sitting there.*" So Jesus preached the gospel to a people who were steeped in the law, who had been told repeatedly what they must do and must not do to earn the favor of God.

So, knowing from the New Testament how "*teachers of the law*", and especially Pharisees made the way to God's goodness one of obedience to laws and rules, we can understand that the gospel – the Good News which Jesus proclaimed – was really new news to the Jews even in Jesus' home region. The books of the Bible we call the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – tell us repeatedly that Jesus spoke as one who had authority and a different message than the people were accustomed to hearing. Especially early in his ministry that is what we read about Jesus' message.

So with that background about Jesus' teaching and work early in his ministry, let's make sure we understand what actually happened on this day. Jesus was inside a house and so many people were gathered around him that no one else could come into the house. Now houses were typically flat-roofed in that climate,

sometimes having tiles covering the flat roof. There were often outside stairs going up to the flat roofs, and it wasn't unusual that people would go up on the roofs of their houses.

Four men came carrying a paralyzed man on his "mat", probably sort of like a mattress but not as thick and heavy as our mattresses today. As one who was paralyzed he would have been unable to walk to Jesus by himself. They came believing Jesus could heal this man, and they were desperate enough that they carried him up on the roof and made an opening in the roof. Luke tells us that **"they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus."** The common picture we have seen from Sunday School book artists is lowering the mat by ropes. Matthew doesn't even mention their uncovering the roof, but concentrates on the healing and forgiveness of sins.

Mark reports **"When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"** You are told repeatedly "your sins are forgiven". Those are words you hear every Sunday in our worship service, and in almost every other worship service we gather for. Those words are clearest in our communion Liturgy, when you hear the minister say 'Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office as a called servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.'

But you also hear them in our normal Sunday worship (on page 6 in the hymnal) when first the minister confesses our sinfulness, then you join in confessing your sins, and then the minister says 'Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy on us and has given his only Son to die for us and for his sake forgives us all our sins. To them that believe on his name he gives power to become the sons of God and has promised them his Holy Spirit. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Grant this, O Lord, unto us all.'

In our sermon text, this announcement of the forgiveness of sins was apparently a message that the people listening to Jesus that day didn't hear, or didn't hear very often. **"Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'"** Didn't the rabbis, the ministers of that time ever tell people that God forgives their sins? It makes you think about our day. When people are really troubled by what they have done wrong, don't they hear from God that God forgives sins for Jesus' sake? Well, two ideas come to mind. One is that people don't know or believe that they sin daily and much, and indeed deserve nothing but temporal death and eternal punishment. The other is that people don't really hear what God in his Word plainly teaches, that Jesus paid for all their sins and that God for Jesus sake, forgives them, and **"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."** Mark 16:16.

We know and believe that Jesus is God's Son. We know that he can and does forgive sins. And when you hear those words in our worship service about forgiveness, it is not the man saying them who forgives your sins; it is really God who forgives your sins.

Jesus replies to their thoughts – we aren't even told they said them out loud – by asking why they were thinking what they were thinking: **"Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, 'Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'"** His point is that anyone can say words if no one can see the results of them. If someone tells you your sins are forgiven, you can't see anything to prove that they really are forgiven. It is like someone coming up to you and saying to you "you now have courage", or "you now have wisdom".

In this particular instance, Jesus goes on to prove he has authority to forgive sins. He backs up and proves his words which tell the paralyzed man something invisible has happened to him by making something visible happen to him. In this way Jesus shows his authority and power.

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . He said to the paralytic, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'" Here is another example of how Jesus' miracle proves he truly is God's Son and came to earth to do what God said he would and could do. That brings us to another timely point for our life on earth. Many suffer from pain, and injuries, and illnesses and hurts, some physical, some mental and emotional; some of which are very visible to others, some of which are not visible to others.

God has power to heal illnesses and hurts. How many of us haven't experienced that in some small, seemingly insignificant way? The medical community may say "the body heals itself". I get a cut on my hand or arm or foot, and sometimes, even without any treatment, it heals itself, or so it seems. But please remember that it is all God's doing.

Can I as a servant called by this congregation to proclaim the gospel and administer the sacraments tell you – if you are paralyzed – to take up your bed and walk? That's not what God has assured me I can do. However, he has assured me that I can tell you all your sins are forgiven for Jesus sake, because of what Jesus did for you. I can pray for you and you can pray for one another that your physical hurts and illnesses and diseases be healed. God has that power. But God has also told us, as you heard again in our Epistle lesson "***We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God***" Acts 14:22 (New International Version), "***that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.***" Acts 14:22 (King James Version) The fact that we will have troubles on earth should not prevent us from praying also for release from all our ailments and troubles. But we always pray "Thy will be done", bowing to our heavenly Father's will. His own son Jesus Christ prayed the same thing. And we must remember that of the 7 petitions in the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us, only 1 petition asks for earthly blessings: "Give us this day our daily bread." The other 6 petitions ask for spiritual blessings, and God grants them abundantly by grace, for Jesus' sake.

One final thought: Did you notice what was more important than earthly things? Jesus told this sick man first that his sins are forgiven. Then he proved that he can forgive sins by healing him from his paralysis. But we know, of course, that paralyzed man eventually died an earthly death. And eternally? Remember, Scripture says "***When Jesus saw their faith...***" So that suggested this man, too, who was healed physically, when he eventually died, went to eternal life in heaven because of his faith in Jesus as his Savior from all his sins.

When Martha was disappointed that her sister Mary was not helping with earthly preparations, Jesus said: "***but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.***" Luke 10:42 (NIV) "***But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.***" Luke 10:42 (KJV) You find the same thing near the end of the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus said "***But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***" Matthew 6:33. What things? Food and clothing, covering for our bodies. In this way, too, Jesus reminds us of what is really important: the forgiveness of sins. May we always recognize what is really important – the forgiveness of sins – and always seek that first! Amen.