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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 7, 2020
5th Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 43:18-25, 2 Corinthians 1:18-22

Hymns: 279; 433; 392; 50:2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Mark 2:1-12

And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. ²Immediately 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. ³Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. ⁴And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

⁶And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

⁸But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, '*Your* sins are forgiven you,' or to say, '*Arise*, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹"I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."

¹²Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw *anything* like this!" (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: There are many who challenge Jesus' Word.

Jesus' Word, Jesus teaching is challenged a lot more than you might think, even by those who identify as Christians. People like to pick and choose what they want to believe, and what they want to incorporate into their lives. This is true even when we find the Word of God teaching a truth plainly written in inspired Scripture. Some say that we need only follow what Jesus Himself said and taught. You know, follow what's printed in red is some Bible editions; the rest is optional with somewhat less authority.

Jesus is the Word made flesh. *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."* (2 Timothy 3:16) Besides, people have always challenged Jesus' own words and teachings beginning with the Scribes and Pharisees in Jesus' audiences. Even people who looked to Jesus to make this life better than and now did not want to hear "the whole truth and nothing but the truth" as Jesus faithfully delivered the truth of God.

In the Epiphany season when we focus our meditations on the revealing of Jesus' glory as the Christ, the Son of God, our Savior, this very much includes how Jesus' glory was manifested in His teaching and preaching. It is foundational to our faith that we know with full certainty that Jesus' Word is true, and as true for us today as it ever was. So we shall see how ---

**THEME: By Healing the Paralytic Jesus Reveals
the Divine Authority of His Word!**

First let us appreciate how --

I. Jesus Prioritized the Preaching of His Word!

It is important that we notice the beginning of this event.

Mark 2:1-2 “And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. ²Immediately 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.”

When people came to Jesus they often had many different reasons for seeking Him out. Some simply wanted to see Jesus perform some miracle. Many, many came because of the suffering of a loved one, either because of some sickness or infirmity, or because of demon possession, a ploy of the devil to instill fear within people that seems to have been far more common during those times of Jesus’ ministry. When people sought out the Lord, Jesus always had compassion for the people. He knew what they needed. He knew they needed deliverance from the oppression of the devil. He knew they needed the peace that only He could bring to this world. He knew they needed to hear the Word of God proclaimed to them. Mark reports in the first chapter of his gospel account, “*And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*” (Mark 1:23) and again in that same chapter, “*Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.”*” (Mark 1:27)

Jesus taught the people, and He taught as one who possessed **authority**, not one who wasn’t sure of Himself, or sure of what He taught. Jesus taught the people the gospel of the kingdom of God. He taught them about repentance and the remission of sins. What we need to keep in mind is that Jesus’ teaching lay at the heart and core of His entire ministry. It is the Word that people needed then, and it is the Word that people need today!

On that day so many people had come to see Him at the house where He was staying that they filled the entire house right up to the doors! Included in that crowd of people were some with ulterior motives. They were there not to learn from Jesus, but to find fault, to undermine, to accuse and discredit Jesus, to challenge this presumption of authority that people had made regarding Jesus’ teaching. So we see how Jesus used the events of that day to

establish the truth and reveal His glory. When the paralyzed man was presented before the Lord we see how --

II. Jesus Authenticated the Authority of His Word!

When these five men, that is the paralyzed man and his four friends who were carrying him, arrived at the house where Jesus was, they saw how large the crowd was, and that the house was filled to overflowing. But they were *determined* to get to Jesus. They knew Jesus could help the paralyzed man. They were so confident in that knowledge that they used the outer stairway to the flat roof houses in Galilee had, and they carried their friend up onto the roof. They were so determined to get to Jesus that once they figured out where Jesus was in the house, they dug a hole through the roof, a hole large enough to lower the paralyzed man's bed through. That's a big hole! I can't help but imagine that it caused some roof material to shower down on the people below, that it caused a bit of disruption in Jesus' sermon. But they were determined. These five men would not be deterred by difficult circumstances from reaching Jesus, from securing the blessing they knew in their hearts only Jesus could deliver! They were seeking Jesus' power to heal. They trusted Jesus.

And what are we told of Jesus' response? "*When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you.'*" (v.5) Were they looking for this blessing for their friend, or were they hoping simply that he be healed? I don't know. Most people assume they were simply looking for a miracle of healing. Even if that is the case we are told of what Jesus saw. When we think about how hard they worked to get the paralyzed man to Jesus, we might think that we see their faith, and Jesus saw that too. But you know not only from other accounts but from this very account that Jesus sees what is in the heart. Jesus saw their faith, and if they were simply looking for healing, He first bestowed a greater blessing in assuring this man that his sins were forgiven.

It is the greatest gift that can be given anyone from the Lord. From pastoral experience I have seen and know how people afflicted with serious illness or crippling disease may wonder if their sin and guilt brought this suffering upon them. Consciences are often burdened, and for any and all of us, it is true that we have plenty of

sins to weigh upon the conscience. When one suffers there is no greater blessing the Lord can bring than this assurance, “**Your sins are forgiven you!**”

What a wonderful moment that was in that poor helpless man’s life! To be personally assured by Jesus Christ that his sins were forgiven had to be precious. I am confident that even if that was not forefront in the man’s mind at the outset (which I think it might well have been) it was cherished by the man. It is a wonder of grace that we all ought to cherish! We receive this blessing ourselves especially on communion Sundays! As we receive in, with, and under the bread and wine the very body and true blood that Jesus sacrificed for us to purchase our forgiveness, Jesus conveys the message to each of us, “**Your sins are forgiven!**” What a gift we receive from the Lord! What a gift to be cherished in our hearts!

But Jesus’ enemies had made their way into the house while there was still room. They heard what Jesus had said and they were simultaneously appalled and thrilled. Appalled because what they heard was not something just anyone should say. They were right when they agreed among themselves that no one except God can forgive sins! Their conclusion was that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy! While their first assertion was right their conclusion based upon that assertion couldn’t have been more wrong. And Jesus was ready to demonstrate how wrong they were. This is where our text reminds us that Jesus knows what is in people’s hearts.

Mark 2:8-11 “But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk?’ ¹⁰But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹“I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”

Here we get to Jesus authenticating His divine majesty and the authority of His Word. Against the objection of the scribes Jesus poses the question, “Which is easier to say?” Think about that for a

moment. Jesus didn't ask which is easier to **do**? For mere mortals both choices of healing a paralyzed man or forgiving sins were beyond imagining, simply impossible. In reality the forgiving of sins is further from man's ability. But which is easier to **say**? The one impossible feat demands visible results, the other greater blessing of forgiveness is invisible, and yet requires the authority of God. So Jesus accommodates His enemies and provides evidence of His divine majesty and authority by saying to the paralyzed man, "*Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house!*" (v.11)

Jesus did nothing apart from His Father in heaven. Jesus did not act on mere human authority. **He is the Christ, the Son of the living God!** He possesses the authority to heal, and more importantly, Jesus possesses the authority to forgive sins.

Mark 2:12 "Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw *anything* like this!'"

The authority of Jesus' Word is absolute. His words are not empty words, and they certainly are NOT blasphemous! The people were amazed, and they glorified God! They glorified God in their response to seeing Jesus do what no man could do.

For us the lesson is so significant. Yes, we may draw the comforting conclusion that we may turn to Jesus for help in time of need, knowing that Jesus has the power to help us in our earthly troubles. But there is a greater lesson for us regarding the certainty and the authority of Jesus' Word. His Word is true. His Word is reliable. His Word is powerful to save. Most importantly when Jesus tells us that our sins are forgiven, we may be assured, **our sins are forgiven!** In each of our regular church services we come before the Lord confessing our sins and asking for forgiveness. In response by the authority of Jesus, and according to His command I forgive you your sins. **Only God can forgive sins.** That message is from Jesus, who came down to earth to redeem us with His innocent sufferings and death. Jesus, who is true God with the Father and the Holy Spirit declares your sins forgiven. That is as valid and certain as it gets, for Jesus has revealed that He possesses divine authority in His Word.

We are blessed! Our sins are forgiven! Praise the Lord!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.