

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 30 Jul 2018)**Read - Mark 2: 1-12**

Jesus returns to Capernaum to rest ... The news got out quickly and soon the house was filled to overflowing with people, and people even spilled out into the streets. Into this crowd came four men carrying on a stretcher a friend of theirs who was paralyzed, but they could not get through.... so they climbed on top of the house and cut a hole through the roof and lowered this cripple down. Let's look at the dynamics of this story by taking a look at the principal characters involved.

The first thing is the intervention/involvement of his friends. They took the time and effort to go out and get him and bring him to Jesus... And they did it because they cared. How important are friends? ... If you read the story closely you will discover that this man's forgiveness and his healing was based on faith ... but not his faith. *He was forgiven and healed because of the faith of these friends*

What would we do without friends? ... No, they cannot perform a miracle and make us well again when we are sick. No, they cannot bring back a loved one who has passed away.

But friends can offer a ministry of presence. They can be there when we need them, and that means a lot. This cripple could not have received healing without the faith of his friends.

Prayer: Father, please help me to see and accept the love and concern of my friends, and the love and concern of your friendship.

DAY 2**Read - Mark 2: 1-12**

The second "character" in the story was the crowd who prevented the cripple from seeing Jesus. They actually got in the way of this poor man getting to Jesus. Oh, it was unintentional. There were simply too many people and he could not get in the house. But this illustrates something that we need to hear. We, the church, are sometimes a part of the problem. Several years ago there was a life guard's convention in New Orleans. As the party was in progress a guest, fell in the pool and drowned! This hints at our problem. We have to let people know that we care about them... that we care about their souls. Try to Imagine what that man saw as he lay at the feet of Jesus???

Tony Compolo wrote about an experience he had while in Hawaii. Having jet-lag he went for a walk at two in the morning and stopped at a café for coffee. He overheard the conversation of some prostitutes that tomorrow would be her birthday. Tony there and then arranged a surprise party for her which was a huge success. When it was over he suggested that they pray. The owner called Tony over and asked if he was preacher or something. "Yes, I am," Tony said. "What kind a church do you belong to?" Tony replied, "I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for prostitutes in three in morning." The cook looked at him and said, "No you don't 'cause if you did I would go to that church." Wouldn't we all want to belong to church like that? A church that doesn't block the doors but opens itself up to all who would come in. That's the kind of church I want to go to... where paralysed people get healed.

A CHURCH WHERE I CAN MEET JESUS!!

DAY 3**Read - Mark 2: 1-12**

The third character in the story is the cripple. In Jesus' time if you were sick, people believed it was because God was angry with you because of some sin. And after hearing that for years the man probably began to believe it. He may not have been sure of what it was that he had done, but it must have been a terrible sin because he sure was paying for it. I am sure that there were those in the crowd who said " he made his bed, let him lie in it.

It is so easy to criticize those who suffer. Homeless, convicts, outcasts, poor, sick, lonely, frightened, bereaved. This crippled man represents all such "cripples". But notice that, Jesus did not condemn him, He simply says, "Your sins are forgiven." In these words we hear the root of the man's illness, and of ours. He, like ourselves, was paralyzed by sin.

His main paralysis was not physical but spiritual, So, Jesus offers him forgiveness. Afterwards he is healed and walks, but only afterwards. While the physical healing was a miracle; it was the healing of the man's relationship with God that becomes the centre for us The healing that needed to take place was medical. But deeper than this, he had a religious need. He needed to be forgiven.

And what about us? We, too, need to look inside ourselves, to unlock that hidden door, to take out that unforgiven sin... and get rid of it! But there is only one way, And even if the crowd stands in your way, we must find a way... even if it means tearing a hole in the roof. Then, being lowered to Jesus' feet, do our penitence, pray and find pardon!

Meditate: What do you need to confess to?

DAY 4

Read - Mark 2:1-12; John 9:1-41

The story of a paralysed man and his friends who lower him through the roof so that he can see Jesus is a wonderful account of how friends bring their friends to Christ so that they can deal with their sin and guilt ... And how Jesus tells him *his sins are forgiven!!*

I wonder what that paralysed man thought himself? I wonder if he was punishing himself with the idea that he had somehow disappointed God, and he was paying the penalty for this with paralysis? And he was probably telling himself that he was somehow guilty? Otherwise, *why would Jesus tell him his sins were forgiven?*

But, please note there is another equally powerful story of Jesus in John 9. The story of a man born blind and his healing encounter with Jesus. Encounters with Jesus, are crucial to our own growth, and *especially* when it makes us face up to our guilt and shame. However, We need to be especially careful not to fall into the trap of assuming that healing can only come to those who have sinned. In the case of the man born blind, Jesus does not say he was a sinner, but that he was born as he was. In other words Jesus' deep and great desire is to bring wholeness to us, not just healing! In fact, the Greek word used in scripture for healing is the word 'sozo' which translates in to English as 'wholeness'. This is deeply significant. Wholeness is a much bigger concept than simply healing!. So let's look a little deeper in John's gospel in the next two days.

Prayer: Father, please help me to understand my sinfulness, and grant me your wholeness and forgiveness. Amen

DAY 5

Read - Mark 2:1-12; John 9:1-41

The man born blind, has an amazing, dramatic moment with Jesus. Jesus spits on the ground, makes some mud and puts it on his eyes. Talk about new insight, new vision! He is completely and totally healed, comes back from the pool at Siloam with 20/20 vision, his transformation is total and complete. He even looks different! - vs 8 and 9, "Is this the same man who was begging?" And the man says "It's me all right – I am the man"

The disciples see this once sightless, helpless, grovelling, haunted man, and ask a theological question "who sinned? Who is the guilty one? Was it his parents? Or him? Was it his fault? ... And they think God is judging him. We are still the same today, when something bad happens to someone we automatically think it's because of something they've done, or not done! BUT Jesus didn't see a sinner, a wicked person, someone to look down on.

We each leave behind us a record of our behaviour for others to see. Many will only know us by name but they will hear of, and see, the things we have done. Is our record an example to follow or to avoid? ... Will it be one that the Lord will be pleased with or one that will sadden Him?

In our story Jesus saw a child of God. Blind, yes! but a person of dignity, of worth, a family member! And He loved him and embraced him and healed him. *And this is the way Jesus sees US!* It's not enough to talk about it folks, what pleases God most of all is *when we DO something*. But notice a most important word here in verse 6 is "anoint" the Greek used here is the same word it uses for the word "Christ". And so the word "Christ" means "anointed one" **WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE YOUR EYES, OR YOUR LIFE, "CHRIST- ED"?**

DAY 6

Read - John 9:1-41

Recall the rest of the story with me, Jesus sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam, the people there are amazed, they ask him what happened, he tells them Jesus healed him. Do you think there was great joy, and they all lived happily ever after? NO! The Pharisees are upset, suspicious of everything Jesus is doing. So they interrogate Him, and the man gives them a classic answer, he says "I don't know about rules and regulations, but this I do know, *Once I was blind but now I can see!*" (verse 25) The religious leaders don't have an answer, so they kick him and his family out!

Now, to end this week, three questions.

1. Have your eyes been "Christed?" because *when your eyes have been Christ-ed ... It changes the way you see yourself!*. And then Jesus comes to tell us it's not about ME but about being CHRIST-ED!! A Bishop once said ... "Conversion is moving from 'that belongs to me' to 'I belong to that'"
2. When our eyes have been Christ-ed ... It changes the way we see other people. We see with our hearts and our hearts break when we see the ugliness of our world, when we see people as God sees them, as part of God's family, and we embrace them, help them, love them, care for them, and respect them.
3. It changes the way we see Jesus! - He claims Jesus as the Lord of his life ... verse 38 ... "Lord, I believe". The more we encounter Jesus Christ in our life ... the more we bring our guilt and shame to Him, the more clearly we see God.

So ... Have YOU seen Jesus my Lord?