

Miracles of Jesus 12-05-18a

This is Friday, the 18th of May, 2012. We're studying the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will be looking at the seventh miracle, the healing of the paralyzed man, the paralytic, the man let down through the roof in Capernaum, in our first session this evening.

Let's take a moment as we begin to take our opportunity to go before God's throne of grace and prepare ourselves for the study of His Word. Shall we pray? Father, what a blessing it is to set aside the requirements and tasks and challenges and concerns of the day and spend time with believers who share an enthusiasm for Your Word and Your plan and purpose and for the Lord Jesus Christ and all of the wonderful potentials and opportunities that we have through Him. We thank You for Your watch care over us, Your provision, Your many expressions of grace and compassion on us.

And we thank You that we have not been left orphans. We have Your Spirit who attends to us and comforts us and encourages and guides us. And we have the power and truth of Your Word to illuminate our path.

As we look at Your Word this evening together, we pray that God the Holy Spirit will teach us, each of us will find in it pertinent and applicable things that will help us to live our lives in a way that pleases You and that prepares us for the ages to come for service and reflecting Your glory. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Turn with me to the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 2. As we take a look at this, at least in the order we're taking them, the seventh miracle. These are in roughly chronological order. This is the healing of the paralytic or the paralyzed man.

It is found in three Gospels and as you turn to Mark, you'll see that it's also in Matthew, Chapter 9 and Luke, Chapter 5. And you can see just from those parallel passages that the chronology of these is somewhat vexed. You're nine chapters into Matthew before this story is told, but you're in the second chapter of Mark. And I'm sort of following Mark for purposes of instruction.

And one of the things that's nice about this is if you look in the preceding context in Mark, you can see that Jesus has just healed Peter's mother-in-law in Capernaum. And after saying that he needs to go and preach in other towns and he preaches in the synagogues throughout all Galilee, casting out demons. And then you have the cleansing of the leper, which we also have previously looked at.

And the leper began to go out and proclaim freely. He was not obedient. And Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places.

And they came to him from every direction. And you can infer from this last verse in

Mark, Chapter 1, that they also came to him for a variety of different reasons. They came from every direction.

Some of them came simply for healing, some because they were interested in this unusual phenomena of miraculous events. Some were interested in his teaching. Some were passers-by that went out of their way to see what was going on.

There's a variety of reasons as well as a variety of directions. But in Chapter 2, it says, And again, he entered Capernaum after some days, after a period of days. So we're not too long after the events of Chapter 1, according to Peter, who is being recorded here by Mark.

And it was heard that he was in the house. The house in Capernaum is which house? Where does he stay when he's in Capernaum? He stays in the home of Peter and Andrew, where Peter's mother-in-law dwells. This is the same house that you had back in verse 29 and 30 of Chapter 1. So he is back in the very same house.

What's interesting about this, and I've mentioned a time or two now that there's been archaeology done. Franciscan monks have been working on that site for nearly a century, excavating and they found the octagonal church that had been built there and beneath it, the floor plan and the foundations of the walls of the original house. And they know from what they have discovered that this is the only house in Capernaum that was converted to a place of worship.

And there was a large room that had been sort of the great room of the house that was plastered in the latter part of the first century AD to reflect light. And they find all kinds of candle stubs and lamp wicks and pieces of lamps and things in that plastered room, which means people were meeting there, especially at night for some sort of convocation. Well, why would they do that in Capernaum and why would it be that spot? It stands to reason that it was recognized that this was the Apostle Peter's house.

And as people are wont to do, they assigned special significance to the location. But what's very interesting is when you go and look at the floor plan of this house, this house was constructed along the plan that most of the houses in Capernaum were over the preceding decades. And it was made of black basalt rocks, large boulders that were stacked up, and then smaller rocks were pounded into the cracks.

And because of this construction, it could not support a very heavy roof. So the roof would be made of thatch or wood or something relatively light. Later on, when they converted this to a place of worship, and they wanted to plaster it and put a solid roof on it, they had to put in pillars to support a more substantial roof.

But when Peter was living there, Peter and Andrew and their families, this would only be a single-story home, and it had this kind of roof. Well, this explains why parts of the roof

are removable. And if you've ever seen a Bible story book, and it looks like they're taking great slabs off of some sort of stone roof, this isn't it at all.

It's branches and thatch and so on that's light and not difficult to make an opening in. So he entered Capernaum. He is at the house, and everybody knows the house where Jesus can be found when he's staying at Peter's house.

Immediately, many gathered together so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And again, if you look at this floor plan, there is a handout with a diagram in the root of the FTP folder for our Bible classes that you can look at. I can show you a diagram here on the break.

But it's a multi-room house, but they all kind of flow together. It's kind of an open floor plan, if you will. So people could be all over the house and still hear Jesus teaching clearly.

But it's packed. It's standing room only. And people who come late, all they see is the backs of people who are in all of the openings and windows and everything else.

And you can't really see Jesus, although you can probably hear him. So he preached the word to them. And you remember in this same context, in chapter 1, verse 38, let us go to the next towns that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.

It is the communication of the word. What specifically? Is he just telling Bible stories? Is he rehearsing Old Testament narratives? This is the gospel of the kingdom. The time has come.

The time is at hand. God is ready to fulfill his Old Testament covenant promises. Jesus is not yet specifically advertising himself as the anointed one, as the conquering king.

He has been identified by John at the Jordan as the lamb of God, the suffering servant who will take away their sins. This is a necessary precursor. And as we're going to see in our second session tonight, the cleansing, the redemption, the blood atonement is necessary before the blessings can come.

The sin problem has to be solved before fellowship and communion and blessing can occur. So this Jesus, first things first. This is his priority.

People have to understand the need for actual redemption, not symbolic redemption. The blood of goats and bulls does not take away sin. This is the message of substantial portions of the book of Hebrews.

So people are listening and Jesus is teaching. This isn't really a healing session. People are all seated there and they are there for Bible class.

It's church and it has been going on for hours. So there's a calm. People are seated.

People are listening. Then they came to him bringing a paralytic who was carried by four and when they could not come near him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was. And these men are enterprising.

They get up on the roof. They can hear through the roof where Jesus is and they just do kind of sound location. Maybe they can see through a few little cracks.

And they say, well, he must be in here in this great room, probably the largest room. And so they just start removing the roof. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

You know what's great about this? They hatched this plan while they were still on the ground. They looked at the situation. They said we're never going to get in there.

But they figured out how to get on the roof. They realized that they could take the roof apart and make a hole large enough and they carried some line up with them. There are four men.

There's probably four lines to stabilize the thing, make sure they don't dump this poor paralyzed guy out from a height of, you know, 8, 10, 12 feet high. But this took planning. It took some provisioning and so on.

And so this is what they... You want to flip that? This is what they do. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven you.

Now notice, it doesn't say when they saw his faith. It's when he saw their faith. So this is sort of a group.

Are these men family members? Are they friends? Is the paralytic himself included in the group that has faith? It would appear to be so. But they're all together. This is a group of like-minded believers.

And Jesus sees their faith. Their faith as a group. Four or five men here.

And he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven you. This tells us that this was probably a young man. If he was an old, grizzled, gray beard, Jesus probably wouldn't say son.

And so you would figure that he must be somewhat younger than the Lord Jesus, who is about 30 years of age at this point. So he's maybe a teenager. He's large enough that it takes four men to carry him, but not so old that Jesus can't address him as a junior.

And Jesus doesn't say what you might expect. Be healed. Stand on your feet.

Show us a jig. Do the waltz. He says, son, your sins are forgiven you.

And you have to wonder, what is going through the minds of these men who have climbed the building, taken apart the roof, let down the man. And Jesus sees him and says, son, your sins are forgiven you. Do they get it? Do they realize that this is a greater gift than a physical healing? What is Jesus preaching? Gospel of the kingdom? And what is the necessary precursor to the blessings and the cohabitation with God in the kingdom? Got to solve the sin problem.

Jesus uses this occasion to emphasize his point. Why does John not say, behold the Mashiach, the conquering king, who will drive the Romans out of our land by the Jordan? Could he not have said this? Would it have not been true? What does John say? Behold the lamb that takes away sin. This is necessary.

This is first. And this is obviously, clearly, part of what Jesus is teaching to this group of quiet students who have come to hear him teach. And you get the idea that Capernaum must have been a great town in these days.

You've got Peter, Andrew, James, John, Zebedee, and this whole house full of people who are content to listen to Jesus teach. And then here come these four men with this paralyzed guy, and they are men of faith. And you think, wow, what a great place for a church.

And you get the idea that some of these same people might have been the ones who later met at Peter's house and said, I remember when I saw Jesus here. Some of the young people would by then be old, but they could recount the days when Jesus was there and some of the things that he taught. They might have shared portions of Jesus' Bible classes in those meetings.

And in that first century gathering in Capernaum, there continued, obviously, to have been people who were very interested. And by the way, inscriptions that they have found on pieces of this plaster that have fallen from that are not only in Greek, but the oldest ones are in Aramaic, which tells you that these were Jewish Christians who were meeting in this place. And along with the mentions of various things related to first century Christianity, it's in Aramaic.

So it's very early. And many of these same people might have been there decades later. So some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, why does this man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone? Now, is this a legitimate question? Well, it kind of depends.

If you recognize that someone is pointing out a scriptural truth, then anybody who can support what he's saying from Scripture can say this is a scriptural truth. I can say Jesus is returning it because I say it doesn't make it happen. I'm just pointing out a truth.

But if I say Jesus is returning tomorrow at 11 o'clock because I've asked Him to, that would be a different thing. Now I'm inserting myself in claiming that I have some sort of sway and some sort of authority over the plan and purpose of God. Their assumption is that Jesus is somehow invoking God's forgiving authority.

And they deduce correctly because He can. The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, as He will soon point out. But they claim that this is a blasphemy because only God can forgive sins.

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? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Arise, take up your bed, and walk? Now, what is the answer to that question? Which is easier? To effect physical healing for a paralyzed man, this man's probably got some sort of neurological damage, maybe a spinal cord injury of some sort, and of long standing. So, which is easier? If we were sitting there in the crowd, could we answer that? Which is easier, to heal the man's paralysis, or to invoke and pronounce the forgiveness of his sins? Which is actually easier? The healing is easier. This is going to be an a fortiori argument.

And Jesus is going to argue from the visible to the invisible. The Pharisees know, Well, I can certainly pronounce, You know, there are priests who can pronounce forgiveness of sin down at the temple, right? Go through the proper ritual, bring the Moses-ordained sacrifices and so on, and your sins are pronounced forgiven. You are reconciled with God.

You've waited until sundown, if you're ritually unclean or whatever, and now it's in the past, it's gone. But no priest, no physician anywhere in Israel could heal paralysis. So Jesus says, Well, let me ask you a question.

Which is easier? To say your sins are forgiven, or to say, rise, take up your bed, and walk to a paralyzed man? Well, the Pharisees can answer this question in their mind. As hard as it may be, or it may be in the province of God, but forgiveness of sin is harder than... So, that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, he says to the paralytic, I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house. Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, we never saw anything like this.

Well, there's a lot to cover in a short amount of time here, and we're only going to be able to hit the high points. First of all, the question that Jesus asks, because he doesn't immediately heal the man, even though that's obviously why he has been let down through the roof. He doesn't come halfway down and say, Lord, could you forgive my sins? He's let down quite manifestly and obviously to indicate his physical handicap.

But Jesus makes a point of saying, which is easier, this visible thing or the invisible thing? If I can do the visible thing, then it's a demonstration that I have the authority to do the invisible thing, and that's what he does. The paralyzed man is a picture of human beings, the human race, and even believers. Notice he says, my son, which indicates relationship.

He doesn't say, hey, pilgrim, or hey, stranger, your sins. He says, my son, and he sees their faith. These are people who already believe.

This is a picture really of the Old Testament saint. This is similar to Paul in Romans, saying, I was alive once apart from the law, but when the law came, sin revived, and I died. And what I don't want to do, that I do.

And what I want to do, that I don't do. The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. Who will deliver me from the body of this death? In my spirit, I want to walk, but my body is paralyzed by sin.

Who will deliver me from this body, Paul says. It's a picture, and this is the end of the Old Testament age. Jesus uses this as a picture.

And he says, look, when sin is forgiven, the paralysis can be overcome. Which does Jesus do first? Does he heal him and then say, your sins are forgiven? No, he forgives his sins, then he heals them. And this is a powerful reminder that our fundamental problems are not physical, they're not earthly, they're not temporal.

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Our struggle is spiritual, and our victory begins with overcoming sin. Dealing with sin.

The blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanseth us from all sin. This is what enables us to walk in the light. This is what enables us to walk in the truth.

This is what enables the power of God to be active and meaningful. This is what the illuminating ministry of both the spirit of God and the word of God can do in our lives when sin is first dealt with. And to the extent that we let sin crop up in our lives and it isn't dealt with, it is not confessed, it is not expunged, it's not just a matter of confessing, it's not just a matter of first John one-nining, or rebounding, or whatever you want to call it.

It is a matter of walking in the light. Walking in the light is to remove ourselves from sin, to seek to not commit it, to not perpetuate it. And we do this because the son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, cleanses us from all sin.

Well, the basis for this forgiveness is faith. The prerequisite is faith. The basis is actually the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is applied here in prospect.

But the qualification to receive that forgiveness is faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him. He that comes to God must believe.

So, He saw their faith and He says, My son, your sins are forgiven. Not an accident that it is. And by the way, it says your sins, plural.

This is another indication that this man is a believer. It's not his Adamic sin. It's not his inherent sin.

It's not conceived in iniquity, born in sin, sin. This is sins. This is transgressions.

This is what we do even though we are believers. Your sins, plural, are forgiven you. This is reconciliation.

This is God embracing His people, His children because of faith. Faith makes it possible for God to express His love, compassion, and grace. It is the approach to God in faith that qualifies us for forgiveness.

That's true at salvation, and it's true after salvation. Approaching God in faith qualifies us for forgiveness, and it is a necessary ingredient. Jesus pronounces forgiveness based on that observed faith.

And if you want to keep your finger here, in fact, I'll just read it. John 20, 23, If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.

This is when Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on His disciples, and He says, You have the authority. He doesn't say this until He has breathed on them the Holy Spirit. Why? This specific ministry of the Holy Spirit on the soon-to-be apostles will give them the perception to recognize faith.

God, the Holy Spirit, has the authority to forgive sins. The apostles will be able to pronounce it because they will be able to recognize it, and it will always be on this basis based on faith. So John 20, 23 is a helpful cross-reference there.

Now, there's all kinds of things you could say about this passage, and we did a very extensive coverage of this episode in our John study. If you go to early April 2007, we were in the first part of John chapter 5, very detailed. But here's some things we did not mention at that time.

First of all, do you notice anything about the physical movement of this story? How does the paralyzed man get in? Through the roof. Why? The room is so packed, the house is so packed, he can't get in. Now, these people are ostensibly there for Bible class.

These are people who are interested in Jesus teaching the Word, right? Now, four of us carrying a fifth one of us comes up to this group of God-fearing, Bible-believing, Christ-

listening people, and we say, we've got a paralyzed man here, I'd like to take him to the Lord. Nobody moves. Nobody gets out of the way.

It's almost a symbolic expression of the fact that sometimes people in church are the biggest obstacle of people getting to Christ. So focused on what I'm going to get in church that I don't have any sensitivity to those who are trying to get to the Lord Jesus. Now, how do I know that they could have moved? How does the man get out of the room? When Jesus says, Arise, take up your bed and walk, does he say, Well, men, heist me up.

You know, his four friends are still on the roof. You realize this, right? The other four guys are still up there. They let him down.

It doesn't say then they shinnied on down. It wasn't a fireman pull. They let him down.

They're still up on the roof. How does this man get out? Do they pull him back up? He takes up his bed and walks out of the house. Now, why is it that the people part for him to leave, but they don't part for him to come in? What does that say about us who are in church, who are listening to the word of the Lord? We need to be sensitive to those who are seeking to come to the Lord, who have faith, who want to come to him and receive whatever they need.

Forgiveness of sins, hear the word taught, but there's there is a sense of callousness or insensitivity on the part of the, well, I've got a good seat and I don't want to give it up. You know, I had a hard enough time getting this close to hear the Lord. And I just really don't want to move for you.

There's five guys coming in. I'm going to be pushed five people further away. No, sorry, you could find another way in.

It's a rebuke in a sense of the people who are sitting there. They have no problem moving when the guy leaves. He didn't say, and behold, the man climbed over everybody in the crowd to get out.

They part, there was room for them to make a path. And they didn't do it on the way in. When Jesus says, take up your bed and walk, mysteriously now there's enough room for him to walk right out of the house with his pallet.

And if he didn't untie the ropes, he's dragging those four ropes behind him as well. Goes right on out. So we want to be aware that coming to church, listening to the teaching of the word of God is not just a selfish action for ourselves.

We want to be sensitive to those one another commands. And the other thought here is, who is Jesus looking at and looking for? He is looking for people of faith. How many times in a healing does he say, your faith has made you whole, your faith has made you well.

On the basis of your faith, your sins are forgiven. When the Son of Man comes again, will he find faith on the earth? And this is the question we can ask ourselves. Am I operating on faith? Is faith an active part of what I do? And faith will result in love, looking out not only for our own interests, but also for the interests of others.

So there is a principle here of faith, and you find this in our concluding passage here in Colossians chapter 2. You look at Colossians 2 and verse 6. As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. How did we receive Christ Jesus the Lord? By faith, right? As you have received Christ by faith, so walk in him by faith, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith. Faith has an object, and it is the faith, the word of God.

As you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. What does it say in Romans chapter 1? When they knew him, they glorified him not as God. Neither were they thankful, but they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Neither were they thankful. Humility expresses itself in thanksgiving. This is why good prayers always begin with thanksgiving.

It is a reminder of our humility in approach to God, recognition that we have nothing to commend us to God. It is only by his grace and by the work of the Lord Jesus that we have the privilege of approach, and we ought to be thankful. Rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

So, of the many things that you can say about this episode, the emphasis here is twofold. One is the man and his friends and their expression of faith. The other is, sort of in contrast, all of those people who had assembled to hear the teaching of the Lord Jesus, but what is the level of their faith? What is the expression of their faith? Does it work itself out in love? Is there looking out for the interests of others? Is there sensitivity to the needs of this man? It appears not.

And then the third element, of course, are the scribes and Pharisees who are hung up on the details of the law. There is a technicality here. He is claiming forgiveness of sin.

On what basis? And they are tangled up with that. And so Jesus makes a point. Well, let me... And the point of this miracle is to argue from this visible healing to the more important and more difficult invisible reality of forgiveness of sin.

Why does sin need to be forgiven? Because sin is a problem. We think our problems are physical. We think our problems are circumstantial.

We think our problems are people and can't get ahead, can't get where we want to be, can't have what we want to have and do what we want to do, see what we want to see, accomplish what we want to accomplish. We think that our problems are in the physical

realm. This tends to be our prayer and our focus.

The Word of God tells us over and over again, if you want those things to fall into place, solve the more difficult problem. Solve the God power problem of sin. Look at where the difficulty actually is.

Let God use His power to solve that problem and all these other things will be added unto you. Well, it's a great, great illustration of the compassion of the Lord Jesus along with these great theological truths. We'll pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to look at miracle number eight, which is the man at the Pool of Bethesda, one of my favorite all-time miracle accounts, the Pool of Bethesda. So let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll be in the Gospel of John.