

WELCOME 10th February 2019 – 5 Epiphany '19 C

Luke 5:17-26

Good morning! Welcome to worship today!

It happens often enough...I'll be asked, Did you see/hear ____? No I was looking at/ doing/busy...just missed it. Whether it's someone I know but didn't acknowledge in the shops because I was focused on my stuff...or something said in our house or something that happened outside of my area of interest...didn't have my phone... Sometimes I miss stuff. You too? Yeah it happens...

When that happens...you can sometimes miss something wonderful...a baby's 1st steps, a child's excitement over something they've accomplished, a word from a spouse or a friend, an invitation you'd enjoy receiving...but you missed it.

Today we'll see folks miss out on life...life restored...life made new...life made whole...life that is a gift... It sounds like this *"Who does he think he is? Only God can forgive sins!"* & you can see the faces behind those words. Jesus saw it too...*"Why do you question this in your hearts? Is it easier to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up & walk'?" So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins."* Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man & said, *"Stand up, pick up your mat, & go home!"* and he did...praising God.

You see, there is more than one kind of paralysis. There is the paralysis of the body caused by disease/age/injury there is also the paralysis of the soul caused by sin. Jesus came for both...to heal both...to surprise all of us with his love his forgiveness his dying & rising to give us life that never ends...to give us life eternal that leads to life in its fullness now.

Jesus is not a sideshow circus performer. He wants you satisfied in him...not in his miracles. He wants your life to be filled & fulfilled in relationship to him not just in what he can do for you. Forgiveness is what restores our place as a child of God Forgiveness...closes the distance between where we are & where God the Father, who made us in love for his love, desires that we be. Forgiveness is that gift we receive & are then called to share as freely as we have received it...

We'll explore & experience that today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of healing & wholeness, we come with thanksgiving for all the evidence of your goodness & mercy - found not only in stories of old, but in our lives today. Lives bruised with tragedy find consolation when touched by your gracious Spirit. Lives scarred with suffering or rejection have hope renewed through the power of the living Christ. We praise you for hearts & lives transformed by your grace & strength & we pray that our lives will reflect your kindness. Arouse in us a love like yours so that we reach out to this wounded troubled world with the compassion of Christ, proclaiming the gospel with boldness & integrity to friends & strangers alike. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

5 EPIPHANY '19 C – WAYPOINTS: THE WAY OF LIFE

- FAITH CHAT:**
1. Please finish the sentence, "My life would be so much better if..."
 2. What are some things that cause life for you to "get stuck?"

Ok - trivia time: Who 1st said, "Keep your friends close & your enemies closer." Some believe it was Sun-Tzu, famous Chinese general/military strategist (c. 500 BC Art of War). "Michael Corleone" (Al Pacino) used that line in the movie The Godfather Pt II. But the original was Niccolò Machiavelli in "The Prince" which is the definitive work on how to become a dictator. I haven't lost my mind BUT I think about that when I'm reading the gospels & I read this: *One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees & teachers of religious law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee & Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.)* Why? What are they doing there?

All they do is argue/accuse/attack...Well... Remember last week Jesus said, *What blessings await you when people hate you & exclude you & mock you & curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man. When that happens, be happy! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. Remember, their ancestors treated the ancient prophets that same way.* He would later say: *If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.* When you live so out of step with the world's values & you engage in life in such a way that so reflects the life of Jesus growing in you that the world has to attack you or prove itself failing – world has to try to destroy you or admit defeat... if it doesn't try to kill you the world admits it's dying...It has always been that way. It will always be that way. 21st century anti-Christian spirit is the same as what's stared Jesus in the face/killed prophets.

But that's crazy because these are religious guys...These are Jewish guys just like Jesus...Right? Wrong. They are religious leaders. They are Jewish. But they are nothing like Jesus. Pharisees & religious lawyers...? Their influence arose after the Jews came back to Israel from exile in Babylon (c 500BC) They believed Israel's survival & return to dominance & the eventual coming of God's kingdom on earth depended on hyper-intense observance of the OT law & they developed a massive legal code that grew outward/around the 10 Commandments & the basic OT Law God had given Moses. Scholars say they built a "fence" around the commandments. 613 little laws that were like speedbumps to keep you from actually violating any of the 10 Cs Slowed you down "out here" b/4 you got to here. As time passed, their rules became even more binding than the Scriptures, & more oppressive...& because they appeared 'good' they garnered more power/control...spiritually & politically.

So...They came to try & catch Jesus in false teaching. They were listening closely to find some hole in his theology...some violation of OT Law they could silence him. Truth will always find opposition from belief systems that seek to control or manipulate people or keep them in darkness for their own selfish gain.

So Jesus is teaching & those guys are hanging on every word looking for a chance to shout "Ah HA! Gotcha!" Lk says "God's healing power is strong" at this point & that likely had 'em stirred up too...'cos they couldn't do that...Right in the middle of this intense house-full of stuff 4 guys show up with a paralyzed man on his pallet so Jesus can heal him. They can't get through the crowd that's packed like a Sydney train @ peak hour so they dig through the roof... bits of mud & clay & dust & bird feathers & straw come dribbling down into the room...they dig their way in & lower the guy down on his mat... whatever that looks like...Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof & took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

A couple of observations...**Some men**...we often read this like they are the paralyzed guy's friends. Doesn't say that. *Some men*...Handful of randoms show up with a guy who may or may not want to be there...who may or may not have asked to be there but there they are. BUT AT LEAST the fellas doing the carrying digging & lowering are convinced Jesus can heal this other guy. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man (Friend - My child), your sins are forgiven." Hang on...nobody asked for that. The presumption of everybody in the room & the 4 guys still on the roof with their heads poking through the hole is something like "get up & walk yourself on home." Everybody. Everybody. Everybody is expecting some version of "You're healed."

Nobody is expecting..."You're forgiven." Jesus does eventually heal the man & tell him to get up pick up his mat & go home...But those who saw Jesus as a threat were fully lit because he forgave the guy's sins...and asked for nothing in return. He didn't say IF you do X then...I'll forgive you/heal you. He simply forgave...What? Look...

The Judaism of Jesus' day & certainly that of the Pharisees/religious lawyers in the room with Jesus had more in common with Hinduism than OT faith. They lived a Jewish version of Karma. Karma says you get what you have coming to you. Karma says what you put in is what you get out. Karma says what you give is what you get. Karma says what goes around comes around. Karma says God will do for you in proportion to what you do for God. Karma is how most

people in our culture view faith in Christ; including some Christians. It's karma not Jesus that says this horrible nightmare in my life is happening for a reason. It's karma not Jesus that says God is doing this to me - this diagnosis, this disease this disaster- because of that sin I did. I messed up therefore this It's karma not Jesus that says if I just do my part (pray, serve the poor, go to church, give) then God will do his part & bless me. Karma is just another word for "Law." And whatever else karma & law are...they are decidedly not grace & decidedly not Jesus. The guy on the floor to whom Jesus speaks has done nothing. Maybe he believes nothing. Jesus sees "their faith" – the faith of "some men" & pronounces the paralyzed man forgiven...& "friend - child"?

You see, there is more than one kind of paralysis. There is the paralysis of the body caused by disease/age/injury. There is also the paralysis of the soul caused by sin & the effects of sin...broken relationships hurt us...loneliness cripples us...anger breaks us...anxiety keeps us bed ridden...apathy blinds us...our past cuts deep & covers us in scars...self-interest/indulgence impoverishes us...mistaken belief ties us up. (that was the Pharisees & religious lawyers & that's a whole lotta folks we know – they've got this mistaken worldview/belief system & they're stuck – paralyzed – in a life holding pattern that spirals toward crash)

Nobody is expecting... "You're forgiven" to be the game changer... My life would be so much better if... How many "ifs" do you think you conjure up in a week? Ifs about family, \$\$, health, circumstances, church, shame, guilt, loss, job/boss/spouse. And if I asked you again in 6 months? Different answers? 6 weeks? 6 minutes? But Jesus knows you better than you do. Jesus knows full well what you **think** you need to make your life complete. But Jesus knows what you need. Jesus can meet any & every need but he always meets your deepest need. Always. Hear me? Always.

"Young man (Friend - My child), your sins are forgiven." Because these hearts are never content... they will always latch onto something new/enticing for security - fulfillment - completeness - happiness – satisfaction. It is that unceasing indiscriminate longing that he seeks to still/fill with himself... his grace... his love... his presence... his Spirit. Jesus invites you to trust that he knows better than you do. He knows your problem, he knows your need & by his life/death/rez/rule for you/me he addresses precisely what we need. Restored relationship w/ the Father - righteousness not our own - grace upon grace - blessing upon blessing. "Friend - My child, your sins are forgiven."

Jesus is not a sideshow circus performer. He wants you satisfied in him... not in his miracles. He wants your life to be filled & fulfilled in relationship to him not just in what he can do for you. Forgiveness is what restores our place as a child of God Forgiveness... closes the distance between where we are & where God the Father, who made us in love for his love, desires that we be. Forgiveness is that gift we receive & are then called to share as freely as we have received it...

It's striking... We always think forgiveness is nice – sweet – kind. We tell our kids to say I forgive you if someone apologizes for hurting them... every primary school teacher in town knows you tell kids to say sorry & I forgive you... BUT forgiveness is nice only if you believe you need it. The one who pronounces forgiveness, after all then, is the one with authority, the one with power. More to the point, the one who forgives is the one with the power & authority to judge. Forgiveness, always holds w/in it an assumption of the need for forgiveness. And the folks who were not at all tuned into/turned on by Jesus were not willing to concede to Jesus such authority or admit their own need for forgiveness, especially not from him. "Who has the power to forgive other than God?" Therefore Jesus has blasphemed... according to them.

And THERE is a tragedy that replays itself over & over again to this day. In their refusal to admit need or acknowledge Jesus' divine power they miss the very event of the healing altogether. A man who has been paralyzed is healed, restored, made new... Life has been restored. Joy has blown out the rest of the roof & all 4 walls. Yet that passes them by. Caught up in a concern with rules authority & power, they miss the grace & wonder of God in their midst. Right before their eyes!

I understand... I hate it but I understand. They were used to things working a certain way. They had a clear understanding of how God was supposed to do stuff. They had a box for God & Jesus didn't do boxed. They had assumptions about divine power & what God should or ought to do. They had that "If I were God I would..." "If God is really there..." mentality. To be stuck in that worldview of how God should or ought to be, they missed the unpredictable irrepressible love of God that is always doing new things through unexpected people, all for the sake of healing, comfort, grace life joy hope... (ICC &/or Robber story)

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ² And because you belong to him, the power^[a] of the life-giving Spirit has freed you^[b] from the power of sin that leads to death. ³ The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature.^[c] So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. Romans 8:1-3

God in the grace & forgiveness of Jesus Christ does what the law can never do...and he does that for you.

You see, there is more than one kind of paralysis. There is the paralysis of the body caused by disease; there is also the paralysis of the soul caused by sin. Jesus came for both... to surprise all of us with his love his forgiveness his dying & rising to give us life that never ends...to give us life eternal that leads to life in its fullness now...to restore us to our place as a child of God...to draw us from where we are to where God the Father who made us in love for his love desires that we be. Forgiveness is that gift we receive & are then called to share as freely as we have received it...

Let's pray with that in mind

Lord Jesus we seek your presence knowing that in you is the Father's greatest grace. Hold us close and lead us from where we are deeper into the Father's love and deeper in his embrace of this broken world and its broken people. Make us signs of your kingdom and agents of your saving grace. Make us bold and confident and compassionate. Make us like you. We pray in your holy Name...Amen