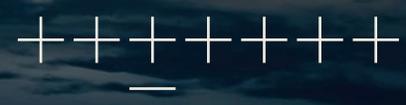


WEEK 3

THE WONDER OF FORGIVENESS

JESUS HEALS A PARALYTIC

Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, 'My child, your sins are forgiven.'" -Mark 2:5



Day 1: Monday

Scripture: *Mark 2:1-12*

INTRODUCTION

This week, we examine another miracle and healing by Jesus, but we may be surprised to learn there are two miracles and healings here. One is a physical healing, but one is a spiritual healing that takes place before the physical. This week, we will experience an unexpected miracle and healing that is greater than we can imagine. As you study Mark 2 and the healing of the paralyzed man take time to reflect upon your own heart, your own faith, your own awareness or openness to God and His miracles. Specifically, seek the Lord to help you see and reflect on the greater work and miracle that we often miss here, the miracle of forgiveness.

Reflection

Go back and re-read Mark 2:1-12. Write down or think through what parts of this passage stand out to you and why? What are some things you have questions about from this passage? Finally, ask God to help you this week be open to what this healing has to say to you about Him and how you might respond to Him with greater awe and wonder.

Day 2: Tuesday

Scripture: *Mark 2:1-5, Matthew 7:7-8, James 1:12*

THE MIRACLE OF PERSEVERANCE

When we truly believe in the power of God's presence and care for us, there is nothing that feels out of reach for God to be able to do. One of the great hopes of this study is that your sense of spiritual imagination and belief increases. As you look upon the works of Jesus, we hope you will find your spirit uplifted and your mind opened to the works and abilities of God. We are invited to witness this in the example of Jesus healing a paralytic, but what's unique in this miracle is that it isn't solely what the Lord does but what God's people do, spurred on by their courageous faith in Him.

Jesus works a miracle in healing this man, physically and spiritually, but we can easily miss the miracle hidden in the response of his faithful friends. They carried him a long distance, pushed through exhaustion, and then faced an unexpected barrier: a crowded house. Though they were close, they couldn't get in. Instead of giving up, they acted with urgent faith and did the unthinkable, they carried him up to the roof.

Next, they dig, rip, and tear through the roof of Jesus' home and lower their friend down to the Lord. What a scene. What strength. What courage. What impossibly miraculous, perseverant faith they must have.

In the miracles of Jesus, we are drawn into amazement and wonder at who He is. But when we look closely at the people in those stories, we often find a measure of awe and wonder in the strength of their faithful perseverance. In many ways, faith itself is a miracle. For anyone to have faith, knowing how sinful, broken, and corrupt we are, and how cruel, selfish, and broken this world can be, it is a wonder that any of us has even a small measure of faith. Yet the miracle of faith, when it is placed in the One who is faithful, not only allows us to persevere but to grow deeper in faith.

Reflection

Let us be reminded of what it means to be faithful. Faith should move us toward God's door, to knock, to pound, to cry out until we find ourselves back in His arms. Let us also remember the power of our faith community and the miracles that can grow from shared faith. Our community helps lead us to God's door and stand with us as we knock, pound, and press our way back to Him.

Today, reach out to your faith community, someone in your small group, someone you sit near on Sundays, a staff member or pastor, or a close friend, and ask them what they need you to faithfully and persistently bring to the Lord on their behalf. Remember, this power and intention of the church to carry one another faithfully to the feet of Jesus.

Day 3: Wednesday

Scripture: *Mark 2:1-5*

THE MIRACLE OF FORGIVENESS

There are moments in Scripture that paint a clear, dramatic, and powerful picture. This miracle is certainly one of them. The author isn't adding extra drama; this story doesn't need it; it is already powerful in its own right. Jesus returns home after a long journey of preaching and healing in nearby villages. Word spreads, and people flock to His house. So many gather that no one can even get through the door.

Then four sojourners come, carrying their paralyzed friend, desperate for Jesus' healing. Blocked by the crowd, they climb onto the roof, tear it open, let sunlight pour into the room, and lower their friend on his mat down to Jesus' feet. After all this effort, after all this faith, surely now comes the miracle everyone is expecting. But what does Jesus do? *"Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, 'My child, your sins are forgiven'"* (v. 5).

If we're honest, this is not what we expect. It almost feels like a disappointment. After all they did, after all the determination it took to bring their friend to the feet of the Healer, Jesus forgives his sins? As Christians, we know that this should matter most, but it still feels like something is missing. Where is the physical healing they were hoping for, and are waiting to see?

We cannot miss what Jesus is doing here. Ever the teacher, Jesus, is showing us something. He teaches that His greatest miracle is something that each of us can receive right now: forgiveness. Physical healing is a beautiful gift, and many people can participate in that work through training, skill, and knowledge. Humans can learn in some measure how to heal bodies. But there is something no human, no power, no idol, no entity can do, no one can forgive sins or heal a broken, corrupted heart. Only Jesus can heal what is truly paralyzed within us: the soul.

Here, He shows that His greatest miracle is forgiveness. Without the touch of the true Physician, we are not only broken in this life, but lost for eternity. His word heals the man's soul first, and in doing so, invites all of us into the wonder of the grace of forgiveness that is still being offered to us today.

Reflection

Re-read Mark 2:1-12, but this time through the reminder of what Jesus' greatest miracle is, and see if this narrative hits you a little differently. Allow yourself to be filled with the wonder of Jesus forgiving our sinfulness and brokenness.

Now, take a moment to pray. Thank God for His miracle of forgiveness. Ask Him to bless you with this miracle now, and if this is your first time seeking this miracle from Him, know that you're opening yourself to the greatest miracle and healing you will ever know. Also, make sure to share this great news with those in your faith community!

Day 4: Thursday

Scripture: *Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26*

THE MIRACLE OF HEALING

The ripples of yesterday's dramatic first miracle echo in what we look at today as we continue this account of Jesus healing the paralyzed man. In measure with the extravagance of Jesus healing this paralyzed man's soul by forgiving him of his sins, the teachers of the Torah become outraged.

The teachers are outraged: "Only God has authority over the soul!" They recognize the seriousness of Jesus' claim, even if they reject it. Yesterday, we discussed our own disappointment when Jesus forgave this man's sins before healing him, and how that often stems from overlooking the deeper work Jesus came to do. The teachers, however, understand the weight of His words; they just aren't ready to accept what they mean.

So Jesus meets them where they are. He asks why they are confused, then proves His authority in a way they can see. If they think healing a body is harder than healing a soul, He will show them. He tells the paralyzed man to get up and walk, and he does! Jesus shows that He has power over both body and soul, and that the greater miracle has always been the saving of the soul, the unseen internal work.

In his commentary, William Barclay notes another notable aspect of Jesus' response to the teachers here. He writes, "*Jesus also met the scribes on their own scholarly ground. The Rabbis had a saying, 'There is no sick man healed of his sickness until all his sins have been forgiven him'... to the Jews a sick man was a man with whom God was angry.*" Jesus shows them the truth; He is Lord of all, and He has come to bring restoration, not vengeance upon His people.

Reflection

For some of us, we have lost the truth of who Jesus is and what He can do. We are like the scribes but flipped. We believe He can do invisible work within our souls, but we have lost sight of the holy wonder of what He can do in our physical lives, whether that is physical healing, relational healing, or personal healing.

Take a moment to sit silently and ask the Lord to help you be touched by Him with a sense of wonder and belief about what He can do. Take an extended time to do this. Recollect the wonderful things you have read in Scripture, heard Him do in the lives of others, and maybe even have seen Him do in your own life. Finally, bring before Him the things you wish to see Him do, heal, and restore. Open your heart to the wonder of the Lord, and see what He may do.

Day 5: Friday

Scripture: *Mark 2:1-12, Matthew 9:1-8*

AMAZEMENT AND PRAISE

If you haven't noticed it yet, there is a theme that seems to happen often after Jesus' miracles. Amazement. Awe. Wonder. Sometimes there's even praise as we see here. These are the natural responses to what seem to be such supernatural works. God acts beyond our expectations and the order of nature. At least, that's how it feels to us.

What Jesus is really doing here, though, is restoring order. We are people of the world; naturally, we have been raised in a broken and disordered world. We are so used to pain, sickness, hurt, and confusion that this seems right or orderly to us. It is reasonable in light of what we have seen and know about the world, but it is important to recognize that none of these things are orderly. None of the distorted things of this world are part of God's intended and created order. This world has been fractured by the corruption of sin, but what Jesus demonstrates through His miracles is that He is here to restore order.

This world is being made right by the Lord. It is slow but powerful and intentional work. One day, the Lord will rapidly upend the destitute and disordered world and bring righteousness and order to reign supremely again. What this means for us today is that we are called to open our eyes to the Lord, to His heart of order and making what is wrong right, and to respond in the natural, appropriate way of amazement and praise.

Reflection

When was the last time you were amazed by something? Why did you feel amazement? What did that amazement lead you to do/how did you respond to it?

Today, seek opportunities to be amazed by God. Look for the ways He is bringing order, wonder, and miracles to this world. At each sign or reminder of this work, take time to praise Him.

Day 6: Saturday

Reflection Day

REFLECTION NOTES AND QUESTIONS:

This week, we continued our study of Wonderful Things: The Miracles of Jesus by looking at Jesus' miracle of forgiveness. As we wrap up this week's study, reread Mark 2:1-12. As you study this passage again, reflect on the miracle of Jesus' forgiveness. Open your heart to the wonderful things He shows us each day about His forgiveness, and open yourself to the awe and wonder of how He exercises this forgiveness in and around us each day.

Reflect on how these words shape our lives. Reflect/journal your thoughts on the following prompts:

- What does this miracle reveal about Jesus and how does this change the way I follow Him?
 - What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
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Day 7: Sunday

Rest Day

Join us for worship today and prepare your heart to engage with next week's study of God and His word. Use your time today to rest, pray, and reflect on this week's readings.

