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In this morning's Gospel, we hear St Matthew's story of the healing of the paralytic, which abbreviates St Mark's account. St Mark's fuller story reads like a burial-scene. The paralytic is helpless as the dead, he is carried out like the dead by his four bearers, four friends; unable to carry the paralytic into the crowded house, they carry him onto the roof where a hole is opened for him, as for the dead, and he is lowered into it, as into his grave. But, falling, he does not fall into clay, he falls before the feet of the Son of God, who sees the faith of the paralytic and his friends and says to him first *'Thy sins are forgiven thee'* and then *'Arise and walk'*. Fr. Austin Farrer reminds us that *Jesus is by his own death the forgiveness of our sins; he is the resurrection and the life through his own resurrection. We are thrown into the life-giving sepulchre of Christ, we touch the slain and living Christ, his body and his blood; our sins are forgiven us, and we live by him; we arise to walk in all those good works that he has prepared for us to walk in.*

This season, we have taken a close look at the miracles and parables of Jesus. Like Jesus's parables, every miracle in the Bible, especially the miracles of Jesus have a deeper spiritual meaning. Jesus raises the dead to show that He is the Resurrection and the Life, and to teach us that He is Lord over life and death. Jesus heals the leprous to teach that He can cleanse us from the leprosy of sin. Jesus does not discriminate in His miracles, He heals rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, Canaanite and Samaritan. Even through the diversity of people Jesus healed and restored, He teaches us that His promises of Salvation, the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Resurrection of the Dead are for all people. This morning, Jesus tells the crowd present in the Gospel story exactly what He is trying to teach them through this miracle. First, He forgives the paralytic's sins, and notice that the paralytic does not say, or is unable to say anything like "Lord, have mercy on me," and yet at witnessing the absolution the scribes cry blasphemy! And Jesus turned to them and said, *which is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then said he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine own house.* And the paralytic who was carried to the feet of Jesus was healed, arose, and departed to his own house.

The crowd present probably would rather have seen Jesus heal the paralytic than the man's sins be forgiven. To heal miraculously is more dramatic, is more awe inspiring. They witnessed the man's sins be forgiven, but the effect was not as obvious. They knew the man was physically healed because he was finally able to

get up from his bed and walk on his own, but a healed soul would take time to reveal. The impact that God's forgiveness has on a soul changes lives and it is a complete and total renewal of the mind, soul, and life. Jesus proves to them that He has the power to forgive sins. He does the spectacular and renews the man's physical body. Imagine how exciting the physical healing was for them. Many in the crowd probably knew the poor paralytic man and his family, and they simply marveled that Jesus was able to heal Him. *They marveled and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.* But did they miss the point Jesus was trying to make? *They marveled and glorified God,* probably only over the physical healing. They missed the point that there were likely many in the room who were as paralyzed by sin in their souls as the poor man was physically paralyzed in his body.

To many, today the words 'paralyzed by sin' does not seem all that bad. After all, we cannot always see sin, nor can we always see its effects on our souls. To many, the Bible's lists of sins are just outdated, many of which are socially acceptable today. What the Bible labels as sins are not all that bad and are even thought of as being virtuous in the world's mind. Greed, uncharity, lust, anger, impenitence, being unforgiving, these are but a few sins that the world sees as the virtues of the the industrious and the successful individual. But the world, in its desire to see another spectacle has missed the point that God has been revealing for thousands of years. Sins paralyze the soul, they destroy lives, and they drag one down to hell. Sin and the refusal to seek out and receive God's forgiveness alienate us from God and from His Church. To refuse to forgive the wrongs done unto us makes us unable to experience the renewing and restoring power of the Love of God.

*Is it easier to forgive sins than to say arise and walk?* We come to this altar this morning, bound by the sins of the past week, seeking forgiveness and renewal. We must allow ourselves to be placed at the feet of Jesus. We must learn to forgive and what it means to be forgiven. We must learn repentance. The great Anglican priest and poet, Jeremy Taylor writes, *Repentance, of all things in the world, makes the greatest change: it changes things in heaven and earth; for it changes the whole man from sin to grace, from vicious habits to holy customs, from unchaste bodies to angelical souls, from swine to philosophers, from drunkenness to sober counsels.* Christ wishes to forgive our sins and raise us from our spiritual paralysis this morning. We draw near to the altar that we too might know that our sins are forgiven, and in approaching this altar, *We are thrown into the life-giving sepulchre of Christ, we touch the slain and living Christ, his body and his blood; our*

*sins are forgiven us, and we live by him; we arise to walk in all those good works that he has prepared for us to walk in.*