

May 13, 2018 (Sixth Sunday of Easter)

Mark 2:1-12

Emerge "Fly: Daring New Heights"

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When it comes to describing life's unexpected tragedies we
overhear and sometimes say ourselves,

"It knocked me off my feet."

"It laid me out."

"It's really brought me down."

And before we sometimes know it, our whole life seems to be
upside down and like a turtle flat on his back, we have the most
vulnerable part of ourselves exposed for the whole world to see
and take advantage of, if they choose.

During the fourteenth century Raynald III, was a duke in what
is now Belgium. As the result of a violent quarrel, Raynald's
younger brother Edward successfully revolted against him.
When Edward captured Raynald he built a room around him
featuring windows and a door and promised him that the day
he left the room his title and property would be returned to
him.

The problem with this arrangement was that Raynald was
grossly overweight and could not fit through the openings in
the room. Raynald needed to lose weight before he could leave
the room. Edward knew that his older brother could not
control his appetite and sent him delicious food every day. As
you may imagine, Raynald grew even larger during this time.

Anytime someone accused Duke Edward of treating Raynald
cruelly he said: "My brother is not a prisoner. He may leave
when he so wills."

Raynald stayed in that room for ten years and wasn't released until after Edward died in battle. By then his health was so ruined he died within a year. He was a prisoner of his own appetite.

There are things in our lives, from which we could be free, but instead we chose to remain right where we are – flat on our backs, unable to move, with our vulnerable underbelly exposed. And like the turtle, and Raynald, this is just the beginning of the end.

Yet, this was not the case for the paralyzed man in the gospel of Mark .Whether he asked for help or help just arrived we will never know. Either way, he said this cocoon, this tomb, this trap, this prison, is not for me. I'm done with it. And thus, we then see him getting to the feet of Jesus.

Where are we when it comes to where we are currently trapped, what are we doing about our prison wall, our submerged tomb – the trap we find ourselves in? What are we doing with our sorrow and grief, our anger and rage, our streak of revenge or our saturation with worry or guilt. Are we down for the count, , unable to move forward, much less move to new heights.

The key to his movement and progress is that the paralyzed man hated the view from his sick bed. He could no longer tolerate the limiting and skewed view from there. One day, he woke up (not sure via his own alarm clock or thru the warning of another) – with something like, “You'll die this way, if you don't get up.

That's when he knew he could not do this on his own. He could not find the freedom he desired, a new start, a new beginning

till he came face to face with it being possible. Jesus offered him forgiveness, which is another way of saying, "Here's a fresh start, and a new beginning."

Jesus talks candidly about what we can receive and what we often cannot. Jesus concluded it was too hard for him to hear, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." That seemed to depend on just him, and that was something he knew he could not manage all by himself. So, with some help from his friends, Jesus included, he arrives at the place he needs to be - for life to be different, so he can get a new beginning, a start: afresh and anew.

Yes, yes, they raised the roof! What had been, was not going to weigh him down to such a point that he would trade this offer for freedom, as opposed to staying in chains. Some of us are so weighed down by what life has dealt us or we have dealt to ourselves by our own hand. Either way, it didn't matter to Jesus. Notice he didn't take a survey or medical history here to determine who was to blame for this man's current state. Instead, he offered a way out, a rising, a taking flight, a being free from what was, so he could be open and be ready for what good will be, in not too long a period of time. It's no wonder that scripture says he "hurried off."

So, then the progression to healing and freedom goes something like this –

1. Admit you are currently laid out.
2. Accept help (from Jesus, and from others), so you can get to be healed, and thus have a life, which constitutes an openness to newness – a future, and a willingness to let the past be the past.

The butterfly is a good metaphor for this story of the paralyzed man. Butterflies have taste receptors on their feet. I believe the paralyzed man could not really taste life till he got moving. The life he knew was killing him. Only in moving forward was he able to taste what he needed to sustain him.

Did you know, butterflies drink from mud puddles. Why, because they can't live on water alone, they must get some of the minerals they need from the mud. Life can cause you to end up in a mud puddle, and if you are not careful you will stay there. Yet, the truth is, those times of being knocked down add to the quality and breadth of our life, if we use them, but don't stay stuck in that messy, murky place called "the tough stuff life throws at you."

Butterflies can't fly if it is too cold or too hot. Maybe, your tragedy, crisis or situation has caused your heart to grow cold, or maybe life has reached the boiling point and you are on the verge of heat stroke. So, it is hard to know whether the paralyzed man who was stuck outside was too cold or too hot. Either way, getting to Jesus and receiving his healing was a must, if he was going to be able to move forward. Butterflies hide in the shade when it is too hot, and bask in the sun when it is too cold. Are we, like them, seeing Jesus as our refuge when our environment becomes too much. Scripture tells us find shade under the shadow of his wings, and as the Light of the World he is the source of our life.

So, will you say "Yes" today? "Yes, to invitation for healing." "Yes" to the help of others, so as to be able to rise." "Yes" to the words of Jesus offering us the chance to begin anew. "Yes", to being healed. And finally, "Yes" to moving on (and being in a hurry about it). Amidst all of life's words, what we need more

now than ever is for us, every one of us to say, “Yes” – here, now, today! Do not delay; new heights await you.