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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 and heal us from the leprosy and sickness 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 as many as will listen and believe in all ages.

This morning, we are presented with a miraculous absolving of sins and healing. In the 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 as good as ~~the~~ dead, he is carried out like the deceased by his four bearers, four friends or family members. Unable to carry the paralytic into the crowded house, they lift him onto the roof where a hole is cut open for him into which he is lowered, 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*. The paralytic and his four bearers did not expect to hear *Thy sins are forgiven thee*. Rather, they had gone through all this trouble of damaging someone else's roof hoping that the paralytic would be completely healed. The Scribes are also surprised by Jesus forgiving the man's sins, first because the paralytic had offered no sacrifice, and second because by forgiving his sins Jesus is telling them He is God.

Fr. Austin Farrer reminds us that *Jesus is by his own death is the forgiveness of our sins; he is the resurrection and the life through his own resurrection*. [Through His sacraments] *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. We see this acted out in the Gospel story. First, Jesus forgives the paralytic's sins, and notice that the paralytic does not say anything. Perhaps he was unable to say anything like "Lord, have mercy on me." But the Scribes, witnessing the absolution, 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.*

This exchange likely went over the heads of most of those who were gathered in the house. The majority were there either because they were followers of Jesus, or because they knew this Jesus to be a great miracle worker. Some came to watch Jesus just as some today might go watch a magic show. Obviously, for any man to heal miraculously is more dramatic or more awe inspiring than observing doctors or nurses. They witnessed the man's healing, to be sure, but to grasp the other miracle, that of forgiving the man's sins was not as easy. They heard Jesus invoke a phrase from the prophet Daniel, *The Son of Man*, and the scribes immediately knew what he was referring to. *The Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven...and came to the Ancient of days...and there was give him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages, should serve him...an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away.* The Scribes knew that Jesus was quoting Scripture, and yet still they cry blasphemy. Meanwhile the paralytic lays in his bed and ponders *thy sins are forgiven thee*, completely unaware of what Jesus had also implied of Himself. The majority of the crowd that day were unaware that they were standing in the same room with the Son of God. They were were aware of the physical healing but the spiritual healing which they had witnessed was lost on them. All that they knew was that

the man was physically healed and was finally able to get up from his bed and walk on his own.

A soul healed by Jesus 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 entire life, of the mind, soul, and body. Jesus proves to them that He has the power to forgive sins. He does the spectacular and renews the man's physical body. *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. And yet there were likely many in the same room who were as paralyzed by sin in their souls as the poor man was physically paralyzed in his body.

To many today, 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 and so do not register as vices in our sin-sick world. What the Bible labels as sins are not all that bad and are even thought of as being virtuous in the eyes of a sinful world. Greed, uncharitableness, lust, anger, impenitence, being unforgiving, these are but a few sins that the world sees as the virtues of 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. Sin paralyzes the soul, destroys lives, and drags one down to hell. Sin and the refusal to seek out and receive God's forgiveness alienate us from God and from His Church. Likewise, 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.*