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Daily Reflections



LIVING A WILD FAITH

By Elisabeth Beall

Today's Gospel

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them.

They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to him, "Child, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?"

Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier,

to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth"—he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home."

He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

MARK 2:1-12

Reflection

There are so many facets of today's Gospel to relish and reflect on.

I have always been moved by the vision of a group of people carrying the paralyzed man to come see Jesus, and then breaking through the roof of the house to lower the man down to where Jesus was.

I like to imagine the look on Jesus' face and his tone of voice when he told the man his sins were forgiven. Here was no Pharisee giving him a tough time – here was a faith-filled man whose most fervent wish was to be near Jesus. I wonder how the man heard about Jesus, and what he heard that urged him to gather friends together to carry him into Jesus' presence?

These are deep questions – but then I get sidetracked by the nitpicky scribes muttering amongst themselves. These are literally and figuratively by-the-book people, and they do not feel reassured by what Jesus has said – instead questioning how it could possibly be true. When Jesus responds in exasperation, I always chuckle, imagining him rolling his eyes just a little (of course, I am projecting my own reaction here!).

But the question Jesus asks is profound: "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk'?" Which is to say, what is easier for Jesus to do: forgive the man's sins, or heal his paralysis?

Of course, Jesus does both. But it is the visual – the man getting up off his mat, picking it up, and leaving the broken-roofed house and the crowd behind him – that grabs everyone's attention. Perhaps some in the crowd – like the scribes themselves – were "doubting Thomases," snarking to each other that it's easy enough to tell someone their sins are forgiven ... and no way to double-check whether it's actually true. Perhaps they were all brimming over with faith, and the physical miracle – on the heels of cleansing the paralytic's soul – was just

the icing on the cake for them.

I ask myself: am I more like the scribes, coloring within the lines of my spiritual life -- or more like the paralyzed man? As this new year gets underway, perhaps we can each resolve to live in wild faith, like the paralytic – trusting that God hears our prayers and responds to them, trusting that miracles do happen.



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For Pondering

- Do you have the confidence to turn to God in your greatest need, knowing that your prayer will be answered? Are you open to the possibility that God will answer your prayer in a way different than the one you'd hoped for?
 - If you were the paralytic in this story, who would be the people in your life who would carry you into Jesus' presence?
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For Prayer

*God of all glory and power,
let my faith be full and unreserved,
and let it penetrate my thought,
my way of judging Divine things and human things.
Let my faith be joyful
and give peace and gladness to my spirit.
Let my faith be humble and not presume
to be based on the experience of my thought and of my feeling;
but let it surrender to the testimony of the Holy Spirit
and to your presence in my life
in every moment and every experience.
Amen.*

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