

## **Scripture Reading:**

**Luke 5:12** “And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."  
**13** Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him. **14** And He charged him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded."  
**15** However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. **16** So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

**17** Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. **18** Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. **19** And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. **20** When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." **21** And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" **22** But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? **23** Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'? **24** But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." **25** Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. **26** And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!"”

# *The Faith of the One and the Many*

As the Gospel of Luke continues to give an orderly account of the ministry of our Lord in the region of Galilee, we come this morning to two dramatic healings and some important lessons about faith!

Church of the King is a member of the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches.

- This means that we stand shoulder to shoulder with the great reformers like Luther and Calvin who fought and won the battle for the great Biblical doctrine of justification by faith: We are going to see in these accounts, how important that doctrine is in our lives.
- We are evangelical, which affirms our belief that we must each exercise the gift of faith and be ready to share the good news with others.
- And finally, we are churches where God addresses us as His Son's Bride, and where we exercise the gift of faith as a community of believers serving our risen and reigning Savior.

We reject what Francis Schaeffer called "dead orthodoxy" where a church can have all the jots & titles of doctrine just right, but have long since forgotten their first love

**AND** we stand against modern individualism that largely ignores the importance of the church and the work of the corporate body of Christ.

- We will see this morning that Jesus responds to faith in an individual and to faith demonstrated by a group of believers
- What I refer to as the faith of the one and the many as it should remind us of the very triune nature of our God Himself!
- But in BOTH cases, His response shows the importance of His love for His people and what that love has accomplished.

With that in mind, let's take a look at the text before us this morning:

**We see Jesus continuing to teach and heal in the various cities of Galilee drawing crowds and critics. Many in the crowds are there just to see the show and the Pharisees and teachers of the law had come to criticize and find fault with Jesus.**

**Before we look in detail at the two healings, we should take note of verse sixteen which is placed squarely between them:**

**“So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.”**

**Jesus, as the Son of Man, sets an important example: Even He needs time alone with God:**

- **Daily prayers and gathering for worship on the Lord’s Day are essential if we are going to be effective soldiers in our Lord’s army!**
- **We will see this important practice throughout the ministry of Jesus, right up to His prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane before his trial and crucifixion.**

**Now we need to look at the two healings and the important role that faith played in each of them:**

- **First remembering how the Bible defines saving faith in Ephesians chapter two: “8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**
- **Our salvation is the result of God’s gracious love for us!**

**Salvation is the gift of God from beginning to end: And we must remember this as we study both accounts of healing this morning:**

- **The gift of faith is what distinguishes these men from the crowds and skeptics**
- **The gift of faith is why their sins are forgiven making them new creations as Jesus will clearly show**

**First we come to the man with Leprosy... FULL of leprosy.**

**An important part of the story of the paralytic man is how difficult it was for his friends to get him to Jesus: It must have been much the same for this man: Lepers were outcasts, and he would have had to be very determined to get himself directly in the presence of Jesus.**

**This he does, and while Jesus does not mention his faith, it is clearly demonstrated not only by his determination, but how he humbly bows before the authority of Jesus saying: “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”**

- **We must not miss the power of the simple response from Jesus, “I am willing.”**

**As we have stressed over and over in Luke’s Gospel, Jesus has come to save His people from their sins. Adam fell into sin in the garden and sickness and death flowed to the entire human race. By healing this man with leprosy, Jesus is showing that He has come to make us clean... to remove the stain of sin, to establish His Kingdom!**

**The physical healing is dramatic and would certainly have been appreciated by this man, but it was NOT central as we shall see more clearly in the account of the paralyzed man. Jesus had come to save people from their sins, to make them new creatures for all of eternity, not just heal their bodies here and now.**

- **This man would have gone on to catch colds, be injured and in due time died.**

**This is why in just a few chapters we will see Jesus giving this sober warning: “4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!”**

**This is a lesson that Jesus is beginning to teach here and will reinforce with the next healing.**

- **It is a lesson that we desperately need in our modern times.**

**What strikes fear in the hearts and minds of average Americans today? An Islamic terrorist? An IRS agent? A judge that can pass down a death sentence or even the mugger on the streets with a gun?**

- **How about a pastor or an elder?**
- **The appearance of a church leader today is more likely to bring snickers or rolling eyes than any sense of fear**

- **AND YET, it is to pastors and elders that Jesus has given the power of the keys, so that what they bind on earth will be bound in heaven!**

**The forgiveness of sins is MUCH more important than the physical state of one's body: This is why Jesus immediately sent this man off to the Priest to make an offering for his cleansing. Jesus is reminding him, the crowds and all of us that all those regulations about how to deal with leprosy in Leviticus were a picture of Jesus forgiving our sins through His atoning & cleansing death burial & resurrection!**

**What a powerful reminder and yet it was missed by almost all those who were present. This man's faith, given as a gift from God, had made not only his body whole in time and space, but brings the forgiveness of his sins for all eternity....**

**Beginning with verse 18, we will now see this even more clearly as men bring a man who was paralyzed to lay before Jesus: Just as with the man with leprosy, faith leads them to the feet of Jesus: Both men devastated physically by the results of sin!**

**[ give the details of what happened]**

**So, the paralyzed man is laid at the feet of Jesus and then Luke gives a detail that does not fit neatly into our systematic theology books...**

**“When [Jesus] saw their faith, He said to him...”**

**THEIR faith brings results for him!**

- **What a beautiful picture of how we are to live in community as believers, even having faith one for another!**

**The commentators get into lengthy discussions about whether the paralyzed man was included in “their,” but he clearly was because his sins are forgiven and that could not occur without the gift of faith!**

- **And that brings us to the next statement by Jesus that is shocking to all those observing Jesus when He says, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.”**

**The reaction of the religious leaders was swift with them thinking, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies?” Accusing Jesus of a capital crime!**

- **The text says that Jesus perceived their thinking, but we will leave the discussion of that miracle for another day.**

**Jesus confronts them, and us, with a very simple question: “Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’?”**

**I am sure we know the right answer theologically and I certainly hope with have a heartfelt appreciation for the price that Jesus had to pay so our sins could be forgiven**

**BUT this is still a question for us to reflect upon: A question where some reflection might step on some toes!**

- **Should we not be more in awe of the more difficult task?**
- **Is that not the point of the question?**
- **Also remember, Jesus was addressing the skeptics and critics!**

**To help us see this question in a modern context, suppose the worship service went just a little different this morning: Let’s say Theron carried out his part just the same, but since I am doing a sermon on healings, I decide to throw in a little healing service to demonstrate: Darin and Tim are instructed to bring forward a young man who lost an arm in an explosion in Iraq: He kneels, I pray over him asking Jesus to make him whole and he arises with the arm fully restored!**

**Would we be amazed? Be honest, it would be an amazing miracle and hopefully we would rightly give glory to God!**

- **BUT now let us again consider this question that Jesus asked: “Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk’?”**

**Which of us, Theron or myself, would have demonstrated the more difficult work that our loving God has done?**

- **Theron demonstrated, as we do each week, the power of God in giving the absolution of sin, proclaiming that Jesus has forgiven our sins!**
- **I would have demonstrated the power of God to heal physical injuries in a dramatic way**

**In our minds we would give the theologically correct answer...**

**BUT, our hearts and emotions would likely be drawn to the excitement of the physical miracle.**

- **This has certainly been a struggle in our American churches these past hundred years!**

**In order to keep our focus where it belongs, our order of worship has the confession of sin and the Scriptures on assurance and the absolution of sins given EVERY week. This is why we lift up both individual and corporate prayers of confession, demonstrating the faith of the one and the many, receiving Christ's assurance of forgiveness as individuals and as the Body of Christ**

- **It is not only something that we need as God tells us to get up off our faces and come into His presence to be instructed, give our gifts and feast with Him**
- **BUT it should also remind us to live out the proper answer to this critical question Jesus has asked, each and every week**
- **We should not miss that part of the service!**

**If we think we must see miracles to REALLY know that God is present, we would do well to remember that it is before skeptics and critics that Jesus heals to demonstrate His power to forgive sins.**

**Am I saying that God can no longer heal people?**

**Of course NOT:**

- **The Spirit of God can still heal today, whoever, whatever and wherever He chooses**

**However, we must remember that Christ has established a Kingdom that advances through history: We are His ambassadors taking His love and justice to the world. Here in the west, under the influence of the Gospel for many centuries, I fear that we take medical "miracles" for granted instead of seeing them as compassion for those who suffer, flowing from our Lord just as we see time after time here in Luke.**

**BUT we must not miss the point of the question that Jesus asked the skeptics: Which is easier? Which should move us to a point of amazement? Obviously it should be the forgiveness of sins, but Jesus, knowing the hearts of men, says: "that you may know that the Son of Man has the power on earth to forgive sins – He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you arise, take up your bed and go to your house."**

**The reaction of the skeptics and crowds should not surprise us, standing in stark contrast with the reaction of Peter that we saw last week:**

**“And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen strange things today!”**

**Surely some were being awakened by the gift of faith, but by and large they are again just amazed by the show, perhaps acknowledging that God might have something to do with all this, but not bowing to Jesus and the bottom line seems to be that they just mutter “strange.”**

- **We have seen the faith of the one man with leprosy and the faith of the many working as a community of friends to bring the paralyzed man to Jesus...**
- **So what does it all mean for us?**

**We will consider at the Table today how we are not just forgiven, not just justified in the legal sense, but FULLY reconciled to God through what Christ has done.**

**We know intellectually that we are forgiven and that we stand righteous before God through justification based on the finished work of Christ, but are we as excited and moved by the absolution of sin each and every week in the same way as we would be for a healing? That is how Jesus asks this important question today... AND it is important how we answer**

- **If we want peace & contentment**
- **If we want assurance that we are saved**
- **If we want true joy in our lives**
- **If we want to be good servants in God’s Kingdom**

**Then we must intellectually, emotionally and practically proclaim the RIGHT answer to this probing and central question that Jesus asked: “Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'?”**

**We should stand in awe week after week at what our God has done! Then we should be ready to go forth to live and share this truly Good News. That same Good News that the Angel Gabriel proclaimed to Joseph, “[Jesus] shall save His people from their sins!”**



## **Communion Meditation:**

**Luke 15:11** “Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. **12** And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. **13** And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

**20** And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. **21** And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'  
**22** But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. **23** And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; **24** for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

**FULL restoration & celebration...**