



# The Mercy of our Redeemer: Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

Luke 5:17-26

Sermon for May 8 2022

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Let's begin by looking at our question for today from the New City Catechism.

You'll find it printed in many different languages in your bulletin.

I will read the question, and then let's read the answer together.

## **Question 19: Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God's favor?**

Yes, to satisfy his justice, God himself, out of mere mercy, reconciles us to himself and delivers us from sin and from the punishment for sin, by a Redeemer.

To explore the mercy of Jesus our Redeemer, I want to look together at a story that is about both physical and spiritual healing.

Let's look together at the Word of God.

### **Luke 5:17–26**

17 One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby.

(It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.) And the Lord's healing power was strongly with Jesus.

18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus,

19 but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof and took off some tiles.

Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

20 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven."

21 But the Pharisees and teachers of religious law said to themselves, "Who does he think he is? That's blasphemy!

Only God can forgive sins!"

22 Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts?"

23 Is it easier to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up and walk'?"

24 So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins."

Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!"

25 And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God.

26 Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, "We have seen amazing things today!"

Together we read Isaiah 40:8:

*"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."*

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we come to you because you are the source of life and truth. Jesus, we worship because you are full of mercy and love. Holy Spirit, please open our hearts and minds to be transformed by the word of God. Amen.

Let's begin with verse 17.

"17 One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby.

(It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.) And the Lord's healing power was strongly with Jesus."

These Pharisees and experts in Jewish law have been sent to investigate the reports about healings and the teaching of this man from Nazareth. Some of the investigators traveled 85 miles from Jerusalem.

Jesus is teaching in front of these skeptical religious leaders in their nice clothes. They are watching and listening to everything. There is also a large crowd of people there. Some of them must watch and listen through the windows, because the house is already full of people.

Verses 18-19.

"18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, 19 but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof and took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus."

Because of his disability, this paralyzed man would have experienced obstacles like this before. He can't walk, but he also endured the prejudices of his neighbors. There were laws that excluded him from certain positions in Jewish society. Sometimes, you see, the thing that gets in the way between people and God is other people.

But this man had some faithful friends. I'm actually amazed these guys didn't give up. I think some of us might have seen the crowds and quit. Maybe we would say to our friend: "Well, we tried our best. Sorry buddy. If God wants you to see Jesus today, we will have to wait until he comes outside. Let's have a snack and wait."

The friends could have interpreted the obstacles as a message from God that they should stop. But the Holy Spirit apparently gave these guys a faith-filled determination, and hopeful confidence, to persist. They saw the roof as a possible way to help their friend.

Can you imagine the scene inside the house? Up on the roof, men are digging, banging, and removing the roof tiles above Jesus and the crowd. Dust and debris are falling down. People are looking up at the ceiling, getting dirt in their eyes! It's a big disruption to the teaching Jesus is trying to do in the house.

Verse 19 says they "They lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus."

Do you think some of the disciples wanted to stop this disruption? "Hey, can't you see the Master is trying to teach down here!" Ah, but Jesus is always full of mercy, isn't he? What a Good Shepherd our Lord Jesus is! What does Jesus say? In Matthew's version of the story, Jesus says this: "Have courage, my son; your sins are forgiven."

Jesus calls this broken man "My son" and tells him to "Have courage." Jesus is still teaching here, do you see? He's teaching everyone at the house how to respond to brokenness. He is modeling how we should react to interruptions, when the needs of the world intrude upon our neat and tidy lives. Jesus shows us to have love and compassion for broken people. To see a whole person, not a cripple on a mat. Jesus loved the whole person, body and soul.

Look now at verse 20:

"20 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven.'"

Often when Jesus heals someone he comments on the person's faith. It takes individual faith to be saved, to have our sins forgiven. No one can be saved unless they see Jesus as their own Savior, who forgives their own sins. In this case, Jesus saw the faith of the paralyzed man, and also the faith of his friends who had confident belief that Jesus could heal.

Who do you love, who needs to be brought to Jesus? Are you willing to overcome obstacles and opposition? Are you ready to be rejected by some people, to bring one person to Jesus? We need to understand the desperate situation of the people we love who are going to hell without Jesus. Only then will we have the conviction to do whatever it takes to bring people to Jesus.

Perhaps you're like me. We often wait until "the Lord opens the door to spiritual conversations." But in reality, we rarely get around to talking to our neighbors or family or friends about eternal things. Maybe we are nervous that people will think we are too religious. Or maybe we are just so busy we don't make sharing the gospel a priority.

I was really convicted a few years ago when I heard one pastor speak about the evangelism efforts at his church. He spoke about how we all put important things on our calendar. This pastor and his wife make sure that their calendar includes hosting nonbelievers for dinner in their home--twice every month. By the third or fourth conversation he has with a nonbeliever, he begins talking about spiritual things. And he asks his congregation to do the same. They have seen many people come to faith in Christ, because they make it a priority.

We need to remember the eternal fate of everyone who dies without trusting in Jesus. Because we have a message that can change their eternal fate. It might be uncomfortable to share the gospel with someone. But I want to be able to say confidently what Paul said in Romans 1:16. "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." To me first, and then to my neighbor. To you first, and then to your friend, your uncle, your coworker. The gospel is good news that is intended for broadcast!

Verse 17 says "the Lord's healing power was strongly with Jesus." The power was there, waiting. It was waiting for some committed friends to carry that bed up on the roof. Do we love our unsaved friends and family enough to rip apart some roofs? To overcome whatever stands in our way? External obstacles or our internal struggles?

To make progress in this, we need three things that the friends on the roof had.

- 1) We must have the conviction that Jesus is the only way.
- 2) We must love unsaved people more than we love our own comfort, our own agenda, our own reputation.
- 3) We must believe that he really can heal those who come to him.

You don't need to solve your friend's problems. But you can bring your friend to Jesus, to the Body of Christ here at your church. It is our privilege and joy to partner with you, and the Holy Spirit, to help anyone in need that you bring to Jesus and to One Voice Fellowship. And we will try to help them in both body and soul, the way Jesus did for this man.

Okay, let's look now at verse v20.

"20 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven.""

Imagine this paralyzed man, lying there, looking up at Jesus. People told this man that Jesus can heal anything. But what does Jesus say? "Your sins are forgiven." That's it. Do you think perhaps the man was disappointed? Maybe he thought: "why did we go to all that trouble, if he isn't going to heal me? I didn't come here for confession. I want to walk!"

When we have an enormous problem in our lives, sometimes the problem consumes all our thoughts, right? Paying the rent, finding a job or a cure, it is all we can think about. But God sees us and our problems more comprehensively and holistically than we do. We focus on our problems--to fix them. God focuses on our hearts--to change them.

When Jesus looks at this sick man, he sees more than a paralyzed body and a medical condition to be fixed. Jesus also sees a sinner who must repent and receive forgiveness. Jesus sees a complete human being. He sees a man who is broken--physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. Jesus saw the man's pain, shame, isolation, and rejection.

This paralyzed man faced a future of dependency on other people. Imagine being unable to provide for yourself or for a family. This man needed more than the ability to walk. He needed hope and a new heart. This man needed healing for physical and emotional pain. He probably needed forgiveness for his bitterness, anger, and despair.

We must view people as complete persons, the way God does. If we don't, we will try to solve financial problems only with money, and medical problems only with medicine. We will try to solve spiritual problems by only quoting scripture. Those problems are not separate from each other. All of our brokenness is connected, my friends. Jesus offers restoration and redemption to every dimension of our lives. And Jesus wants His church to offer the same kind of complete help to the world.

Let's look now at verse 21.

"21 But the Pharisees and teachers of religious law said to themselves,

"Who does he think he is? That's blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"

That's a good question. Who does Jesus think he is? Who do you think he is? Jesus claims to forgive sins. And we know that only God can forgive sins. Therefore there are only two possibilities here. Jesus is either a fraud and a fake and a liar. Or he is God himself and the only true answer your deepest needs.

Peter said to Jesus in John 6:68: "where else can we go, Lord? You have the words of eternal life." Eternal life. That is the real miracle, the best gift Jesus gives here. This paralyzed man needed more than the ability to walk for a few years or decades.

Modern medicine means we can get knee replacements and organ transplants. Medicines for cancer and heart disease prolong our lives. But we are all falling apart. Everyone dies eventually. Do remember Lazarus, the man that Jesus raised from the dead? Lazarus eventually died, again. Jesus could have raised the body of Lazarus and healed the body of the paralyzed man, without touching their souls. Jesus could have left them spiritually dead, with healings that were only temporary.

But we see something different in verses 20-24. Jesus does a complete healing. He saves this man's body for life on earth, and he saves the man's soul for life in heaven.

Barrett Jones is a friend of mine. He is a doctor in southern Africa at an HIV-AIDS medical clinic in a very poor part of Malawi. A few years ago, Dr. Jones hired a local pastor to be their spiritual ministry director. The pastor's job is to share the gospel and to pray with their patients. Some financial donors didn't like what Barrett did. They said, "We could help more patients with the money you are using to pay this pastor. And the religious life of our patients is none of our business!"

Dr. Jones understands the only reason the world is so full of human need, so much suffering. Suffering exists because of a broken relationship between human beings and our Creator. This vertical relationship has been fractured by our sin, and that caused horizontal brokenness. All the relational, emotional, physical, and material suffering in the world are symptoms of the spiritual brokenness between us and God.

At One Voice Fellowship we seek to alleviate that horizontal, human suffering. We want to offer generous mercy ministry to bring comfort and healing to the hurting. To help them taste and see that the Lord is good and that he cares about their suffering. At the same time, we also help people connect vertically with the God who made them and loves them. We must do both physical and spiritual ministry, or else our gospel is deficient, and our compassion is incomplete.

We want to be a church that loves people holistically, as Jesus did. But we can never love them as much as he can. That's why we point and bring people to Jesus. His love is greater and deeper than our own.

To conclude this sermon, I want us to simply ponder and be amazed by the love of Jesus for us. You see, this paralyzed man was brought there by his friends, faithful friends who carried his broken body. But Jesus' friends ran away from his broken body on the cross. When Jesus was arrested and crucified, the disciples abandoned their friend and left him helpless and alone.

This paralyzed man heard God himself say: "Son, your sins are forgiven." Jesus heard God the Father say: "Son, their sins are on your head. That's why I must turn my back on you." After the miracle, Jesus told the paralyzed man: "Stand up and walk. Go back home!" On the cross, the Father told his Son, "Hang there, and die."

Why did Jesus endure all of that? Because it was the only way to cure the paralysis in our hearts. Sin was killing us from the inside out my friends. But on the cross, all of our sin was poured onto Jesus, to crush and punish him. So we could be healed. That's very good news. The best news you will ever hear! Jesus cured our sin disease by absorbing it into his own body. Jesus was crippled by our sin, so we could be healed.

After we are forgiven and empowered by Jesus, he says to us: "Stand up and walk!" Jesus sends us out to our friends and family. Jesus gives us the conviction and faith to bring this good news to others. You are not responsible for how people respond, only for how you love them. Or, maybe you yourself are one who needs healing, today? Maybe you are the one who wants to experience the forgiveness and healing that Jesus provided to this man?

Do you believe Jesus has the power and desire to heal you? He says to you: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Believe it. Look to him with hope and joy and faith, and let him be your healer, your redeemer, your Savior and your Lord. Even today.

I'm going pray to close our time. I will begin our prayer with Psalm 103. Listen closely to these words. Maybe the paralyzed man sang these familiar words while he walked home after his miraculous time with Jesus.

1 Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.


2 Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits--

3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

4 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,

5 who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Jesus, thank you for teaching us how to see other people holistically. Would you give us the courage and conviction and love that we see in the friends of this man? Holy Spirit, would you lead us to pray consistently for our unsaved friends and family? And Father, would you give us opportunity and boldness to bring our friends to Jesus? Only Jesus can heal, only he can save. But help us do our part, to proclaim the good news in Word and deed. To your glory alone. Amen.

 One Voice Fellowship