

MEDITATION 16

Mark 2: 3-5

³ And they came, bringing to Jesus a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

"And they came, bringing to Jesus a paralytic carried by four men."

Have you ever been in need? Have you ever been in the kind of need where you felt helpless and needed help? Have you ever had to depend on others for help be they family, friends or neighbours?...

Every healing story in the gospels has a specific reason it is there. From the many healing encounters Jesus has, only certain ones are included in order to give a picture of who Jesus is, what he does and the transforming impact he has on people who need something from him.

Sometimes the need is obvious and sometimes the need is more hidden. The obvious need of this man is the healing of a physical ailment that prevents him from walking. We know in areas of profound and prolonged violence, trauma and malnutrition ailments like paralysis, blindness, deafness and all kinds of mental distress can consume body, mind and spirit. But let's see what Jesus sees and what happens when he engages this man.

So what is it that you need? Does something ail you seen or unseen? Do you know what it is? Is that the whole of it or are there are things about yourself even you cannot understand you may need?...

"And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay."

These four people who bring the "paralytic" to Jesus are incredible are they not? Think about their care for the man, taking the time and making the effort to bring him to Jesus for healing. Are they family? Are they friends? Are they all members of a community who have come together to make a commitment of care and compassion for one another?

What is it that Jesus needs in order to heal? Is it all in himself, or is it also what he needs to draw forth and see in others as a seed for healing ready to flower and bloom with the sunlight and watering of faith, hope and love?...

Who are the people in your life who genuinely care about you?... What have they done for you? What would they do for you?... Are they family, friends, neighbours, members of your faith community?...

And what is in you that can draw forth healing?... Have you underestimated the healing power in you in the face of what seems bigger than you or debilitating in some way undermining faith, hope and love in you?... What may God draw forth in you as part of the very healing and rising up you need?...

Prayer: Thank you, O God... I take this moment to thank you as I image specific persons and specific communities too, persons and communities who have been there for me... who have given to me from the heart... who have helped me be who I am in my body, my mind, my spirit... Thank you for them... Thank you for the ways your Spirit has ministered and healed me through them... And thank you for the ways you have awakened me to the healing power you have planted in me... Help me to rise up even stronger even in the face of what is not as it could be... Amen.

"And when Jesus saw their faith..."

Do we see as Jesus sees?... What is faith? And what is the faith Jesus sees?... We usually don't make the effort to do something unless we believe we can do it and unless we believe some positive outcome can come from the effort. These four friends come together and bring the man to Jesus, and even when they can't get through, they find a way to get him to Jesus. Jesus is clearly moved by their persistence and determination in faith and love...

How persistent and determined are you in your faith and your love?... Or do you, have you, given up too easily or quickly?... Is there a relationship you need to give more of an effort to?... Have you had enough faith in what can yet be healed in and through you?... Is there enough love left in you that can see an opening to a new pathway, a better pathway?... Or is it about finding a more gracious way to say: "enough" and to make peace with what is?

Prayer: Help me, O God... Help me find my faith... Help me grow my faith... Help me see how you are already actively part of my life and seeking to raise me up in the midst of so much that is beyond me too... Thank you... Amen.

"He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven.""

Ah, here it is... Jesus sees something that is not visible, something hidden within the man, and something maybe the man himself has not fully seen or understood... Why does he need to be forgiven?... What sin does he need release from?... How is illness of body, mind and spirit all connected?...

We need to be careful here... It's easy to judge ourselves or to feel judged if we carry a physical or mental illness as if we have done something wrong or failed to take sufficient care of ourselves to prevent it happening... We need a lot of grace, compassion and forgiveness for ourselves and for others... Jesus forgives the man so that he is released to be able to forgive himself and receive the love that embraces him fully as he is, paralysed, but also someone who may be healed too... healed in body, but even more critically, healed in spirit...

We all need healing, and we all need healing in our spirit as much as in our mind and body... We all need the kind of love that sees us in all our humanity and sees us past our failures, our guilt, our shame and our inadequacy too... We also need a love that accepts our vulnerability past the facades of our ego, arrogance, and pride too... We need to feel safe to be who we are before God... without excuse, without pretence and without shame...

PRAYER: Come to me, O God... Help me see as you see... Help me heal where I know I need healing... And help me heal where I don't know I need healing too...

Break down my facades... Break down my self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy... Help me believe in myself as you believe in me... Help me recognize the healing power in me, and help me recognize your capacity to heal me in ways visible and invisible...

And help me accept your way for me, through sickness and through health... Help me grow whatever my condition... May my suffering humanize me and grow my compassion and empathy... May my victory in healing make me humbly grateful and energized to serve and care as I have been served and cared for...

And thank you for friends, neighbours, and family who have been and continue to be there for me, ready to support me however I come... I see you through their love and care... I believe in you because of their faith...

In Jesus' name and through his healing power I make this prayer... Amen.