

Our eternal Lord, become a man, who has the authority to forgive sins on earth; to establish the ministry of absolution by His authority in the Church. So it is when the paralytic is forgiven; the scribes blaspheme, that Jesus actually has this authority. The paralytic, of course, is in himself helpless. Not only is he a sinner, but he doesn't have any way to get to Jesus. So he's dependent upon his friends who bring him and pray for him, like when someone brought you to a baptismal font. Jesus sees their faith, moved by compassion to forgive, saying, **take heart or be courageous, your sins are forgiven.** He says nothing, about the paralysis. In the Greek, in this context, **be courageous as you face this paralysis because your sins are forgiven**, paralysis is temporary. It will not last, but forgiveness of sins is eternal, and you can face what you must, no matter how you are afflicted on this earth, whether men treat you unkindly, whether you live with disappointments and pain, whether you are despised, whether you are loved and respected, whether you fail over and over again. **Be courageous as you face your paralysis, your helplessness because your sins are forgiven.**

There is no greater kindness, no more miraculous, life-changing, significant thing Jesus could've done for the paralytic man than forgive his sins. And the same is true for you.

There's not more to Christianity than the forgiveness of sins. That is it. Oh there are other things but everything flows back to this. If it's Christian, it must be connected to a Man, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Who he is, what He has done, how we get it. His Word, Sacraments. Why St. Paul says **I wish to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified.**

How do you answer the question, "Where is God?" Many would say, "God is in heaven," "God is in my heart," "God is everywhere." Certainly not wrong; yet very lacking. For where has God located His promised to come to you with His very presence, to join Himself to you, where has He promised to come with forgiveness and grace; that is not everywhere. He locates Himself in a place. With, in His authority. So you can be sure.

The world does not get this. Even Christians don't get this, as most all American Christianity locate God only in the abstract, God is found, known in a relationship of feelings, in hearts, through experiences, your commitment. How sad. We even see in today's Old Testament reading, God's not merely everywhere; not just "out there," but one who comes to be with His people.

I have no idea of relationship with God apart from where God has located Himself, in concrete places of His choosing and placed His authority to come to His people by a font, Altar, preaching, word spoken.

All authority on heaven and on earth given to Me, to the 11, go. He says; it's not abstract nor authority given to all Christians. This authority, His authority comes to you by 2 men here. The ministry of our Lord is a ministry of His very presence, of touch, of words. Where He tells you He is. That is what we desperately need. Where Jesus has placed, to whom He has given His authority, or else we're just laity playing church as children.

In the OT, Jacob is running from his lies, betrayal, what a family, his brother hates him, with armies will seek to kill him, uncertain future ahead, looking for a wife. Alone. Afraid. Depressed. Scared. Maybe you've ever felt that way. We're often the cause of our own problems. Your live a mixture of good and bad and uncertainty, living with scars, you have a past, living with a dysfunctional family, with future uncertainty, with doubts, none of us have it all together. Who doesn't have a complicated life.

But He does say **your sins are forgiven**, He calls you His own. His beloved. No truer word could be promised, not just to Jacob, but as sure and true for you that started for you at a font, by His authority: **Behold, I am with you, I will keep you wherever you go. And I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.**

And so if you dare to react as Jacob did, perhaps you'd like Gen. 28 put on the chancel wall as churches throughout the world, throughout the centuries have done. **This is none other than the house of God, and this, the gate of heaven.** Oh we did that. By His authority, still this very morn, heaven and earth come together as in not other way on the planet. His authority from pastors in this place. Certainty of eternal healing, forgiveness.

As with Jacob, not a far-off God in the abstract, but physically comes to you; given you promises, to calm your fears, ease your minds, even right now in the midst of all your issues.

the heart of Christianity. You heard Him, His authority speaks to you today in the absolution; by His authority now joins His very life to you from His altar. **Be courageous for your sins are forgiven**: you can face anything this world can throw at you. **Be courageous for your sins are forgiven**: you can face disease, any hardship, betrayal, uncertain future, even death. **Be courageous, take heart dear child**, you are His beloved, forgiven, made a saint, He is with you. It's going to be okay for you.