**Sunday 14th January 2018 Message**

**Are you paralytic?**

**Heavens Surprise**

**I was shocked bewildered and confused**

**When I entered heaven’s door**

**Not by the beauty, the lights or it’s décor**

**It was the people in heaven that made me sputter and gasp**

**The sinners, the cheaters, the liar and the trash**

**There stood the kid from second grade who stole my lunch money twice**

**Next to him was my neighbour who never said anything nice**

**Herb who I thought would be rotting in hell was sitting on cloud nine doing quite well**

**I asked Jesus what’s the deal I would love to hear Your take**

**How did all these sinners get up here it must have been a mistake**

**Any why is everyone so quiet, so sombre, please give me a clue**

**Jesus said “It’s because they are all in shock they never thought they would see you”**

**Scripture**

***Luke 5:17-26***

***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!"***

***NKJV***

**The Leper - Context**

As part of last weeks message I referred to Luke’s account of the healing of the leper which precedes todays passage. If you recall Jesus told the leper to tell no one but to present himself to the priest as required by the law of cleansing in Leviticus 14. I believer Jesus was intent on the priesthood having to confirm that he (the leper) who was once unclean, had been miraculously healed by Him whose identity as the Messiah they disputed. Not only would they see they miracle they would have had to proclaim to the whole community that the man who once was excluded from fellowship could now be included.

I do not know whether any of you read the process of examination and offering contained in Leviticus 14. There are a few things that captured my attention and wonder which I did not mention last week.

1. Two doves were presented to the priest as an offering, one was sacrificed the other was dipped in the blood of the sacrifice and set free to fly away. What a picture for the leper, and every sinner who has been cleansed by Christ. Now he and we are covered by the blood of Christ and set as free as bird to fly. The priest whose mind was so paralyzed in the way he thought would miss the significance that no longer was this leper bound by the laws of exclusion or inclusion in the community of believers.
2. The priest had to apply the blood and the anointing oil to the right ear, right thumb and right big toe of the cleansed leper. This was the same consecration and anointing for the priesthood. This paints a picture for the leper, the priest and us all that when we are cleansed by Christ we enter the royal priesthood. I wonder if they got the significance of the message?

Last week I mentioned the challenge I believe God places before us this year is to grow in unconditional love. I believe we are all experiencing a refining process calling us into being more like Jesus in His level of unconditional love to mankind.

In a little while we will look at Jesus’ unconditional love towards the scribes, Pharisees and teachers of law AND His unconditional love towards the paralytic. But let us look back to the cleansing of the leper.

Jesus is approached by a man FULL of leprosy, a man who had never been allowed into contact with anyone for years, a man whose face would be distorted, dressed in rags, possibly with missing limbs, fingers, nose, ears etc. There is no withdrawal away from the man by Jesus, I wondered if the disciples scurried away to a safe distance? I am also amazed the leper himself did not comply with the law and cry “Unclean, Unclean” as he approached Jesus. Just on the basis of the leper not keeping the law Jesus could have turned away. BUT no Jesus stretches out His hand and touches him who has not been touched for many years. One of the sayings of my previous pastor was never let anyone come into this church and leave without being physically touched.

For anyone who has been rejected, felt rejected, feels unworthy, physical touch is a great healer.

Notice that Jesus does not say “I am willing be healed” He says “I am willing be cleansed (katharizo – to purify)” words that apply to a sinner. Sin in the Bible is synonymous with leprosy in that it eats away at the flesh and the being of mankind, we cannot survive without purification by the Saviour.

The power of the touch of Jesus and the words of Jesus are dramatically revealed as it says in Luke 5:13 IMMEDIATELY the leprosy left him. Can you imagine the sudden transformation of a deformed body going from grotesque to while IMMEDIATELY. Not a gradual overtime healing. Its one of those healings we desire to see as a regular occurrence in our lifetime. In the eyes of heaven it happens everytime someone comes to Christ, oh for heavens perspective to see beyond what manifests in physical in ourselves let alone that of others.

The account of the cleansing of the leper precedes the forgiveness and healing of the paralytic in Luke 5 because of the order God placed on presenting His Son as the Messiah to the Pharisees. The two accounts are intrinsically linked.

**Pharisees, Scribes & Teachers of the Law.**

Luke particularly emphasizes the presence of the Pharisees, scribes and teachers of the law ***Luke 5:17 who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. NKJV***.

Why? Because they will have been party to, or heard the testimony, of the synonymous representation of sin being cleansed from the leper, and confirmed by the priesthood. This would have stirred up intrigue, suspicion, cynicism and outrage in them. They had to be there to see if this was truly THE Messiah or just another teacher and miracle worker. They came from all over the territory and being the elite of society would have filled the house where Jesus was all by themselves. Not only that, being who they were would have wanted exclusive access to the Rabbi so if He said or did anything which rocked their boat nobody else would see that Jesus had the upper hand. These men were paralytic themselves, their mindsets were rigid and unable to think any differently than they had been taught down the generations. They would have posted guards on the door to keeper the crowds of commoners out, and if they were here today they would have had the PA and the video overflows turned off.

What amazes me, and perhaps is easily missed on the surface of the text, is that the unconditional love of Jesus arranges events so that they are all there, alone with Him, so that He can reveal Himself as the Messiah to a hostile audience. If you trawl the internet for sermons on how to keep progress in your spiritual walk you will hear things like don’t peck with the chickens if you want to fly like an eagle, don’t waste your time helping those who do not want to change, be careful of the company you keep. Whilst there is logic and some scriptural backing for such guidance, I wonder what Jesus would think about the way we choose to apply it and choose the company we keep, the church we attend, the lost that we approach?

Jesus is right in there with our equivalent of meeting with the leaders of the Islamic State, or the political arena of humanists and atheists. He is in what we may consider to be a no win situation, yet He knows even the most paralytic thinking can be transformed. So, there is hope for you and me, yet.

I love Luke’s comment, given the audience that Jesus is entertaining, ***“And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.”*** To heal who? Them? There is no record of any physically ill people in the house.

**Distraction?**

Whilst Jesus is in full flow of talking with these religious people bits of plaster, mud and wood begin to fall on Him and the elite company. Anyone trying to teach a group of people something really important knows how annoying a distraction can be, not just because it messes up your flow, but because you have lost the attention of the listeners as they look up and around to see what is going on. Many a minister has wished the children would not throw their toys on the floor, scream, or their parents get cross, or the local nuisance shout out, when they are in the middle of giving a message.

Somehow, I doubt whether Jesus was upset about the commotion going on. It was perfect timing of an opportunity to give a sermon illustration as more bits of roof fell into the room. As the congregation looked up with annoyance about the disturbance and perhaps a little concern that the whole roof came down and wondering how much that is going to cost to repair, they see exactly the type of people they did not want in the meeting. Jesus on the other hand sees His sermon illustration being lowered into the room, and His heart and mind is still on winning the lost religious community gathered.

These four friends and the paralytic has such faith that Jesus could heal they had gone to extreme lengths to get into the presence of Jesus. Faith often meets resistance before the miracle or breakthrough takes place. There is internal resistance your own reasons, external resistance the people stopping you taking the steps, in this case those “church” people who should have taken the paralytic to Jesus but instead locked them out, the crowds were an obstacle outside the house, the roof was an obstacle.

When the rubber hits the road, you start the race of faith, when friction occurs you know that faith is touching the surface that will move you forward. Things do not work without friction. Brakes do not work. Vehicles will not move if there is nothing for the wheels to push against.

Friction is necessary for two things to come into contact in order to produce the end result. Faith and resistance. **Friction is the fuel of your faith.**

The gathered audience still had a whole load of friction against what Jesus was about to do, but had no faith in themselves because they settled, paralyzed in a belief system and logic that required no faith. You may know people who give you grief and put your faith to the test. Why not thank them and say without you my faith will not produce results.

**Forgiveness or Healing?**

The faith of the paralytics friends was amazing they met so much friction in trying to get to Jesus it was plain to see by all who were gathered. Thus Luke says when Jesus saw THEIR faith, the friends and the paralytics He spoke the most amazing words. Not the words that they were expecting and the most unutterable words the congregation could think of. If I was the paralytic on a good day I might say in response “Oh that’s nice, thank you. BUT can you not see that is not my real need I came so I could get off this stretcher once and for all.”

***Luke 5:20 When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."***

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The greatest work of the cross and the most important message of the gospel is that of forgiveness, it is not whether you are healed, prosperous, empowered by the Spirit, etc. It is whether you are forgiven.

The paralytic does not ask to be forgiven. The paralytic is not full of repentance. Jesus does not ask for a please or repentance to receive forgiveness, yet we do.

Jesus knew how the man felt, just like He knew how the leper felt. All sickness in those times and culture was considered to be judgement from God, just as any tragedy is blamed on God today. This left both of them feeling it was their fault they were sick, it was their fault they were ostracisized from society. It was there fault they were poor. It was their fault they had to beg. Guilt was piled on them daily by the religious leaders of the day and by society.

In many ways it was the mans guilt that kept him paralyzed in his thinking and he needed forgiveness to receive his healing. Regretably many are paralyzed today from approaching Jesus because the church makes them feel guilty and does not extend forgiveness with unconditional love the way Jesus does.

Jesus knew the greatest need of both men was cleansing from guilt by knowing they were forgiven by God and could come into relationship with their heavenly Father. The healing was an additional blessing.

**Blaspheme.**

The congregation were so appalled they whisper to each other that Jesus is blaspheming because He dare do what they believed only God could do, and that is forgive sins. Of course Jesus could forgive sins because He is God, but the reality is we too are called to forgive one another.

Jesus discerns in His spirit what they are thinking. Scary thought He hears your thoughts.

***Luke 5:22-24 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'?***

When Jesus asks which is it easier to say, He knows that congregation understands that whenever God says anything it happens. So if God says let there be light there is light. If God says let the earth bear fruit it bears fruit. The voice of God is the creative force which can change any situation in an instant. However, they know that only something they can see as a result of God speaking will tell you whether God has spoken.

So Jesus says to prove that He is the Son of Man he tells the paralytic to get up and walk, which he does, and that also proved that He has the power to forgive sins also. Jesus underlined the point that forgiveness and healing go together, the Pharisees had to know that God forgave the sins which they thought had resulted in the paralysis.

Jesus also knew that everytime He spoke those words His death on the cross was being proclaimed, because God had said no sin will go unpunished and God is righteous and the punishment had to take place.

When Jesus calls us to forgive one another a different type of death has to occur in us, the death to just revenge, the death to self. I also believe that our forgiveness also has to be given without expecting repentance, that is true unconditional love. Jesus died, paid the price for all sin, forgave all sin**, before** repentance takes place. How many times must I forgive?

Jesus always reaches into the areas where no one else can or dare reach. He reaches out to the leper. He reaches into the area of unforgiveness, guilt, shame. When He raised the little girl from the dead He reached out through the veil of death, took her hand and said the equivalent of “Sweetheart rise up” Talitha cum. Jesus never needed to touch the dead, the leper, the tongue, the ears, the eyes of those bought to Him, He could have just said the word but His compassion touched every part of their being. When He touches you, He touches everything and most of all He touches your identity to be fully restored as a child of God.

Jesus could heal and forgive with no conditions attached, what about me, what about you. There is no way you can forgive someone who has hurt or offended you if you have any sense of superiority over them. Whilst you think you are in a better place with God than they are you will remain judgmental. Jesus could forgive as He had learnt never to be judgmental even though as God He is superior.

The congregation in that room representing the Jewish religious leaders had never forgiven anyone because only God could forgive, and they were as trapped in their thinking and behaviour as the paralytic on his mat. I believe that is why Jesus entertained their company that day because out of love He wanted them as free as the paralytic.

Here is the amazing thing look what Luke says at the of this account

***Luke 5:26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!"***

Yet their scriptures had told them this would happen and has happened

**Ps 103:3 Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases**

**Concluding Comments**

Would you like to be like Jesus and show forgiveness and unconditional love to anyone and everyone. We can only do it the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus needed the Holy Spirit to fulfil His ministry, so learn to lean on Him like Jesus did.