

Sermon Guide – March 28, 2021 – 6th Sunday of Lent – Palm Sunday

Matthew 9:1-8 is the text for this morning's healing story. As in the past, Mark and Luke tell the story as well – with some differences in the details. Check out their versions in Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26. How are they similar? What differences do you see?

It's important for us to NOT equate the man's paralysis with sin. Jesus forgives the man's sin because, as any other human being, he is in need of God's forgiveness. While some of that time considered illness and disease to be a result of sinfulness, that was not Jesus' intent and is not a theology we embrace today. Thoughts?

From the New Interpreter's Bible... "The point of the story is that the one who heals by the power of God (which can be seen and verified) can forgive by the power of God (even though it cannot be seen and verified)." Healing is something we can see; the paralytic man got up and walked home! We cannot "see" forgiveness, even though forgiveness makes a difference in a person's attitude and demeanor. Thoughts?

Back in Matthew 1:21 we read about Jesus' mission, his purpose: "She (Mary) will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." By forgiving sins, Jesus is moving along in his mission, which he will complete when he gives up his life on the cross, saving us from our sin once and for all.

The scribes accuse Jesus of blasphemy, which in Jesus' day and in Matthew's day was a general term, referring to anything considered derogatory to the dignity of God. Jesus is charged with blasphemy because he acts in God's place when he pronounces that the man's sins are forgiven. Matthew's point in this gospel story is that as the Messiah, God made flesh, Jesus DOES have authority to forgive sins. This point will come back to hurt Jesus when the authorities bring him to trial.