
Forgiveness: Mk 2:1-12 and Psalm 103:1-6

The situation has changed since Jesus began to preach; he attracts large crowds and he has moved to Capernaum. The house in this story might be Peter's house.

There are various important details in this story which we are not unpacking today:

1. These four men are great friends! If you call yourself a friend, do you do as much for your friends as they do?
2. Their faith leads these people to action. Does our faith lead us to action?
3. Jesus now has enemies! This shows that he is threatening vested interests.
4. This lame man is probably kept down by his sin of his inability to forgive others. But note: Not all illness is a result of sin! For many illnesses we need a doctor and/or a vaccine! In some cases confession of sins is needed for healing.

We will focus on the forgiveness of the sins of the lame man (verse 5).

The healing which Jesus performs fulfils Scripture, e.g. Isaiah 35:

“Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution he will come to save you.
Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.”

Isaiah speaks about God here. Only God can forgive sins, says the Old Testament (Psalm 103; Isaiah 43:25; Exodus 34:6-7). That's why sacrifices were brought to him alone.

Isaiah 43:25: “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

Therefore, what the teachers say in Mark 2:7, is true. That's irony! Jesus forgives sins like God does and so he shows that he is God. (He also shows this by reading their minds, which only God can, 1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 44:21). If he were not God, his claims in verses 5 and 10 would be silly, preposterous.

Jesus not only heals, he also (and primarily) forgives the man. In this way he goes to the heart of the human problem/predicament:

“He deals with the heart of the human problem
by dealing with the problem of the human heart.”

The greatest problem of humanity remains sin / alienation from God. Other things are difficult (ignorance, lack of money, illness, discrimination) but not as bad as missing God. Jesus has solved this problem in his life, his death and his resurrection.

Yet he involves us in the process of forgiveness, for he says in Mark 11:24-25: “[W]hatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

At the Communion table we celebrate that we are forgiven and we decide to forgive others; we also express this when we pray the Lord's Prayer.
