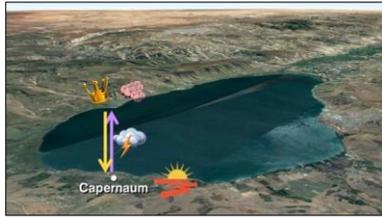


Weaving the Word

Through the Roof

March 19, 2017

Welcome to where we're learning to look past what we want to what we need!



Jesus left Capernaum at sunset, got His boys through a deadly storm, established His Kingdom with the Gentiles, proved His true identity as God, by deceiving the devil, and then had to turn around and head back home.



When Jesus had again crossed over returned by boat to the other side of the lake, and came to his own town a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake for they were all expecting him. – Mat 9:1; Mark 5:21; Luke 8:40 NIV

I'm guessing the other boats with Him got there before Him. And, I hope the boys in His boat took it slow to give Him some rest.

When Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered [*synago: assembled*] that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. – Mark 2:1-2 NIV

Who has assembled to hear the Word in His home office? Because, Jesus only taught the crowds outside and in parables. (Mt 13:10-11, 34-36)

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. [*Hundreds of 'em*] And the power of the Lord was present to heal THEM.¹ – Luke 5:17 NKJ

How's He healing them? He preached the Word to them. What's He healing? Blind eyes; deaf ears; hard hearts. (Mt 13:14) Just the day before, He said if they saw, heard, and understood, they'd "turn and *be forgiven*" (Mk 4:12) "*and I would heal them.*" (Mt 13:15)

Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, lying on a mat carried by four of them and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof made an opening in the roof above Jesus and after digging through it, lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." – Matthew 9:2-3; Mark 2:6-7; Luke 5:18-21 NIV

He sees more than mere persistence. Later that day, He'll say, "*Who touched Me?*" "*Everyone!*" Yet, only one woman is healed by her faith; because, she believes He is who He says. (Mt 9:20-22; Mal 4:2)

¹ I substituted New King James for NIV, because it translates the word for "them". Less literal translations (like NIV) replace the original word with "*the sick*". Other translations ignore the original word and only write, "to heal".

The Pharisee's ongoing argument, clear to the cross, is whether Jesus is God or Satan. (Jn 7:20, 8:52, 10:19-21) Because, by what He does it's clearly one or the other. And the day before, the majority judged Him to be Satan. (Mt 12:24, Mk 3:22; Lk 11:15) Yet, **one of them, who's paralyzed, believes He's God.** But, the Pharisees surrounding His house won't allow him to break rank. Matthew tells this as a continuation of the 80+ disciples, some of whom were Pharisees (Mt 8:18-23), returning after having *their* eyes opened to Jesus' true power and authority and identity. And, Matthew indicates² that **four of them try to bring this man home while Jesus preaches; which is how they know how to dig directly over Him.**

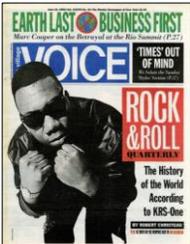


And, **“When Jesus saw *their* faith”** He said, **“*your* sins are forgiven”**. **This paralyzed Pharisee is *their* first convert to Christ as God!** And, they don't care if they're committing religious-political suicide, by defying every religious leader in the land to do it! And **that's what Jesus sees when He looks up!** And, **that's why it's by their faith that this man has turned, to be healed.**

Now, the *your-sins-are-forgiven* part comes as a complete surprise. Instead of saying, “Be healed,” Jesus says, “Be forgiven.” Why? Because, He wants to reward this guy's faith; and, like all of us, **his problems are much deeper than his physical suffering.** You *know* this guy's thinking, **“If I could walk again, I'd be set for life. I'd never complain again. Everything would be good.”** But, give him a few months, and he'll see how profoundly untrue that thinking is. Euphoria can't last. Never does. 'Cause, **the root of our heart's discontent is too deep.** Walking will just usher in *new problems*.



So, whenever we're tempted to think, “If I could get my deepest wish, everything would be good and my problems would be solved,” **we're looking to that desired *whatever* to save us, which technically makes it our savior.** And, if we make *anything* other than Christ our Savior, and **if we don't get it, we'll be frustrated, angry, and unhappy.**



Yet, **if we do get it, we'll end up even more frustrated, angry, and unhappy,** because of the **shocking disillusionment that comes when it fails to provide what we thought it would,** leaving us with devastating emptiness and hopelessness of having no other prospects. Life is especially rough on those who have it all. **What do you do, where do you turn, when wealth, fame, beauty, respect, sex-appeal, health, youth, and power have failed you?** Parties. Pills. Booze. Affairs. Cults. Causes. Despair. Suicide.



Cynthia Heimel, in a (Jan 2) 1990 column for the ultra-secular, “The Village Voice”, wrote this astonishingly candid and insightful bit of wit: “I pity celebrities. No I really do. Sylvester Stallone, Bruce Willis, and Barbra Streisand, were once perfectly pleasant human beings. But now their wrath is awful. I think when God wants to play a really rotten practical joke on you he grants you your deepest wish and then laughs merrily when you realize you want to kill yourself. You see

² After saying they return, Matthew writes, “And behold, bringing to him ... and Jesus seeing their faith” (Mt 9:2), which insinuates those already described. Less literal translations (like NIV) add: **“Some men brought to him”**.

Sly, Bruce, and Barbra wanted fame. They worked, they pushed and the morning after each of them became famous they wanted to take an overdose. Because that giant thing they were striving for, that fame thing that was going to make everything OK, that was going to make their lives bearable, that was going to provide them with personal fulfillment and happiness had happened and they were still them. The disillusionment turned them howling and insufferable.”



Why does the paralyzed man want to be healed? So he can walk and run. *Why?* So he can accomplish, earn, and accumulate. *Why?* So he can be satisfied and fulfilled. And yet, none of *that* does *that*. **And, sadly, our suffering is often the necessary ingredient to help us figure that out, so we can get our *truest desire* met.**



In C.S. Lewis’ “The Dawn Treader”, when rotten Eustace gets his wish for wealth, it backfires and turns him into a dragon. He turns to Aslan for help and is shocked when Aslan painfully claws and tears his thick skin away layer by layer in order to set him free. **Jesus always sinks in deeper than we think. As believers our primary focus must remain on growth in Christ.** We can come to the Lord deceiving ourselves, thinking we just need a little boost to get past a problem, so we can get back to chasing after what we think will *really* fulfill us.



It’s not wrong for the paralyzed to want to walk; it’s wrong to think that getting what we wish for will ultimately fulfill us.

It’s not wrong to wish for a T-bone steak in the dining lounge onboard the sinking Titanic. And *granted*, it’ll taste delicious. But, wouldn’t it be nicer if, instead of a steak, the chef brought you a *helicopter*?



The paralyzed man thought walking would fix and free and liberate him. But, **that fix can only let him walk ... until once again, he can’t.**



Jesus isn’t a genie. Genies have *horrible reputations* for ruining lives by granting wishes. **Jesus is the *un-Genie* who kindly looks past our wishes to grant our needs.**

At this, some of The Pharisees and the teachers of the law sitting there, began thinking to themselves, *said to themselves*, “Why does this fellow talk like that? “This fellow is blaspheming!” “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” – Matthew 9:3; Mark 2:6-12; Luke 5:21 NIV



If you’re with two friends and one of ‘em punches you in the mouth, and the other turns to him and says, “I forgive you for that,” how would you react? **“Hey, he didn’t punch you; he punched me! You can’t forgive him; only I can.”**

And, only God can forgive sin against Him.

So, when Jesus says “Your sins are forgiven,” He’s simultaneously saying, “You’ve sinned against Me,” and unavoidably declaring, “*because, I’m God.*”

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and **Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, to them, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’ – Matthew 9:4-5; Mark 2:8-9; Luke 5:22-23 NIV**

Now, *there’s* a riddle of the ages! Which is easier to say?

Well, that depends entirely on *who’s* saying it.

For anyone *other than Jesus,* it’s easier to say “*Your sins are forgiven,*” because it’s only talk; we have no power, apart from God, to do either. But, **for Jesus, who *is* God, and *can’t* lie, saying, “*Your sins are forgiven*” comes at an infinitely greater cost than fixing legs.**

Right here, the shadow of the cross falls across His path, as **He takes an irreversible step, declaring to the rulers that He can forgive sin, setting in motion what’ll end in His death, which will accomplish what He says He can do,** which *they* claim he can’t, which gets Him nailed to a cross, which makes Him able.

So, which is easier to say: “*Walk,*” or, “*I forgive you.*”

But so that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....** [That is, He is God] Then he said to the paralytic, “I tell you, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” And Immediately the man got up he stood up in front of them, took his mat he had been lying on and walked out in full view of them all and went home praising God. This amazed everyone and When the crowd saw this, They were filled with awe and said, **“We have seen remarkable things today.”** [In the Word of God that Jesus was preaching and revealing to them to heal their eyes and ears and hearts] **and they praised God, who had given such authority** [*exousia: power of choice; liberty of doing as one pleases; power of judicial decisions; jurisdiction*] **to men** [specifically, the Scribes and Pharisees Jesus assembled from every town in Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem] saying, **“We have never seen anything like this!”** – Matthew 9:6-8; Mark 2:10-12; Luke 5:24-26 NIV

The lame walking, they’d been seeing, *and more,* for months. But, the Word Jesus preached, to lay out His case, in order to force them, mere men, to judge if He’s God ... *remarkable!*

Jesus has the power to give anyone at any point anything we wish.

But, if it would displace Him, or hinder His ongoing work within us, in any way, well then, that would be downright cruel. We don’t need a dangerous and deadly wish-granting genie.

We need a Lion, loving enough to dig in His claws, despite our defiance, and carefully tear off layer by painful layer, the skin of sin that entangles and enslaves and distorts our desires.