

I wonder whatever happened to Peter's house in Capernaum. If walls could only talk, that house could tell some tales. The house in Capernaum that Mark 2 talks about was probably Peter's. People came to that house in droves, when they heard that Jesus was back at Peter's house. The house was packed with people who wanted to get well and with people who wanted to watch people get well. They had seen what Jesus could do and expected Him to make them well. Peter opened his home to them so they could hear Jesus and watch Him in action.

They couldn't fit anyone else in the house, and there may have been as many people outside trying to get in. Peter was thinking, "This is what Jesus meant when he said to me, 'Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.'" I wonder what Peter's wife was thinking. Even on their best behavior, all those people had to be noisy, and people will accidentally break things. We don't have to guess their reaction to what happened next, because it was unexpected and over-the-top.

An Act of Faith

Four guys came to the house late and for good reason. They brought a friend on some kind of stretcher, who was paralyzed. They were hoping Jesus would make him walk again, but they could not get inside. "Hey! First-come, first-served." "Wait your turn!" You wonder if the four guys had choice words for the people who pushed them to the back of the line.

What they did next shows just how desperate and determined they were. Those five men climbed up an outside staircase onto the flat roof of Peter's house. You wonder how they got their paralyzed friend up the steps. But up they went, paralyzed friend, stretcher, and all. They laid the stretcher down on the roof, marked off a space slightly larger than the stretcher, pulled off the tiles, and started making a hole in Peter's roof. They lowered their friend through the hole in the roof into a room full of startled, gawking people.

The paralyzed man came to rest on the floor in front of Jesus. Some people said it was wanton destruction of private property. Some didn't like the interruption. Peter had to be thinking, "Who's going to fix my roof?" But Jesus saw it as an act of faith and said to the paralyzed man, **"Son, your sins are forgiven."**

New Wine

Those words contradicted every expectation in the house. Imagine the emotions of the paralyzed man. He had let himself dare to hope that he might walk. His four friends had encouraged him. Now this! Teachers of the law who were there thought it was blasphemy. **"Who can forgive sins but God alone?"** (Mark 2:7) Where were the priests? Where were the sacrifices? Where was the temple? Who did He think He was?

The whole mood changed. Can you feel it? Why spoil a good thing? Why say something that made no difference? A paralytic walking was the real deal. It made a difference. It made no difference to say, **"Your sins are forgiven"**? It was just words. It riled up the religious types, and this poor devil had to be carted back home with his dreams crushed. To people in this hostile

mood Jesus posed a question: **“Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’”** (Mark 2:9) Well, seeing is believing, and I don’t know what forgiveness of sins looks like. But if Jesus tells the paralytic to walk, and he walks, then everyone knows Jesus is for real.

Jesus said, **“I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”** So he said to the man, **“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”** (Mark 2:10, 11) The man **got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”** (Mark 2:12)

Jewish leaders said with good reason that Jewish law mandated sacrifices for sin to be made by Jewish priests in a prescribed way in the Jerusalem temple. Jesus said His power over paralysis meant that a new offer of forgiveness had entered the world. What do that power and that offer of forgiveness say about Him, who wielded the power and superseded the ancient laws? We in our secular age like to say that if you have your health, you have everything. Jesus said forgiveness of sins matters more than good health. What does that tell us about Him?

Jesus said over and over, **“The time has come. The kingdom of God is near.”** (Mark 1:15) In other words, watch Jesus, and you will see what God’s authority looks like in human life. Watch Jesus, and you will see God’s priorities on display. And as the people in Peter’s house found out, His authority will contradict human authority, and His priorities will contradict our priorities.

Unlikely disciples become extravagant disciples as they allow themselves to be corrected by the Lord they follow. They learn sooner or later that His thoughts are not their thoughts, and His ways are not their ways. They learn sooner or later that they are doing Him no favors by following Him. He is pouring out the new wine of heaven. It remains to be seen, if His disciples then and His disciples now are wineskins that can stretch and not split under the pressure of His expanding presence in their experience.

Communion

The One who brought the presence of God and the priority of forgiveness into that room in Peter’s house is here with us by means of bread and cup. We hold in our hands the visible representations of Him who said to them and says to us, “Watch me, and you will see what God is like. God is with you. Don’t miss Him!”

We won’t miss Him, if we keep in step with the Holy Spirit. We keep in step with the Spirit, when we pursue God’s priority of forgiveness and the reconciliation it makes possible between God and man and with each other. There are many ways to do that. Let’s talk about one.

The Church prays, **“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”** (Matthew 6:12) Jesus told a story of a master who said to his slave, **“I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?”** In anger his master turned him over to the jailers until he should pay back all he owed. **This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.**” (Matthew 18:32-35)

Are you angry with someone who wronged you? Keeping in step with the Spirit means that you forgive that person. That’s how we participate in God’s priority of forgiveness and reconciliation. Make plans this week to forgive. Start with those closest to you.

As you hold the bread and cup in your hand this morning and commune with Christ, ask Him for the strength to forgive and seek reconciliation. Make your promises to Him.