
Carrying your Friends

Scripture Reading: Mark 2

After a few days, Jesus returned to Capernaum, and word got around that he was back home. A crowd gathered, jamming the entrance so no one could get in or out.

He was teaching the Word. They brought a paraplegic to him, carried by four men. When they weren't able to get in because of the crowd, they removed part of the roof and lowered the paraplegic on his stretcher. Impressed by their bold belief, Jesus said to the paraplegic, "Son, I forgive your sins."

Some religion scholars sitting there started whispering among themselves, "He can't talk that way! That's blasphemy! God and only God can forgive sins."

Jesus knew right away what they were thinking, and said, "Why are you so skeptical? Which is simpler: to say to the paraplegic, 'I forgive your sins,' or say, 'Get up, take your stretcher, and start walking'? Well, just so it's clear that I'm the Son of Man and authorized to do either, or both . . ." (he looked now at the paraplegic), "Get up. Pick up your stretcher and go home."

And the man did it—got up, grabbed his stretcher, and walked out, with everyone there watching him. They rubbed their eyes, incredulous—and then praised God, saying, "We've never seen anything like this!" (Mark 2:1-12 MSG)

Suggestions for experiencing this story

- As you listen to the reading – sit back, relax your breathing, and open yourself to God as revealed in this story.
 - As you listen, you will have questions and confusions but put them aside and just uncritically become part of the story- accept it as it is and see where that takes you.
 - What's the atmosphere here? Sights, sounds smells, emotions.
 - What does Jesus feel like, experience in this story? What do we see in him as the roof opens up?
 - When have you felt paralyzed in your own life and needed the help of friends or God to carry you?
 - What's so important about the friends' faith?
 - What is it about the skeptics that can only see bad in something good? What is the construct of their beliefs that makes them blind?
 - What can we do to avoid this sort of narrowness while still having a strong faith?
 - Who are the friends who have carried you when you've needed it?
 - How can we "carry" each other in ways that help us experience Jesus' love and forgiveness when we are paralyzed by fear or failure?
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A Prayer for Today

*O Lord, who has mercy on all,
take away from me my sins,
and mercifully kindle in me
the fire of your Holy Spirit.
Take away from me the heart of stone,
and give me a heart of flesh,
a heart to love and adore you,
a heart to delight in you,
to follow and enjoy you,
for Christ's sake.
(Ambrose: c.339-97)*



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