

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” This is the Promise of David, as he pens the prophetic Psalm. And David knew something of sin and forgiveness. He plotted the death of Uriah the Hittite. He committed adultery with Bathsheba.

And yet in love, in mercy, God sent His prophet to show David his sin. There were temporal consequences to his transgressions. But the Prophet’s last word was not Law, not a word of condemnation. God gave him to declare to David “The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die...”

From the account of David, we learn much about God. God is a God of mercy, a God of healing, and God of grace. Man can do a lot of things. He can shape and arrange using materials God has spoken into being. He can build great cities. He can mount tremendous wars. But God alone can create. And God alone can forgive sins.

Where there is sin, there is death. Death came through sin, and death comes to all who sin. In that way the paralytic represents all sons of Adam. He was fallen of body and soul. The soul cannot be seen. But his body was wracked with disorder and disfunction. That external malady was a concrete sign of the condition of his soul, indeed of the souls of all the fallen. But God is a God of life. In Him is life – life for Adam, life David, life for the paralytic, and life for you. In the account of the paralytic, we see faith and love at work.

The men believed in Jesus. They had faith. Their friend was suffering. So the men brought the paralytic to Jesus. That’s what faith does. That is what love does. It doesn’t run from God, it trusts in God’s forgiveness and healing. It desires to help others, to see others healed. The men act on their faith. The paralytic too had come to believe that Jesus could heal him. So the text says “Jesus saw their faith.” The Lord sees the men’s faith, and yet requires personal faith from the paralytic. It is to him as he believed. His sins are forgiven. God alone does miracles.

The most important healing is first. He is healed of soul. The fatal consequences of the sin he inherited are removed. The due penalty for the sins he had committed is removed. His soul was reconciled to God. And yet when the Lord speaks to the paralytic and proclaims “Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you!”, the scribes thought to themselves “This man blasphemes.” They did not have faith. So they could not know true love.

Then to His miraculous healing, the Lord adds another miracle. He Lord reads their hearts. He is the God who sees. He sees the thoughts and intentions men conceal. Only God can do that. And He reads your heart. He hears the thoughts you refrain from verbalizing. God is not deceived by the veneer of piety and kindness you have worn.

Even if you work to fool yourself, God sees, God knows, how you really feel. He sees what you really believe. He is not deceived – as He knew the thoughts of the scribes, so He knows your thoughts. And that should strike fear in each of us. For the sin expressed through word and deed is conceived in the heart. And God sees your heart.

But do not lose hope. You have the account of the healing of the paralytic. God heals. God saves. In mercy, the Lord does not strike the scribes with fire from heaven. As He extended forgiveness and life to David, as He granted Adam the Promise that works saving faith, so He worked a sign, a third miracle, that the unbelief of the scribes might be driven out. He speaks, and the physical paralysis of the man is healed. Unlike the healing of his soul, his physical healing is seen by many. It did not require faith, it inspired faith. And the crowds were in awe. They glorified God.

The Son of Man has healed you. The God of love, the God of life, the God of forgiveness and healing, has driven out the paralysis of your sins. He has forgiven your sins, as far as the east is from the west. He has done it by proclamation, attached to a sign, much like His healing of the paralytic. To the healing of your soul God has attached water and His Word, by which the Holy Spirit works to grant you forgiveness and life. The external symbols testify to the unseen, the spiritual, the eternal restoration you receive in Holy Baptism. And there God gives you faith.

You have faith in Jesus Christ. You believe that He suffered without friends to help. No one intervened in His suffering. No one spoke a word of pardon or peace. He was denied the very remission He granted the paralytic. For He bore the sins of the paralytic. He bore your sins. His limbs were twisted and disjointed as He hung on the cross. There He died that your sins be buried with Him.

But He is the Lord of Life. He is not dead. He who spoke the paralytic into health overcame death and took up His life. And that He did for you. He gave the Prophets to promise that it would happen, and He gave the Apostles and Evangelists to testify to the fact of His resurrection. So you, like the crowds, are in awe. You marvel. And you believe. You believe that He who rose physically heals spiritually. And believing, you receive the healing that He alone can give.

You have faith. And you have love. You have the love of God, who is the source of all love. So in faith you believe and worship the God who saves you. And in love, you do what the friends of the paralytic did – you bring others to Jesus, the source of salvation and life. You bring others to the Divine Service, that they too may hear of Christ, believe, and receive the forgiveness of sins. And with them you marvel. You are in awe of the God who freely heals. And you glorify God, who by the Office of the Holy Ministry has given men the authority to forgive sins.

It is yours this day to receive the first healing the Lord gave, healing of soul, in the forgiveness of your sins. And it is yours this day to receive what faith craves – Christ. You hear Christ read and preached. And He comes to you, together with the external signs of Bread and Wine, that you know, that you believe, that you eat His Body and drink His Blood. He comes to you in mercy, that you receive the forgiveness He gave to the paralytic. He comes to you in love, that God call you His dear as well. So be of good cheer, for your sins are forgiven you.

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