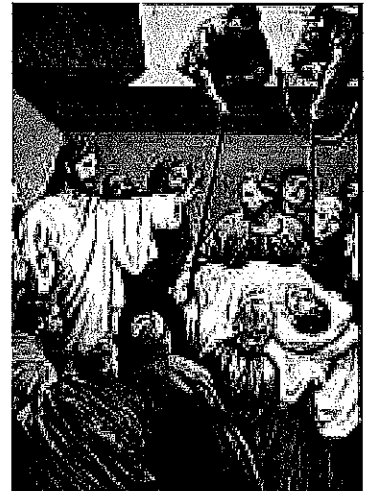


From the Desk of Pastor Jim – “The Great Physician”



Next to the picture of David standing over the fallen giant Goliath, holding the giant's sword ready to do him in, my favorite Sunday School picture as a boy was that of the four men lowering their paralyzed friend through the rooftop to the feet of Jesus.

The incident shows the openness and availability of Jesus' love for people in need. There He was, busy teaching the people who had crowded into the house to hear His words, when suddenly there before Him lay this paralytic. He did not resent this forceful intrusion of these men, who wanted to be sure their friend would be in touch with The Healer.



Jesus' interaction with the paralyzed man showed His order of priorities. How amazing! The invalid was paralyzed to such a degree that he could not walk, and everyone in the place wanted and expected to see a miracle of physical healing. And what did Jesus do first? Heal him? No! Jesus told the man, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven." Jesus, you see, knew the man's real need, and it was much worse than his paralysis. The healing of the sick man followed of course, but it had to wait for that which was more important.

The truth of this lesson forces itself on us rather unavoidably: there is something higher and more important even than bodily health! It is the assurance that God accepts us because He had pardoned our wrongdoing. In providing the sick man this deeper, inner healing, Jesus was true to the priorities of His mission. He had come "to see and save the lost."

Jesus wants us to know that also our greatest need is God's forgiveness! The Bible judges all of us with the words: "All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God." We know it's true. How good, then, to be able to go to Jesus with our sin-sickness and know that it is His highest priority to forgive us. And, in His name, we can bring other repentant sinners that same assurance: "Your sins are forgiven."

A few people who were present that day were upset with Jesus. They maintained that He had blasphemed God, for they said, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" That's when Jesus showed the crowd that He **IS** God and that He wields God's power and authority. Jesus asked them: "Which is easier: to say 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say 'Take up your bed and go home'?" It takes God's power really to do either of these. Then, to the amazement of all, Jesus spoke to the paralytic, "Get up, take your bed and go home," and that's exactly what the healed man did!

Because Jesus is our Great Physician, we can rejoice that He has given us that inner healing we need most, and we can turn to Him for healing and restoration when we are physically ill. And, like the paralytic's friends, we can, with our prayers and our witnessing, bring our families and our friends to Jesus for healing that only He can provide.

May the healing of Jesus' forgiveness be your greatest blessing,

Your Pastor Jim