

Explore the Bible: February 7

Forgives • Luke 5:17-26

By Ann Maniscalco



Maniscalco

Do you ever reply, “It’s been one of those days!” when someone asks, “How are you doing?” Usually, this response is accompanied by an eye roll or a deep sigh. If you’re like me, some days start out with thinking the day ahead looks quite uneventful, but before we finish our breakfast and are out the door, life happens! With a jolt, the day is off to an unexpected start, sometimes with wonderfully pleasant events and sometimes with difficult ones.

The homeowner in today’s story certainly didn’t expect his day to transpire like it did. Jesus, a huge crowd, and some unexpected rooftop visitors changed things in a big way.

The opening verse of this week’s Scripture begins with these same words: “On one of those days” (v. 17 ESV). Our lesson is sandwiched between verses we studied last week (Luke 5:4-11; 27-32). Jesus was carrying on His usual activities of teaching and doing compassionate and mighty works. Some days, His platform was a boat and on other days, a hillside or a roadside. In this passage, we see that it was a house, according to the (v. 19 NKJV).

The house overflowed with an audience that included Pharisees and teachers of Jewish law from surrounding areas. Verse 17

reveals “the power of the Lord was with [Jesus] to heal” (ESV). This seems an odd statement, as Jesus had already exercised His divine healing power many times prior to this (Luke 5:15; Matt. 8).

Scripture clearly shows that in some locales (notably Nazareth), the lack of the people’s faith hindered displays of His power. Mark 1:5-6 tells us, “He could do no mighty works there,” marveling “because of their unbelief” (NKJV).

In our focal passage, we see that most of the people at this gathering must have been more receptive and expectant. This afforded the Lord the opportunity to lavish His healing power without the restraints caused by lack of faith. There’s a great lesson here for us: when our faith joins hands with God’s willingness, compassion, and power, amazing things can happen (see Matt. 9:27-29)!

Our next verses expand on the above thought, showing how faith coupled with determination can solve many a dilemma. (You might want to read the other accounts of this event in Matt. 9:1-8 and Mark 2:1-12.) While Jesus was teaching, five late-comers arrived on the scene. Four men had transported a paralyzed friend on a stretcher, but they quickly saw how the crowd had swelled even to the outside of the home.

Determined to get their friend to this Healer they’d heard about, they came up with an innovative answer to the problem. Obviously, they didn’t take time to consult the home’s owner before taking matters into their own hands – literally. Hoisting their friend to the roof, they tore into it until they’d created an opening large enough to lower their friend in front of Jesus.

As the dust settled, the crowd surely wondered what would happen next! Luke continues, “And when [Jesus] saw their faith, He said, ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’” We may ask, “How is faith visible?” In this case, the actions of all

five of these determined believers evidenced their strong faith.

James 2:14-18 explains this combination. When someone says he has faith but it doesn't reveal itself in action ("works"), James says it is dead. Other translations say "inoperative" or "useless."

Notice that before Jesus healed the man physically, He said his sins were forgiven. The scribes and Pharisees, always looking for a way to trap Jesus, began to think to themselves, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Since the Spirit of God is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12 NKJV), Jesus "perceived their thoughts."

Presenting them with a question that put them in their places, He asked, "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?'" (ESV). This rhetorical question surely left these Jewish leaders fumbling for an answer. The Lord didn't wait for them to collect their thoughts. Identifying Himself with the Messianic title, "Son of Man," He proved His authority to do both.

Telling the man to pick up his bed and go home, the former paralytic did so immediately, "glorifying God." A praise meeting ensued with those gathered exclaiming, "We have seen extraordinary things today." Our hearts rejoice when God grants healing to those we love, but spiritual healing is vitally more important! Do we spend as much time praying for the spiritual as we do the physical?

Maniscalco is a member of Emmanuel Church, Ocean Springs.