



THE WORD FOR TODAY

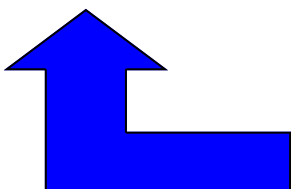
Luke's Gospel, Chapter 5, vv 17-26 ***Jesus heals a paralysed man***

Whilst we know that a lot more could be done to help disabled people today to lead a full life, the contrast between the achievements we see at the Paralympics and the plight of disabled people in Jesus' day is stark. The disabled were the outcasts of society and had no hope of living anything like a normal life. This story speaks both of heartwarming friendship and of God's healing power—and how both of those things combine to bring about a miracle.

It was very near the beginning of Jesus' ministry. He was travelling around, teaching the people and healing the sick, and often taking time out to pray. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were often there in the background, suspicious of this new teacher who seemed to have miraculous powers, watching his every move.



Follow the words of this passage round the church, beginning on the north wall of this little building. There is stonework going on so please take care: keep away from the scaffolding and if you walk on the grass be careful not to slip if it is at all damp. We are using the New International Version of the Bible, which you can find on the internet under Bible Gateway, and the whole "Word for Today" is on the church website, which is www.libertonkirk.net You can also find meditations and prayers on other Bible passages there in previous "Words for Today".



Turn immediately left to find the first verses of the Bible passage on the bench

“One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.”

1



How can anyone know that “the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick?” Only by being there and feeling it. It is unlikely that Luke himself was there, but he collected information about Jesus’ ministry from people who *were* there, perhaps Mary, Jesus’ mother, who knew that Jesus was God’s Son and that he was close to his Heavenly Father.

The power of God to enable Jesus to heal the sick was in the room where they were all gathered. We believe it can be with us today if we are close to God and if we believe in his healing power—power which can heal our bodies, our minds, our souls.

***Lord, help me to draw closer to you day by day.
Keep me praying so that I am always aware of your presence.
Help me to trust in your power to heal today.***

(Station 2 is on the East side of the church building just past the scaffolding on the right, but if you don’t want to walk past the scaffolding on the grass,



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.”

2

This paralysed man was blessed to have friends—many disabled people were left on the streets to beg. No-one wanted to be seen with them. This man not only had friends but they wanted to take him to Jesus, who was a new teacher who could heal the sick. They reckoned this was their friend’s big chance to be healed, if they could just get him right in front of Jesus—they knew that all the sick weren’t healed but that those Jesus met face to face would get his attention. That wasn’t easy because there were crowds of people. It seems to me that this paralysed man must have been good to know—he played his own part in this friendship, and now his friends were not going to be deflected from their goal.



***Lord, thank you for the good friends I have, near and far.
Thank you for those in my church family.
Help me to be a good friend, ready to listen, ready to help.***

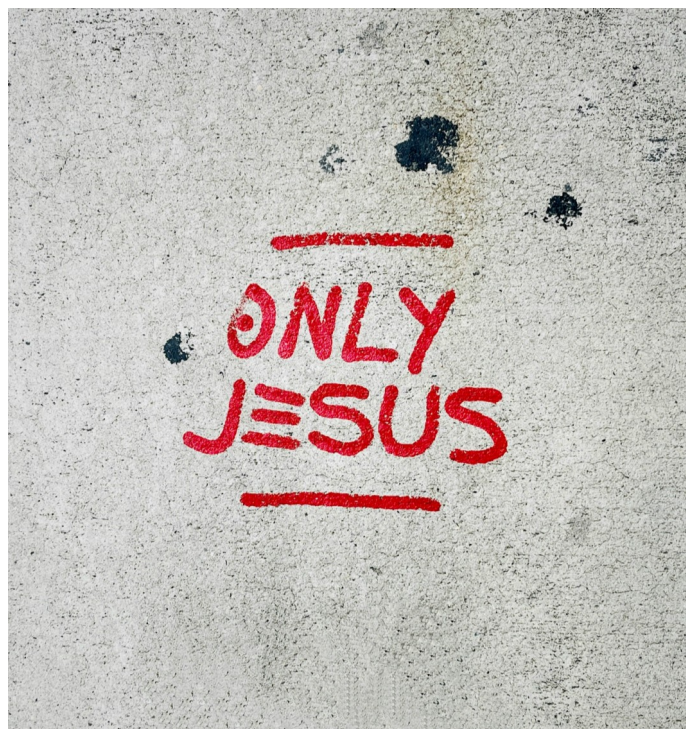
(No. 3 is further along this side of the church building)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven.’”



These men are determined to get their friend to Jesus. They take him up on to the flat roof (there would be steps as some people slept up there) and make a hole big enough to lower him right in front of Jesus. And they wait. (We are not told what the house owner thought!) Jesus looks down at the man on the mat and up at those anxious faces looking down and acknowledges the faith which has brought them there by forgiving the man’s sins.

Perhaps not what people were expecting, but in fact a pearl beyond price—his salvation. It’s an amazing fact that all that Jesus requires of us is that we believe in him, and that faith will be enough for our salvation—forgiveness of sins, restoration to God’s family, the hope of eternal life. But what will the onlookers make of Jesus’ response?

*Lord, draw me closer to you.
Deepen my faith in you and everything you are.
May I always acknowledge you as my Lord and Saviour.*

(Walk along the back of the church and turn right to find No. 4 on the prayer bench)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, ‘Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’”

4



“It’s aye bin” is a good Scottish saying. Have you ever sat with somebody and indulged in criticism of somebody or something in front of you, which goes against your way of doing things, knowing that the person next to you will be thinking the same? The Pharisees and the teachers of the law had very fixed ideas about the Jewish religion, and they were not open to new ideas! If Jesus was trying to set himself up as God, or God’s Chosen One, the Messiah, that would be blasphemy. (It couldn’t be true, of course, they couldn’t possibly believe that!)

We often forget that God knows what we are thinking—we sometimes have to apologise! Why not talk to God about those thoughts instead? He is always listening, and would love to help your understanding.

Lord, help me to remember that you know my inmost thoughts.

Keep me from unkind thoughts.

Teach me to come to you when I don’t understand, or want to criticise.

(No. 5 is on the West side of the church before you come to the tower)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, ‘Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven’, or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?”

5

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . .’ He said to the paralysed man, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’ ”

Jesus knew the Pharisees didn't like him forgiving sins, but just gave the paralysed man an instruction to get up and take his mat and go home. It's wonderful to see Jesus' authority and control of the situation. The Pharisees were left to ponder just what Jesus was up to. Everybody else, including us reading the story now, is excited and amazed by the complete healing of someone who could never have expected to stand up on his own again.



***Lord, it's exciting to read of such complete healing, against all the odds.
Help me to understand your power and authority.
Let me treasure your grace in the forgiveness you promise.***

(Walk towards the front of the church and find No. 6 near the cairn)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“Immediately he stood up in front of them,
took what he had been lying on and
went home praising God.”***

6

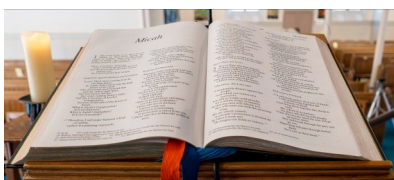
I like to think of the man’s friends racing down the stairs to meet him as he walked out into the fresh air. What a journey home that would be—skipping along in sheer joy. How good it is that God was being praised for the complete transformation of this man’s life.

His friends had played their part—they had brought their friend and laid him at Jesus’ feet. That is what praying for someone does—it lays them at Jesus’ feet—something we can all do.



***Lord, thank you for all your goodness to me day by day.
Let me never forget to say thank you.
Teach me to bring people before you in prayer, and to keep praying.***

(Walk to the front of the church and find No. 7 on one of the benches)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, ‘We have seen remarkable things today.’”

7

“Awesome” is an overworked word these days. Even something served up in McDonald’s can be awesome. But there are times when we encounter God in something, like a view of the Alps spread out before us, and we are filled with awe. We can only stand there and praise a God who can create such wonders. And feel privileged to be able to see them. I can understand these people finding it hard to put their feelings into words. “We have seen remarkable things today” might seem understated, but the awe was real.

“Awesome” things can happen today when believers lay their loved ones or themselves at Jesus’ feet and trust in his power.



***Loving Lord, thank you for the joy of glimpsing your glory and your power.
I stand in awe of you.
Help me to trust in that power to heal so evident in this Bible story.***

If anything you have read has prompted questions you would like to discuss, please contact John Young on 664 3067 or jyoung@churchofscotland.org.uk



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