

Pastor Writes

Greetings to you all. Last we looked at the authority of Jesus over the powers of darkness and his authority to teach. In that incident we noticed the power with which Jesus taught and how the listeners were glued to his teachings. They were astonished by the authority with which he taught. In the midst of his teachings we noticed there was a demon possessed man in the Synagogue who shouted because the demon recognized who Jesus was. Jesus commanded the demon to come out of the man and they screamed and shook him violently and came out of him with a shriek. Again the crowds were amazed and they asked each other, 'What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives order to impure spirits and they obey him'. This morning we will look at another incident which took place sometime later when Jesus entered Capernaum again.

Jesus was probably in the home of Peter in Capernaum where large numbers had gathered and there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. The 'word' is the message of the Gospel by which Jesus asked people to repent for their sins and to enter the kingdom of God through faith in him. As he was teaching, four men came carrying a paralyzed man, seeking to bring him before Jesus so that he could be healed. When they saw the crowd they realized there was no way they could take their friend to Jesus. So they came up with an ingenious idea of taking the paralyzed man to the roof of the house and digging through it and lowered the mat on which he was lying. Palestinian houses were usually flat roofed homes made of beams and clay and so it would have been possible for them to dig through it. Surely this whole incident would have caused a great commotion, as they were actually breaking through the roof! The faith of the friends was so strong that, all they wanted for their paralyzed friend was to somehow meet Jesus. This act of faith prompted them to do this extreme action.

Jesus saw their faith and said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' This is not the normal response one would expect when we have brought somebody for prayers of healing. Those who were beside the man especially the teachers of the law, were thinking to themselves, 'Why does this fellow talk like this? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sin but God alone?' The teachers of the law were taken aback that Jesus was claiming the power to forgive sins, which was a divine prerogative. Their question was right, 'Who can forgive sin but God alone?' but they failed to see the answer, that Jesus is indeed God in human form and has the authority to forgive sins. Mark in his gospel always raises this question, 'Who is this?' and wants his readers to answer that Jesus is the Messiah - God in human form.

Jesus perceived what the teachers of the law were thinking and so he asked them, "Which is easier: to say to the paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'" The question is a doubled edged question. To tell the paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven cannot be proved by an outward sign, but to make a paralyzed man walk would definitely be a visible sign. So in order to show that Jesus had power and authority to forgive sins, he tells the paralyzed man, 'Get up, take your mat and go home.' The paralyzed man immediately got up and walked home.

By doing this miracle Jesus shows that he has authority both to forgive sins as well as to heal sickness. The divine prerogative of forgiving sins is his prerogative. Just as God heals so also Jesus heals. The Church has been called to share in Christ authority to heal sickness and sins as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and because of the indwelling Holy Spirit within us. We are called to pray for healing and also to share the message of forgiveness in and through Jesus Christ. We are called to exercise this authority as the body of Christ. Many a times we fail to share the good news about the forgiveness of Christ and to pray for healing. The body of believers are called to exercise this gift given to us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. May we truly share in Christ authority to heal sickness and sins.

Shalom

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