

Claiming Deity
March 25, 2018

One of the things I am most thankful for is my roof. I am thankful that it does not leak. A leaky roof is a headache. It messes up the insulation, the ceiling, the wall, the carpet, and any furniture below. A roof that does not leak is a delight. How many of you take your roof for granted? If you ever get a leaky roof and need to have it fixed, you will thereafter be more aware of your roof and what it does for you.

Last year, my neighbors down the street had a large limb fall through their roof and then through the living room ceiling. They are thinking more often about their roof these days.

In our passage this morning, there were many people who were concerned about a roof with a hole in it. Though this hole was man made.

Mark 2:1 (NIV) A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.

You might be thinking that Jesus was from Nazareth, not Capernaum. And you would be right. His hometown was Nazareth. But he made Capernaum sort of his home base for his ministry in the region of Galilee.

Several weeks before this he had been in Capernaum. At least four of his disciples lived here and he had previously stayed at the home of Peter, one of them. The house he is now at may be Peter's house or the house of one of the other disciples, or another house. Maybe he rented a house or someone else invited them to stay at his house. Whoever's house it was, it was full of people.

Mark 2:2-5 (NIV) So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

God wants us to see some important lessons through this bit of history.

The house is full, packed with people. There were people standing in the doorways, and probably looking in the windows, with others outside trying to hear what Jesus was saying.

That is the scene as the group of men came up to the house, four of them carrying a paralyzed man on his mat. One man might be able to squeeze himself through the crowd and into the house. But there was no way that four men, carrying another man could do so, even if the crowd was so inclined to let them in.

So what can they do? They could give up and go home. No, they were too determined to help their friend to do that, not after carrying him here. They could wait until Jesus was finished teaching and the crowd eventually dispersed. No, they were too determined to help their friend to wait. They could start a ruckus and try to force people to get out of the way, but that would be rude and selfish. And Jesus might not like that.

Then one of them thinks of the roof. In that region of the world, at that time in history most houses were small rectangles and had flat roofs. The roof was made by taking long, flat planks of wood and laying them across the open area supported by the walls. On top of the planks they layered mud mixed with grass to make sort of a natural mortar. This would dry out in the hot sun and provide the protection they needed. It would wear out eventually and needed to be repaired each year before the rainy season returned. The typical house had an outside stairway that led up to the roof. People would store things up there or even sleep there on summer nights when the house was too hot.

So it was not an unusual thing for these men to go up onto the roof of the house. However, it was unusual to bust through the mortar and lift the boards off to make a hole to lower a man through.

I have always puzzled over this story. Where is the owner of the house? Why isn't he running up onto the roof to stop these guys from destroying his home? I conclude that either Jesus has rented it and the owner isn't here, or maybe it belongs to one of Jesus' disciples and Jesus said to him, "I'll take care of the repairs." Either way no one stops the men from tearing a hole in the roof.

Now picture the scene with me. They must have had some knives or other metal tools to dig into the dried mud roof. They certainly could not use their hands. Remember the house is full of people, with not much room to move around. They can hear the men up above tearing through the roof. Dust is sifting down between the boards of the ceiling, falling on those below.

And this is not a quick process. The dismantling of the roof would not be just a five or ten minute job. It must have been closer to 15 or 20 minutes minimum to accomplish a hole wide enough to lower their friend down to Jesus.

And Jesus just let it happen. He did not stop them. I figure He must have stopped His teaching, what with the distraction of the noise and dust falling. Surely, some in the room, being dusted, were complaining, even yelling at the men on the roof to quit. Maybe the room started emptying out.

I feel pretty sure that if someone started tearing a hole through the drywall up there or even through that screen where the speaker is, that I would quit preaching. You wouldn't be able to listen for the distraction.

Jesus, of course, knows from the Holy Spirit what is taking place. And He waits for the men to finish their task. He could have commanded enough of the crowd to leave so He could go outside. He could have healed the man outside. He could have yelled for them to stop coming through the ceiling. Jesus did not need to see the man or touch him or even be next to him in order to heal him. We know other times that Jesus healed someone from a distance. But here He lets them proceed with what they were determined to do.

Why? Why did Jesus let them tear the hole in the roof and lower their friend in?

1. This action was evidence of their faith in Jesus to heal.

2. This action was evidence of their love for their friend.

Both of these points are important and we will come back to them in a few minutes.

Finally the hole is made, and the man is lowered down to Jesus.

Before addressing the man's physical condition, Jesus speaks to the man's spiritual condition. He tells the man that his sins are forgiven.

The commonly believed theology of the day was that if you were sick, it was always due to sin. They believed that God caused your illness to punish you. We know that this belief was wrong. Jesus points out in several other passages that all illness or physical handicaps are not due to sin.

However, there are times God uses suffering to get our attention and call us to repent of our sins. And that was true of this man. This man needed to get right with God. Therefore Jesus addresses that need first. As much as the man needed physical healing, he needed spiritual healing even more. He needed forgiveness more than he needed to be able to walk. He needed a right relationship with God more than he needed to be able to dress himself. He needed cleansing from sin more than he needed the ability to work. And spiritual healing, forgiveness, is what Jesus offered him. The man accepts forgiveness, by faith, from Jesus.

Of all the needs you have, not one of them is anywhere as important as being forgiven of your sins. This has eternal consequences.

Mark 2:6-12 (NIV) Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

None of the guests speak it aloud, but Jesus can see on their faces that they are surprised and upset that Jesus claimed to forgive the man's sins. For they know, and rightly so, that only God can forgive sins. How dare this young man claim to speak for God!

In that moment the Holy Spirit gives Jesus divine insight to know what they were thinking. So he addressed them in such a way to prove He had the authority to forgive sins. Saying someone is forgiven is a lot easier than healing them. So He does the harder work of that healing the man's paralysis would be.

**Only God can forgive sin.
Only God can heal a man who is paralyzed.
Jesus heals the man.**

Conclusion: Jesus is God and can forgive sin.

One of the objections to the Christian faith that you might hear from people who reject the good news is that Jesus never claimed to be God. It is true that He never comes right out and says, "I am God." There are reasons He did not do so. But at the same time, Jesus made the point in other ways. This healing event is one of those ways. He doesn't state the conclusion. He just leaves it hanging for spiritually discerning people to draw the conclusion themselves. Jesus is God.

Another example occurred on the night the priests arrested and questioned him.

Mark 14:61-64 (NIV) Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They all condemned him as worthy of death.

Here too Jesus does not say the words, "I am God." Yet that is how they interpret the meaning of what He does say. They understood him to mean that he is God. No one else would be sitting at the right hand of God except someone equal to God.

So why, with all the evidence for the deity of Jesus did so few people at that time accept Him as God? They failed to do so for the same reason people fail to accept Him today.

1. If Jesus is God, then everything He said is true.

2. If Jesus is God, then I must submit to His commands.

To admit that Jesus is God is to recognize His claim on my life. The reality of God means I owe Him submission. God made us. God has the right to direct our lives according to His will. If Jesus is God, then I have to pay attention to Jesus. I have to submit my life to Him.

Man is sinful and does not want to submit his life to anyone. This rebellion against God is sin. This is what we most need forgiveness of, this rebellion against the authority of God.

Jesus came to save us from our sins. The things He did proved that God had sent Him. If you will believe that He died for your sins, and submit your life to Him you will be forgiven of your sins.

Now you who are Christians. You claim to believe that Jesus is God. You claim to believe that forgiveness is available through Jesus and only through Jesus. That means that any who fail to receive Jesus will die in their sins and be found deserving of hell.

Your friends and family who do not know of Jesus will go to hell. No matter how good or nice or smart they are, they will go to hell. If you believe they need Jesus, then...

... **What are you doing to bring your friends and relatives to Jesus?**