

7th Sunday Ordinary Time Cycle B February 19, 2012
Isaiah 43:18-19,21-22,24b-25 2Corinthians 1:18-22 Mark 2:1-12

“Child, your sins are forgiven.”

There’s more than a few people down in Washington right now who I’d like to speak those words to. “Your sin of doing your darndest of trying to force this precious pearl of our faith in Jesus Christ to participate in unholy and unhealthy practices for the human soul, is forgiven.” But not yet!

Over the course of the centuries and millennia, countless numbers of institutions, individuals, technocrats, ideologies and massive egos have stood themselves up against the will of God. And just as many as have put their best foot forward, or their best weapon forward, be it threats, a sword, a spear, a gun, or a mighty wielding pen, just as many have failed.

One of the most comforting parts of our faith, and I do pray that every one of us delights in the full understanding of this, is that God always wins out in the end. This Gospel is a perfect microcosm, a perfect snippet of this universal and eternal truth. Jesus is accused of blasphemy; the accusers are upon him like a dog on a tennis ball. But in the end a paralytic is forgiven, picks up his mat, and walks home. Who won? God wins in the end. Always. “. . .that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth. . .” This is a winning formula. For us.

“Child, your sins are forgiven.” No more unifying words have ever been spoken. The uniting of soul and body back into the good graces of our Creator. This is the power of forgiveness. A unifying spiritual event that not only rights the world we live in, but confronts and defeats the powers of confusion, spin, and evil. The forgiveness that Jesus extends to the paralytic defeats the disease and paralysis of accusing, of hatred, and the envy that was shown toward Jesus. And the same we can show toward one another.

As we approach the upcoming season of Lent, I extend an invitation to every one to come and experience the good graces found within the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Where God wins out in the end, and we are reunited with our Creator. Affectionately known by many as our Easter duty, seeking God’s forgiveness in our lives is not an experience of berating ourselves. Or simply recognizing and bringing forth any wretchedness that may have found a home within our hearts. Seeking God’s forgiveness is certainly such things. But the power of the sacrament is meant primarily for the greater purpose of rising, picking up our mat, and walking home. (A beautiful image of the last day, known as resurrection. Rising out of the graves, picking up our resurrected bodies, and walking home to heaven’s glory).

This connection that Jesus intentionally makes with the forgiveness of sins and a miraculous bodily cure is no fluke, nor is it arbitrary. It is not happenstance or a misconnection. It is pure intention. What Jesus does in this situation where this guy’s friends go above and beyond the call of dutiful friendship, raising the roof to lower their buddy into Jesus’ presence, is to unite the soul and the body of one person. Except, this one person represents all of humanity. Reason being that all of us are broken to one degree or another. Thus, we are all in need of reunification in spirit and body.

“Child, your sins are forgiven,” makes a perfect match with “Rise, pick up your mat, and go home.” The soul is lonely without the body. And the body, whatever physical condition it may be in, is lost without the soul.

This is why in our faith we have always believed, as it comes to us from the best in the Jewish tradition, that what we do in our bodies affects our souls. It affects the outcome of our eternal judgment. This is why teenagers are taught no pre-marital sex. This is from the best of the Jewish tradition adopted by our Christian faith, believing that the incredible beauty discovered in the act of consummation is reserved for the marital relationship, where a lifelong covenant is established between a man and a woman. The body-soul connection is also why we hold fast to no adultery in a world that makes light of it, encourages it, laughs at it, and places less and less emphasis on its destructive power and results. What we do in the body affects our souls.

And this is also why gossip is such a serious sin. The tongue is sharper than a two-edged sword. If only every word spoken was as fluent as The Beatitudes, or the Gettysburg Address. What we do in the body affects the soul.

Jesus unites body and soul in the presence of a vast crowd. In the words of Isaiah today, being apropos for this Gospel; "...see, I am doing something new."

Only Jesus, in and through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Peace, can create that which is new.

As we are about to enter the season of Lent, I pray we will be humble enough to lower ourselves into the presence of the Lord, possibly with a little help from our friends. And come to be renewed in body and soul. Take advantage of this powerful gift, so that we may rise, pick up our mats, and walk home.