

MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT

Stuart Mennigke - 23rd February 2003

Mark 2:1-12

There are many characters in this story of Jesus healing the paralytic – all have something to teach. I'm going to say something about the sick man and the scribes and relate it to ourselves, God's call for our own and society's healing.

As with many scripture stories involving Jesus' challenging the Scribes and Pharisees – there is a particular kind of interaction going on. What is it here? With both the paralyzed man and the Scribes - it's that Jesus looks past the immediate and sees the issue in front of himas well as the issue behind. He sees the **person**, and he sees the **real issue**. In much the same way as we open up the scriptures – he looks **at** the situation, and he looks **behind** it. And...he is dealing with forgiveness and love.

The issue in front of him is:

Firstly that the person is a paralytic (these days we would say “physically challenged”), and of course, it is not so important to know whether in fact the person has great sin which needs to be forgiven or not. If he did - Jesus may have known – he may not have – (but more of that later....)

In the mindset of the people of the day – there was an immediate connection between illness/paralysis and sin committed. It could have been superstition or it could have been real knowledge. On one level in **their** minds - it was cause and effect. He has physical symptoms, - so he must have sinned (there are other stories like the “man born blind”...where people ask Jesus: “*Who sinned? The man or his parents?*”) *Jesus' answer of course is: “neither”.... but here is a situation in which the power of God might be displayed.*

With greater ability in medical knowledge these days, we can know that the man's paralysis may have been from birth – not caused by him or his life's actions – but the **issue** is that Jesus knows that if he sets him free internally – that is, in his **spirit** - he is free and he can live with his ailment – because real freedom is in attitude which comes from freedom in inner/deeper perception. And that is where he most needs freedom from whatever it is which binds him.

Likewise - with greater psychological and spiritual knowledge these days, and because we no longer see things/life as **linear** (more Newtonian thinking) – but rather as more connected (more Einsteinian thinking) – we've begun to learn **scientifically** what these people of old knew **intuitively** - that is – there is a link between the mind/body/spirit - and we're beginning now to discover the value of this understanding.... and so we know that physical symptoms can be a manifestation of inner/spiritual upset. I'm stressed ... I get a coldI have prolonged emotional pain I get headaches or other ailments. So, physical healing often requires and may demand the healing of emotional issues. Some of the most avidly read books today are those which capture the link between spiritual, emotional, rational.

Caroline Myss...and her books “*Anatomy of the Spirit*” and “*Sacred Contracts*”...

Thomas More...and his “*Soul Mates*” and “*Care of the Soul*”...

Scott Peck ...and his “*The Road less Traveled*”, and “*A Different Drum*”...

What grips people is not the “new age” stuff which many are scared of – it’s the reality of this link- which seemed quite normal for Jesus to identify and work with.....

And like with the paralyzed man... it’s about love as a force that influences and perhaps determines biological activity. Love helps us heal ourselves and others. (says Caroline Myss ref. “*Anatomy of the Spirit*”).....which is why forgiveness is a major component in love. We shouldn’t be surprised at the gruesomeness of say.... the rape and crime that manifests in our South African society in 2003... because for decades - bred into the perceptions/attitudes and therefore the cell structure of young South Africans was a violence of degradation of human beings.... and it will take as many decades of normal, peaceful, generous loving attitude to be bred into the cell structure of children today. There is a direct link between society’s biology and its emotional well being ... and we are part of its healing – or part of its degradation. (Ethically you see, **society** is responsible for overfilled prisons....)

Example: (I’m part of a team conducting a series of transformation workshops on Affirmative Action/Employment Equity for a major SA group at the moment – and the whites in the group are surprised that after 9 years of freedom black people STILL have need to voice...that history has something to do with the way ahead! ... with healing. We can’t just move on... they say...we need to talk about, feel it, and know that you feel it too!)

Then the Scribes: ... It seems as if Jesus also knows where the lesson really belongs – not as much with the man who is paralyzed ... but with the Scribes whose attitude needs to be healed. Forgiveness and love are two sides of the same coin. It’s really them/the scribes (and Pharisees) who are bound up and paralyzed by their attitude of hate, prejudice and so on.... who need healing. Jesus is emphasizing that his kingdom (of heaven) is for the messy, the miserable, the sinners, the sick, the prostitutes and outcasts – it is one of inclusion not exclusion. It’s one of forgiveness and understanding, where love is the teacher and forgiveness is the learning.

And so the paralyzed man is really an icon – if you like – an image of Jewish society’s paralysis – or at least that of the Jewish religious leaders. And Jesus wants them to ask for the same freedom as the friends of the paralyzed man do – he longs for them to say: “We want to stand up, take up our mat and go home ... heal our sin and our failure to believe.” But they can’t. He wants them to see that inner healing/forgiveness is what sets people free.

But they can’t make the connection because of their inner “bound-up-ness”. So, he makes it for them: “Which is easier etc...? ... so I say to you paralyzed man – get up, take up your bed and go home”.

He is talking to the scribes about their inability to forgive/accept... he is really talking to them about love... love which includes, not excludes.

Caroline Myss says (in “Anatomy of the Spirit”) that because love has such power, we come to know its energy in stages, and each stage presents a lesson in love’s intensity and forms. First we learn love and forgiveness in our ‘tribe’ – our family place ... or we don’t ... Then we learn love/forgiveness with outsiders with whom we are not connected through blood. Then we learn it through physical /material things – sport, dating and mating, home and body. All these are about our external world.

But after that we begin to learn love through our internal world – and here we learn to let go of our need to know, work out, justify ... but rather.... to embrace the healing energy of forgiveness ... “we are not born fluent in love”... she says.... ”but spend our life learning about it. Each of life’s challenges is a lesson in some aspect of love”.

And this is the place to which Jesus calls the paralyzed man, the scribes, and us ... To so work with him in our inner/spiritual beings, that I let him invite me, draw me, pull me, even drag me, toward wholeness, by confronting the parts in me which hold me back from forgiving, and so hold me back from loving ...Him... and all those made in his image.