



# Further up, Further in

## BROUGHT TO CHRIST/CHANGED BY CHRIST

For individual study or group discussion

DATE: January 16, 2022

SPEAKER: Joe/Frank

SERIES: Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 5:17-26

### Family Dinner Table

Since the diving accident that left Joni Eareckson Tada a quadriplegic for more than 40 years, she is regularly asked questions about dealing with suffering and healing.

While discussing her book *A Place of Healing: Wrestling with the Mysteries of Suffering, Pain, and God's Sovereignty* in a 2010 interview with Christianity Today, she had the following to say:

*There's the portion of Scripture in Matthew 18 where Jesus says, "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off. If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out." Here Jesus, the one who delighted in healing hands that could not work, restoring feet that could not walk, giving sight to eyes that could not see—here he is, saying cut off your hand, gouge out your eyes, if these things are causing you to sin. Jesus underscores his priority that yes, the physical body counts, but it does not trump the health of the soul.*

*When people ask about healing, I'm less interested in the physical and more interested in the healing in my heart. I pray that I get rid of my lazy attitude about God's Word and prayer, of brute pride—set me free from self-centeredness. Those are more important, because Jesus thought they were more important.<sup>1</sup>*

- If forgiveness of sins and spiritual healing carry much more eternal weight for us, discuss as a family the ways our culture, and even the church, manifest attitudes which are out of step with this truth.

Our lesson opens with Jesus teaching inside a house in Capernaum (cf. Mark 2:1-12; Matthew 9:1-8). A crowd had gathered to hear him preach, including the "Pharisees and teachers of the law." We read that the house was packed so full of people, the four men carrying their paralyzed friend on a pallet decided to lower him down through the roof instead in order to present him to Jesus.

- What do you think motivated these men to get the paralytic to Jesus? What should motivate us to bring people to Jesus? (2 Corinthians 5:18- 20)

Then Jesus said something astonishing! When he saw the faith of the four men, he told their paralyzed friend, "Man, your sins are forgiven you" (v. 20).

- It was probably surprising to the friends of the paralyzed man when Jesus first said to him that his sins were forgiven. After all, they had their friend's physical healing in mind. What is significant about Jesus first saying to the man that his sins were forgiven?

The scribes and Pharisees began to murmur among themselves. We are told that Jesus "perceived their thoughts" (v. 22), pointing us back to Luke 2:34-35 when Simeon told Mary in the temple, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." In today's passage, we see Jesus revealing their thoughts when he asks, "Why do you question in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'" (v. 22-23)

- Were the Pharisees and scribes not accurate in saying "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Why did they have such an issue with Jesus saying this?

As we read, we are struck by the two obstacles in this encounter with Jesus: the crowd and the Pharisees. The first obstacle was the crowd which prevented the men from bringing their paralyzed friend to Jesus, and the second obstacle was the church leaders who wanted to prevent Jesus from upending their religious system of laws and traditions.

Jesus' words were a direct challenge to the religious system of the day. According to the law, the only way one atoned for sins was going to the temple and having the priest offer an animal sacrifice on their behalf (see Leviticus 4). In order that all those who were present would know that Jesus had the authority to forgive sins, he commanded the paralytic to rise, pick up his bed and walk (v. 24).

- What was the reaction of the crowd when the paralytic was healed? What can we learn from this?
- What was Jesus teaching about his role in salvation? (See Leviticus 4 and 5; Matthew 27:50-51; Hebrews 7:23-28, 9:11-14, 10:10-14)
- Why did Jesus both forgive the man's sins and heal his infirmity? What does this say about Jesus' ministry? (See Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23; Luke 4:31-41)

Every miraculous healing performed by Christ was a reversal of the effects of sin. That is why it was appropriate for Jesus to proclaim the forgiveness of sins. His miracles were an attestation of his divine identity (Acts 2:22). And both signify the presence of God's kingdom in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Luke 17:21; Isaiah 35:5-6, 53:5-12; Matthew 11:2-6).

*"The greater thing is not the miracle; it's the advancement of the gospel, it's the giving of the kingdom." Joni Eareckson Tada*

### PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

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<sup>1</sup> Pulliam, S. (2010, October 8). Joni Eareckson Tada. ChristianityToday.com. Retrieved January 12, 2022, from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/october/12.30.html>