

Trinity 19 (2026)

Have you ever heard a tune or song that ‘transported’ you . . . transformed an ordinary moment into a holy one?

I have. Two particular occasions come to mind.

The first happened in the late 90s when Ron and Diane Wikander accompanied me to England. Incidentally, it was on this trip that Ron received his ‘call to the ministry’ . . . in a pub no less! But that’s a story for another day.

One of the places we visited was Canterbury. It was there that I stepped inside a shop where music was being played over the loudspeaker system. After leaving, about a half a block down the street, I turned around, returned to the shop and bought the CD set from which this music was coming.

This was not the only occasion on which something like this happened. Years later, I was in a church bookshop in Atlanta, where again music was being played. This time the recording was of a children's choir singing:

Tell me the stories of Jesus
I love to hear;
Things I would ask him to tell me
If He were here:
Scenes by the wayside,
Tales of the sea,
Stories of Jesus,
Tell them to me.

I found both the melody and the words transporting . . . but also thought provoking, particularly the line about questions we might want to ask Jesus "if He were here" (in the flesh that is).

Some that came to my mind were:

If the peace proclaimed by the angels at your birth is real: **Why is hate so strong? Why do nations still war? Why is the world in such a mess?**

If Satan did indeed receive a fatal wound on Good Friday, if death died and a new order of the ages began:

Why are cemeteries still filling up?

Why do we face daily struggles and temptations?

Why do you delay your promised coming?

These are difficult questions. The Bible gives us hints, but not the precise answers we seek in our moments of impatience.

The closest it comes in answering the one regarding the delay of our Lord's Second

Coming is found in 2 Peter 3 when the apostle writes:

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come . . .”

From this passage we learn that history is going somewhere, and in the end God wins.

Wickedness will be judged and delt with. Creation will be cleansed and purified. More than that, the delay we experience in the present is for a purpose. It is to give more time for those who are perishing to get on the lifeboat and be saved.

Where do you and I fit into this paradigm?
We are the ones called to operate the lifeboats.

In today's Gospel, we have one of those 'scenes by the wayside' referenced in the hymn I have just quoted.

Here we find Jesus healing a paralyzed man. Mark in his Gospel supplies further details. The friends who brought him were unable to get him to Jesus because so many people had crowded into the house where Jesus was teaching.

Not to be deterred, they carried their sick friend up onto the rooftop, pulled back some tiles, and lowered him on a pallet down to where Jesus was.

Here we have more than a great story . . . rather a sign that the long-awaited Kingdom of God was breaking in.

This miracle took place in Capernaum, a village on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was the home of Simon Peter, and by this time had become the center of Jesus'

public ministry. In today's passage, Jesus does three things:

--He honors the faith of the friends of the paralyzed man.

--He meets the need of the man laid at His feet.

--He answers His critics in a dramatic and unmistakable way.

Let's look briefly at each.

First, **He honors the faith of the sick man's friends.**

What is significant about this miracle is that it was the faith of his friend that brought about his healing.

In most of the other healing stories recorded in the Gospels, it was the faith of the person

who stood in need of healing that counted, but not here.

What I think we can take away from this aspect of the story is that sometimes people need to be carried to Jesus. Their inner resources are exhausted. They are without power to make the journey on their own. So, they need our help and faith.

Perhaps you can think of someone who stands in need of the love and healing power of God. For whatever reason, this one is not able to come on his own.

This is what I am asking you to do. In your mind, bring that person and lay him or her before Jesus . . . in faith.

What will happen? I don't know. Do your part and leave the rest to Jesus.

Jesus honors the faith of the friends of the afflicted man.

Secondly, **He meets the need of the paralyzed man.** He does so in two ways, first by forgiving his sins, and then by healing his body.

It is not necessary to think that this man's malady was brought about by some particular sin. It may have been, but not necessarily.

This thing Christians call sin is more than you do a few bad things . . . I do a few bad things. It's more deep-seated. It is a dark power that has the whole world in its grip. Jesus came to break the power of sin and all the ills that flow from it, and this is what we see Him doing in today's Gospel.

Interestingly enough, in the medical community today there is a growing awareness of the union between the physical and spiritual

dimensions. Some of you may have heard of Paul Tournier. He was a 20th century Swiss physician who brought to the fore the close connection between spiritual and physical wellbeing.

In *A Doctor's Case Book*, Dr. Tournier tells the story of a young girl who was being treated for anemia. The standard treatments were not working.

So, she was sent to a mountain sanitarium. There, the attending physician tested her and found no sign of the disorder. A second test was conducted with the same result coming back.

The girl was asked if anything out of the ordinary had happened to her since her initial testing.

“Yes,” she said. “I have been able to forgive someone against whom I bore a nasty grudge.”

Her mental attitude was changed, and so was the state of her blood. The first opened the way for the second.

On a practical note, if you find yourself in some sort of distress, by all means go to a doctor, but don't neglect the spiritual dimension.

Confess sins you may have hidden away. Forgive and let go of old hurts. Go for the holistic approach. Remove obstacles that may be blocking God's healing power.

Jesus honors the faith of the friends that brought the paralyzed man to be healed. He meets this man's need, both spiritually and physically.

Finally, we come to the last point in this sermon: **Jesus answers His critics, not with words but with action.**

The religious leaders present that day accused Him of blasphemy. **“Who can forgive sins but God?”** they asked.

Jesus responded, not by giving them a theological lecture on His person and purpose for coming, but by telling the afflicted man to get up and walk . . . which he did.

Forgiveness and restoration of health are both the purviews of God. The first is out of sight of man; the second is in plain view. They got their answer: The one who stood before them was more than a prophet. He was God’s son.

Were his critics won over by the evidence? Did they become Jesus’ disciples? No.

What might we take away from this part of the story?

I think it would be this: we should not become discouraged when we share our Christian faith with a friend or colleague and there is no positive response. Do your part. Leave the rest to God. Some will respond; others will harden their hearts and say no. It happened then; it happens now.

This morning, we have looked at one of the many stories of Jesus. This one in particular seems to be full of practical wisdom.

The stories of Jesus are exciting and compelling, but let's not be hearers only. Let's be doers . . . let's be doers by translating the words Jesus spoke by the seaside and in other places into words people in our turbulent world today can hear, find hope in and be changed by.

God has many ways of getting our attention – sweet melodies being one of these. Let's be open to all. Hear and respond to the Master's call whenever and in whatever form it comes.