

3rd Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Isaiah 55:1-9

Psalm: 63:1-9

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Gospel: Mark 2:1-12

This morning we continue learning about healing through the experiences of people who met with Jesus.

Last week we focussed on how healing begins with having compassion for other people, feeling what God feels for them and looking at them as God does. Today, using the story of the healing of the paralytic man who is brought for healing by four friends, we consider how we need to have confidence in God's healing power. (The other two qualities we will explore in coming weeks are have the courage to take risks to offer healing to other people; and having the commitment to follow through, continuing to pray for people when healing doesn't seem to be happening)

This morning's gospel account of the healing of the paralytic man is one of my particular favourites. While the man receives healing, it is not through his effort – instead it is through the effort of his friends. I find comfort in the story because it reminds me that when I'm struggling with my faith or my commitment to Jesus, my friends can carry me with their faith... while at other times when my friends are struggling, I help carry them.

Many years ago I was reminded that what was important in our lives was not what we could do in our own strength, but what we did in God's strength. Here's a thought... a pen in my hand is useful, but a pen in CS Lewis' hand is mind blowing... it depends who's hand it's in; a guitar in my hands isn't worth much at all, but a guitar in Eric Clapton's hands is priceless... it depends who's hand it's in; a tennis racket in our hands is worth a little, but in Roger Federer's hand's it's worth \$48 million... it depends who's hand it's in; a football in my hands is pretty useless, but in Matt Giteau's hands it's worth \$1 million per year. .. it depends who's hand it's in.

When we are praying for other people, we are placing them along with our hopes in God's hands. The God who is all powerful, the God for whom nothing is impossible. Jesus tells us that all we need is the faith of a mustard seed. Worship becomes very critical for us then, because worship shifts our gaze off ourselves and our own situation and focuses on Jesus and his power. And in doing so we remind ourselves that he is all powerful – powerful enough to cleanse us from our sins and powerful enough to make a paralytic man walk... all because his friends believed. We remind ourselves of all the hope and possibility that is available to us.

I'm not sure if you've ever played a game of trust with your grandchildren or family friends before. One of the games I play with my niece and nephew is where they stand in front of me and close their eyes and then they fall into me and I have to catch them before they hit the ground. When they were younger (they are now 8 and 6) they would do this for hours and hours and hours. The remarkable thing about this game was always that they knew that I would be there to catch them. While from time to time there have been accidents when I didn't catch them, the game still continues – and in that game there is something very deep for us about faith. When Jesus says we

are to be like children in order to enter the kingdom of God, I think it means something of this childlike faith that knows that Jesus will always be there when we pray.

I'm not suggesting that when we pray we will always get what we ask for or even what we want, but I do believe that God promises to hear us and to always be with us. We need to have confidence that God desires us to be whole, free and healed and promises that when we pray he hears us. More than that, we need to know that God has the power to heal us because he has the power over all things – even death.

After the service there will be an opportunity for prayer at the communion rail. I invite you to come forward for prayer for yourself, for your friends or for anyone. There will be someone to pray with you...