

SCRIPTURE READING FOR JANUARY 22, 2023 @ CAPC OAKLAND

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Mark is one of the four gospels written to tell the life-story and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. It was most likely the first composed between AD 60 and 70, later used by Matthew and Luke. "In Mark 1:16-45 Jesus has battled with demons and disease, but his relationships with human beings have been remarkably harmonious. This changes here in 2:1 through 3:6, where Jesus finds himself constantly in conflict with the Jewish religious leaders, the scribes, and members of the sect of the Pharisees."^{*}

removed the roof: "Access to the roof, which would have been necessary for repair and for enjoying cool nighttime breezes during the summer, would have been by means of an outside wood ladder. The roofs of the dwellings of common people in Israel were 'made of wooden beams placed across stone or mudbrick walls; the beams were covered with reeds, matted layers of thorns and several inches of clay.'" ^{*}

your sins are forgiven :: it was common for a priest to declare a persons forgiveness, as we see in Leviticus 4:26, 31 ^{"26} All the fat [of the goat sacrificed as a purification offering the priest] shall turn into smoke on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of well-being. Thus the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin, and he shall be forgiven....³¹ [The priest] shall remove all its fat, as the fat is removed from the sacrifice of well-being, and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar for a pleasing odor to the Lord. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf, and you shall be forgiven." The problem is not the explicit statement of forgiveness Jesus makes, but is maybe his usurpation of priestly prerogatives and roles. *Especially if these scribes were priests.* ^{*}

scribes:: In the period before the Jewish revolt against the Romans (77-73ce) there were four major Jewish sects: the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and "Fourth Philosophy." **The Pharisees** were the most accurate interpreters of the Jewish laws, as affectionate with each other and zealous for community harmony, and very influential among the common people." We've long thought that the scribes were pharisees, although now this is less clear. **The scribes** "*grammata*" were people who knew letters. Like the pharisees (and unlike the other 3 sects) they were close to the common people. They focused on the written law, and were most likely Levites and often priests who were skilled in legal exegesis because of their writing skill." They're probably angry with Jesus because he is claiming to be their equal and usurping their power of declaring God's forgiveness and mediating sacrificial offerings. ^{*}

^{*} Notes taken from Mark 1-8 The Anchor Bible Commentary Series by Joel Marcus.

Mark 2:1-12 NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

¹ When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door, and he was speaking the word to them. ³ Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they *removed the roof* above him, and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, *your sins are forgiven.*" ⁶ Now some of the **scribes** were sitting there questioning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves, and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ⁹ **WHICH IS EASIER**: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰ But so that you may know that **THE SON OF MAN** has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—¹¹ "I say to you, *stand up*, take your mat, and go to your home." ¹² And he *stood up* and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!".

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- What would make the four unknown people help the paralytic man in this way?
- A theologian wrote that “faith is crossing boundaries.” How and what boundaries are crossed in this story?
- Why are the scribes so upset? Shouldn't they be excited? The friends of the paralytic are able to overcome boundaries and barriers, why can't the scribes?
- How do you struggle with forgiveness, acceptance and reconciliation in your life? Is there a particular relationship? What have you learned about forgiveness as a choice? How have you been changed by forgiveness – either you forgiving another, (or not) or being forgiven (or not) by someone you've wronged?
- How is forgiveness like being raised up, resurrected from a stuck-ness or impasse or death?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

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WHICH IS EASIER :: “From the standpoint of systematic theology, it may be simpler to perform a miraculous cure than to forgive a person's sins, but in terms of external proof, which is what is at stake in our passage, it is easier to declare sins forgiven than to declare a person cured. One may say, ‘Your sins are forgiven’ but are they? Outside observers have no immediate way of knowing, whereas they can at once verify a miraculous cure. Thus Jesus' ability to heal is an argument ‘from the greater to the lesser’ : if he can do a hard thing such as healing a paralytic, he can certainly do the ‘easier’ thing of forgiving sins.” *

THE SON OF MAN :: Jesus uses this title – especially in the gospel of Mark – rather than the title of Messiah or Christ. It comes from a vision in the Book of Daniel 7:13-14.

“¹³ As I [Daniel] watched in the night visions,

I saw one like A SON OF MAN
coming with the clouds of heaven.

And he came to the Ancient One
and was presented before him.

¹⁴ To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed.”

Increasingly, to be attentive to gender in language and theology, translators use the expression "ONE LIKE A HUMAN BEING" in the place of "THE SON OF MAN".

stand up :: The Greek word used here is “ἐγείρω pronounced | egeiró | it means: 1) to waken, to raise up (as in standing up, putting upright); 2) It's also used in the notion of to raise up, or rise again as in resurrection.

⁵ The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen [ἐγείρω], just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen [ἐγείρω] from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.” Matthew 28:5-7