

The Healing of the Paralytic (7th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B)

Isaiah 43:18-19, 21-22, 24-25—God Forgives Israel’s Sins

1. New Exodus: I am doing a “new thing” (Isa 43:18-19)
2. Monotheism: “I Am He” (Is 43:25; cf. Exod 3:16)

Psalm 41—Lord, Heal My Soul, for I Have Sinned Against You

1. Illness: God heals those who are “ill” (41:2-5, 13-14)

Mark 2:1-12—The Healing of the Paralytic

1. Home: probably a reference to Peter’s house (cf. Mark 1:21, 20)
2. Paralytic: a man unable to move (Gk *paralytikos*)
3. Blasphemy: the LORD (Hebrew *YHWH*), the one who created the world and instituted the Sabbath (see Exod 20:8-11)
4. Monotheism: “the one God?”; alluding to the *Shema* (Deut 6:4-6)

Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, “Why does this man speak like this? *It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone* (Gk *heis ho theos*)?” (Mark 2:6-7)

Hear, O Israel: *The LORD our God is one LORD*; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Adela Yarbro Collins: [T]here is no precedent for a human being making a simple declaration that God is at this moment forgiving another human being’s sin... What Jesus has said calls the unity of God into question.¹

5. Son of Man: allusion to the heavenly “one like a son of man” (cf. Dan 7:13-14)

The Living Tradition

John Chrysostom: He confirmed this [his divinity] through his own actions.. The scribes themselves had devised this definition. They themselves had introduced the precept. But he proceeded to entangle them in their own words. In effect he said: it is you yourselves who have confessed that forgiveness of sin is given to God alone. (John Chrysosto, *The Paralytic Let Down Through the Roof*, 6)²

¹ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark*. Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.

² Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, *Mark* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament 2; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 28.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (7th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. Why did the scribes consider Jesus' declaration of forgiveness to be blasphemy? What does this charge of blasphemy reveal about who Jesus was claiming to be?

For Further Reading

1. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark*. Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.