

Wednesday
February 22, 2006
7:00 am Holy Communion

A Reading from Mark

And going again into Capernaum after some days it was heard that he was in a house, and many were gathered together so that the house was no longer able to hold them, not even pressed up against the door, and he was speaking the word to them.

And they come, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four (people). And, after not being able to bring him to him on account of the crowd, they unroofed the roof that was above him, and after digging it out they lowered the stretcher where the paralytic was lying.

And Jesus, beholding their faith, says to the paralytic, “Child, your sins are sent away.”

But some of the scribes were sitting there and talking it through in their hearts, “Why does this man speak in this manner? He blasphemes! Who is able to send away sins but God alone?”

And straightaway, after perceiving by his spirit that they talked it through in this manner in themselves, Jesus says to them, “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins

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are sent away’, or to say, ‘Rise, and take up your stretcher and go’? And in order that you might have knowledge that the Son of Humanity has authority upon the earth to send away sins”—he said to the paralytic—“I say to you, rise, take up your stretcher and go into your house!”

And he was raised and straightaway after taking up the stretcher he went out before all, so that all were beside themselves and glorified God saying, “We never saw something of this manner!”

The Word of the Lord

Homily

The door captivates me. It might seem odd out of all the things in this text to be the thing that captivates me, but maybe that is why it captivates me. It just isn’t one of Mark’s favorite words. It adds superfluous detail. Just a few verses earlier, Mark says that the whole town was gathered around the door, and now there isn’t room for anyone at the house where Jesus is staying, not even around the door. Later the disciples will find a colt tied up at the door and take it for Jesus to ride triumphantly into Jerusalem. Jesus will later tell

the disciples that the Reign of God is at the very door. When Jesus dies they roll a stone to cover the door.

Ultimately, a door is a boundary control. We build walls to separate places; we build doors to control who or what gets in or out of those places. We put prisoners behind walls and we control the doors. We put ourselves behind the walls of our houses and we control the doors. Sometimes even that isn't enough. When we go to sleep the bad guys are locked up behind walls and we are miles away behind our own locked doors, our own locked bedroom doors, and under our covers even if it is ridiculously hot. We control the boundaries.

Both kinds of doors, the kind that lock others in and the kind that lock others out, are in use. In the house where Jesus stays the crowds are thronging to the door. You can imagine sitting inside the walls of the house, feeling the pounding of fists and feet, seeing the door coming off of its hinges. At the tomb they put Jesus away behind a door. You can imagine the relief of everyone that this menace to Roman society is safely under a layer of rocks.

Friends of Christ, the door does not stay shut. The women come to the tomb on Sunday morning and find that the great stone is already rolled away from the door, and that

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Jesus is nowhere to be found. He's on the loose. No door can control God's coming and going.

Sometimes others block our path to God. The cashier at the grocery store is a jerk. Your friends tell you that you need to work at being a better person for God to love you. Work gets heaped on you and you aren't able to focus on your faith. Other times we block our own paths to God. We tell ourselves that we can earn our salvation. We tell ourselves that we do not need God. We lock ourselves away behind layers of security, right down to the sheets we pull over ourselves at night.

In Christ, God bursts through those doors. The obstacles, regardless of who put them there, are nothing. In a moment, in that split second when no one is looking, in an act so effortless that it is not even described, the stone is rolled away and Christ is on the loose and God is at work in the world. No door can control God's coming and going.

The love of God in Christ Jesus is so great that nothing can contain it. The crowds are so desperate to get at it that they tear the roof off the joint to get at Christ, and Christ is happy to oblige them. No wall, no door, no roof, can keep God from us. At the grocery checkout, at work, at dinner, and in the middle of the night under a warm blanket God is with

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us. The doors of this place can't keep God out, and the doors of this place can't keep God in. No door can control God's coming and going. What we *can* count on, is that God promises to be with us, whatever side of the door we are on.
Amen