

## LENT PT 3. CLEANING

I sometimes have to be dragged to the doctor, dentist etc. I'm terrible!

We like to ignore the pain - imagining that the doctor, or the dentist will be much worse, when in fact dealing with the issues will make it massively better!

But it takes experience to be able to do that, right?

Broken bones only get better when we fix them - or they leave us horribly disfigured.

Same is with our sin - we can leave it, choose not to deal with it, push it away, pretend it doesn't exist - but it will leave us scarred, hurting, frustrated, angry.

There's this story in Mark I think will help us understand this concept.

*Mark 2:1-12 "1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' 6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' 8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, 'Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up, take your mat and walk"? 10 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.' So he said to the man, 11 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'"*

I genuinely like to think that this man that they brought to Jesus was protesting the whole way to the house – “I'll be fine, I'll walk it off, don't need no doctor, just a flesh wound - I'll be fine!” His mates are

like; “Buddy it's been a few years now, you aren't gonna recover from this, time to take you to the one guy who can sort you out!”

This is often our attitude towards our own sin, right? We're reluctant at best to deal with it – it literally has to be killing us to address it! Today is all about cleaning - answering the question, what do we do with our sinful stuff?

The first thing I'd like you to notice is that when a man who is obviously paralyzed descends through the roof to where Jesus is speaking to people - I mean imagine that scene! The very first thing he does is what? He proclaims that his sins are forgiven - weird right? He's obviously not been dropped through the ceiling for absolution, this is about healing, right? So why is he forgiving him?

I think there are a couple of reasons;

1. Demonstration of authority: By forgiving the man's sins, Jesus demonstrates his divine authority as the Son of God. Recognizing this act as a demonstration of divine authority leads to a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to do!
2. Challenge the status quo; In Jewish tradition, only God had the authority to forgive sins. By claiming this authority and exercising it, Jesus challenges the religious norms and expectations of his time. This challenges individuals to reevaluate their understanding of religious authority and consider the implications of Jesus' claims. It invites them to step outside of traditional religious frameworks and embrace a deeper understanding of God's grace and mercy revealed through Jesus Christ.

The point Jesus is making is that he is on earth to offer so much more than just physical healing! By doing this he is declaring for the world that he can make a way to God for all of humanity.

I think there's another reason he does this.



1. Jesus recognizes a deeper need: Jesus sees beyond the obvious physical hurt of the paralyzed man and recognizes his deeper spiritual need. While the man's brokenness is evident and undoubtedly a source of suffering, Jesus understands that sin is the root cause of all suffering and separation from God.
2. This is about the soul not the body: Forgiveness of sins is essential for spiritual healing and restoration of one's relationship with God. Without forgiveness, there can be no reconciliation with God, no restoration of relationship. Jesus understands this fundamental truth and addresses the man's spiritual need for forgiveness before addressing his physical symptoms.
3. This is about complete restoration: By addressing the man's spiritual need for forgiveness, Jesus sets the stage for complete restoration—both spiritual and physical. He doesn't just offer temporary relief from physical pain but provides a solution to the deeper problem of sin and separation from God.

Jesus makes the point - we need to deal with our hearts first, our spiritual condition, then what physically hurts us

Cleaning up is all about owning our stuff! It's about acknowledging that our action can hurt both ourselves and others - and choosing to do something about it! Cleaning up is about confessing our own brokenness before God - and choosing to not shy away from it. How can we do that?

**Confession to God:** In the passage, the paralyzed man's need for forgiveness is evident, though he doesn't ask it. Jesus recognizes the man's spiritual need and offers forgiveness without the man directly asking for it. This highlights the importance of acknowledging our sins before God, even when we may not articulate them explicitly. Just as Jesus responds to the man's unspoken need for forgiveness, God hears our silent prayers and knows the deepest desires of our hearts. Confession to God involves

acknowledging our sins, seeking forgiveness, and trusting in God's grace.

**Confession to Others:** The actions of the paralyzed man's friends also offer a lesson in confession. Instead of keeping their friend's condition hidden, they actively take steps to bring him to Jesus for healing. This involves a form of confession—acknowledging the man's need for help and seeking assistance from others. Similarly, confessing our sins to others can be a powerful step toward healing and reconciliation. It involves being honest and vulnerable about our struggles, seeking understanding from trusted friends or mentors, and experiencing the grace and forgiveness of God through their loving response.

Confession isn't just a formality; it's a sacred act of vulnerability, where we acknowledge our sins before God and seek forgiveness. It's through this honest confession that we open ourselves up to receive the fullness of God's grace made possible to us through the cross of Christ.

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## REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

1. What has God been speaking to you about over the last week? Is there anything that surprised or shocked you?
2. Are you someone who is comfortable acknowledging when you're wrong? Or do you find it hard to admit it? Why do you think that is?
3. Have you experienced a moment where you felt forgiveness? What happened?
4. Why do you think it's so important to God that we are open and honest about the things we struggle with?
5. How can you and your small group create a safe space for people to be open and honest about their struggles and challenges? If you feel like your group is already there; how do you think you cultivated this environment? What advice would you give to another small group?
6. What is one way this week that you could demonstrate God's grace to those in your family or work place?



**CENTRAL BAPTIST**

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