

Mark 2:1-13

Aim of lesson

To show the faith of the paralysed man and his friends, and the power of Jesus to forgive sins and to heal.

Background study

Study the design and construction of houses in New Testament times. Find a map to show the location of Capernaum. Isaiah 35:6; 43:25; Micah 7:18; Mark 1:21-34.

Suggested outline of lesson

Geographical setting for the miracle

With the aid of a map showing the location of Capernaum, and pictures of the Sea of Galilee, talk of the activities of Jesus in the early part of his ministry in this area. His friends the fishermen lived here, and the local people crowded eagerly to him, to hear his stories and to see the many miracles of healing.

The story behind the miracle

Lead on from this introduction to the meeting of the four men who were concerned about the ill health of a friend. Suggest that they were excited by the recent return of Jesus to the town and were convinced that if only their paralysed friend could somehow be brought to Jesus, he would be cured. They realized that their friend had no hope of going to Jesus by himself and they planned together how they might bring about this meeting. Having found out exactly where Jesus was, they wasted no time in going to their friend's house. Perhaps they did not explain exactly where it was they were taking him. Imaginatively describe the journey through the streets. The sick man had complete trust in his good friends, as they carefully and gently carried him along. Suggest that they would have needed to rest occasionally, since he would have been heavy to carry. Bystanders would have looked with curiosity as they passed by. Endeavour to convey the hope in the hearts of the four friends as they neared their goal. Contrast this with their dismay and frustration on their arrival at the crowded house.

The context for the miracle

It is suggested that at this point in the story, the narrative should be transferred to the scene inside the house. Describe how Jesus was thronged on all sides by those who had come both to hear his words and to be healed. Tell the children that Jesus was telling stories in order to teach them what God required of them, and these so interested the people that, as always, they listened with rapt attention. The voice of Jesus was the only sound to be heard. All at once, other sounds began to distract the listeners - sounds of banging and scraping. Perhaps, at first, those within the house were puzzled as to the direction from which the sounds were coming. Eventually it became obvious that the noise was coming

from above. Realizing that he had lost their attention, Jesus looked up, as did everyone else. Convey the surprise they must have felt when a hole appeared, followed by first one face, then another, until four faces were gazing down into the room below. Despite the fact that the room was tightly packed, the crowd managed to step back to clear a space below the hole, as debris from the ceiling fell down and the hole grew bigger. The four faces then disappeared, and the crowd waited expectantly, wondering what might happen next. Ask the children to imagine the people's surprise as the stretcher was slowly lowered into their midst, right in front of Jesus. The four faces, filled with hope, reappeared above them, and all eyes were now on Jesus to see how he would respond.

The response of some to the miracle

Jesus' response shocked some of his listeners. Among the crowd were some of the Jewish religious leaders; they did not understand that Jesus was the Son of God and, therefore, thought he had no right to claim to be able to forgive sins. Jesus knew what they were thinking and answered their unspoken challenge. By healing the paralysed man, he proved that he had the power to work miracles and also the authority of God to forgive sins. The former could be visibly demonstrated and should have been accepted as proof of his claim to be the Son of God.

The response of true friends to the miracle

The climax of the story is one of joy and praise. Describe in turn the feelings of the observers who marvelled at what they had witnessed and praised God, the feelings of the cured man - his relief and happiness at being able to stand and move, his gratitude towards Jesus and towards his good friends - and the feelings of the friends, who hurried down to greet him, thrilled that their efforts had been rewarded and that their friend was now well.

Worksheets

The code reads 'Everyone praised God saying "We have never seen anything like this".'

Prayer

Dear Lord God, we thank you for giving Jesus the power to heal the sick man, and to make him and his friends happy. Please help us to know Jesus better, so that we shall be happy, too. Amen.

Memory verse

"There are friends who pretend to be friends, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

Relevance to the children's lives

The sick man had four good friends. What did they think was the best thing they could do for him? How did they all feel after their meeting with Jesus? Do you think that people who know Jesus are happier people? Why don't you introduce your friends to Jesus, and let them share your happiness by bringing them to Sunday School?