

Guided Meditation: The Call to Extraordinariness

Passage

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 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. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. 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 paralysed man lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 'Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' 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? Which is easier, to say to the paralysed man, "Your sins are forgiven", or to say, "Stand up and take your mat and walk"? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the man— 'I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.' 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!'

Mark 2.1-12

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Meditation

Take up a posture that is comfortable and close your eyes.

Now become aware of your breathing. Become aware of the air as it enters and leaves your nostrils . . . Not as it enters your lungs, just as it passes through your nostrils . . .

Do not control your breathing. Do not try to deepen it or change its rhythm. Simply observe your breathing, in and out, in and out . . .

Now imagine yourself in Capernaum . . . the buildings and streets . . . the weather and the quality of light . . . the people and animals . . .

Take time to imagine the whole setting as vividly as possible, its sights, sounds and smells. Compose yourself in the place . . .

Why have you come here?

Are you one of the townspeople listening, inside or outside the house; the paralysed man, or one of the four friends; one of Jesus' disciples, his inner circle; one of the scribes?

What are your feelings as you survey the scene? What are you doing? . . .

The house and streets are packed with people jostling for room.

What can you see or hear of Jesus? How is he standing or sitting? Who is around him? What is he saying? . . .

What are your thoughts and feelings? . . .

Do you want or need to get closer? How? . . .

There is a commotion, straw and plaster flying as a hole is made in the roof of the house. A man on a pallet is let down . . .

What are you doing? What can you see? . . .

How do Jesus and those around him react? . . .

You hear Jesus saying 'Your sins are forgiven.'

Notice your reactions . . . How do you respond? What do you do or say? . . .

Imagine Jesus is now responding to you . . .

How does he look at you? What does he say? Listen to his words, the sound of his voice . . .

Spend some time now in the scene in the company of Jesus. You may continue to speak with him, or watch him interacting with others, or simply be in his presence . . .

If your attention becomes distracted, become aware of your breathing again and then gently return to the scene . . .

Now take your leave of Jesus . . .

Let the scene fade as you return gradually to an awareness of your breathing . . .

When you are ready, open your eyes.

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Notes

This is the fifth of a series of meditations drawing on *Everyday God: The Spirit of the Ordinary* by Paula Gooder, one of the books which the Slow Book Group at Exeter Cathedral has been reading. The book is divided into six sections, for reflection over the six months between June and November 2022 (Ordinary Time in the Church's calendar). The theme of Section 5 is "The Call to Extraordinariness".

This is not one of the six readings that Paula reflects on in Section 5, but one that she refers to in writing about forgiveness. It also speaks to me in a number of ways of bearing others' weaknesses, which she also writes about in this section. I have adapted the NRSV slightly, replacing 'the paralytic' with 'the paralysed man' or 'the man'. 'The paralytic' seems to me to be a label, defining a person by their illness instead of being a person first and foremost.

The style of the meditation is based on Ignatian meditation as presented by Anthony de Mello in [*Sadhana: A Way to God, Christian Exercises in Eastern Form*](#) (pdf), Exercise 22.

Some people imagine in pictures, others in sounds, and others have a way of being present in the scene that is particular to them. If you would find it more helpful than using your mind's eye, think your way into the scene as though you were writing about it. How is God guiding your mental pen?

Clare Bryden

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