

# REFLECTIONS ON GOSPEL RALLY 2022

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In this year's gospel rally, we considered two passages from the Bible, one for each night. The first was taken from Mark chapter 2 verses 1 to 12, which was the account of the Lord Jesus Christ healing a paralytic man, and the second was from John chapter 3 verses 1 to 21, the account of Nicodemus coming to the Lord by night. Interestingly, both passages recount an individual coming to the Lord with some sort of request. Both received a response from the Lord that wasn't really what they were looking for, but later turned out to be what they really needed. And that was the reason why the theme for 2022's gospel rally was 'An Unexpected Answer'—unexpected though it may be, it was nonetheless a very important answer; an answer that all should come to hear and consider.

In the account of the healing of a paralytic man, the Lord did not heal him immediately, despite the efforts of the man's companions in bringing him to the Lord for healing. Instead, the Lord did something unexpected by addressing the greater need of the paralytic man—his unforgiven sins. One might ask, 'What could be more pressing than the paralysed condition of that man?' To that question, the Lord once gave an answer separately: 'What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?' Healing the man of his paralysis may deliver him from his sufferings temporarily, but it would not save his soul from eternal suffering

in hell for his sins. It, therefore, made perfect sense for the Lord to forgive the sin of the paralytic man first because anything else was secondary.

Meanwhile, jumping to the second passage in John chapter 3 verses 1 to 21, we are introduced to a man called Nicodemus. Here is someone who has gained the whole world. Being a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus was not only a man of influence and power, but someone who was also well-to-do. What would a man of such social standing possibly want or need from the Lord? Nicodemus was the



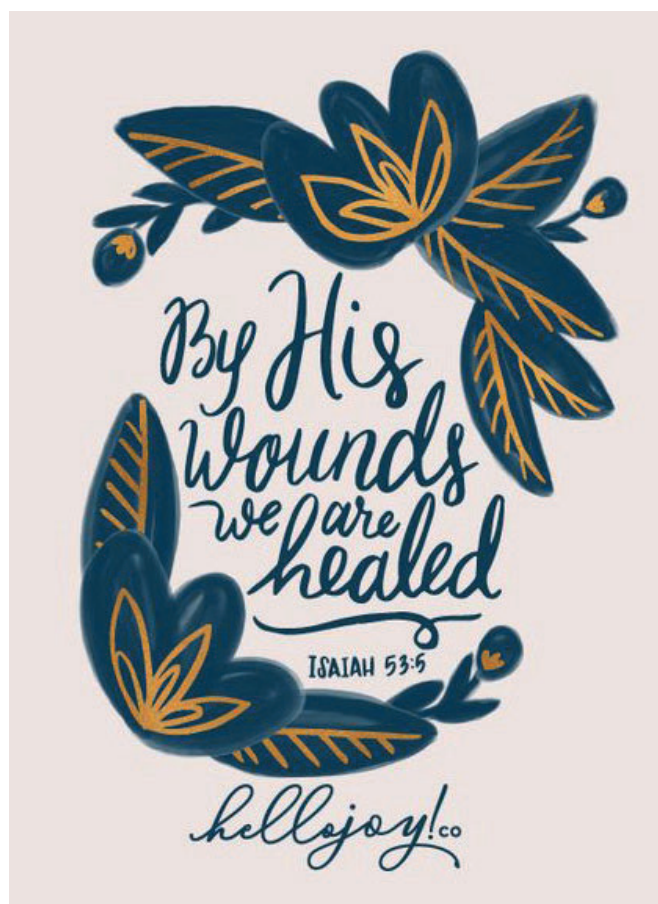
complete opposite of the paralytic man. Yet the Lord did have something for him—something that made Nicodemus wonder if what he had been pursuing all his life were things that had no value.

ONE MIGHT ASK, 'WHAT COULD BE MORE PRESSING THAN THE PARALYSED CONDITION OF THAT MAN?' TO THAT QUESTION, THE LORD ONCE GAVE AN ANSWER SEPARATELY: 'WHAT WILL IT PROFIT A MAN IF HE GAINS THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSES HIS OWN SOUL?'

These two individuals made me wonder if I truly know what is important in life. How often we focus on pursuing things that are physical and temporal, and neglect or even despise the things that are spiritual and eternal! If not for the Word of God and the Holy Spirit working in my heart and the hearts of God's people, we would still be lost in our sins, unaware that we are heading down a path that leads to destruction and eternal condemnation.

It is no wonder that the responses of the Lord to these two individuals were met with disbelief and even disdain. Disbelief not from the paralysed man (I suppose), but from the scribes who were at the scene. They could not accept that Jesus Christ, an ordinary looking man, had the authority to forgive sins, something only God could do. Regardless of what the Lord did or said, the scribes would not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God, simply because Jesus Christ wasn't what they expected or wanted Him to be. Even with the many miracles that the Lord subsequently did, they were still unmoved, unaffected, to the point of crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

Nicodemus too found it hard to understand and accept what the Lord meant when He said 'you must be born again'. Thinking that it meant to be physically born again from his mother's womb, it must have been a great blow to Nicodemus. After all, Nicodemus worked hard to get to where he currently was, a person of status and power. Now he had to start all over again in order to enter the kingdom of God? It was hard for him to take in, hence the continuous questioning by Nicodemus. Perhaps it wasn't just the difficulty in understanding the concept of being born again that led to Nicodemus' unbelief, but also the possibility of having to give up all that he had achieved thus far that led him to dismiss the need to be born again.



The reactions from both the scribes and Nicodemus reminded me of how small or little a person's faith can be. The moment God isn't who we expect Him to be, or when things go contrary to what we are used to seeing and understanding, or when the situation requires us to give up something that we treasure, our faith shatters and we fall into unbelief. I am reminded of the verse from John chapter 6 verse 44, 'No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him'. Sometimes, a child-like faith isn't child's play. There could have been a hundred and one factors that prevented me from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am grateful that God, in His good time, enabled me to put my trust in His Son and accept Him as my Lord and Saviour.

The Lord answered the unbelieving scribes with an interesting question: 'Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Rise, take up your bed and walk"?' Just as how we considered this question during the rally, the answer really depends on who you direct the question to. At first glance, one might think that it is easier for someone to say 'your sins are forgiven' because it can't be proven physically, whereas saying 'rise, take up your bed and walk' requires the paralytic man to do the impossible—to rise and walk again. Hence, by doing what the crowd regarded as impossible, Jesus Christ proved that He also has the authority to forgive sins.

However, if that same question was directed to the Lord Jesus Christ, what would the answer be? It really isn't all that difficult for the Lord to heal the paralytic man immediately, which He did subsequently. But for the Lord to be able to

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**AND FOR US WHO HAVE ACCEPTED CHRIST, THE DIFFICULTY OR DISCOMFORT WE FACE IN SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS PALES IN COMPARISON AGAIN WITH THE REJECTION AND OPPRESSION THE LORD FACED FROM THOSE HE CAME TO SAVE.**

forgive sins, it required Him to go all the way to the cross to lay down His life, so as to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world. In the first place, He had to leave heaven's glory to come down to this sin-cursed world, be made in the likeness of man, and be born in a lowly manger as a baby. There wasn't a need for Nicodemus to do the impossible by ascending into heaven to understand the things that are from above, because Jesus Christ Himself had come down to mankind to show us the way to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ chose to do that which is harder, so that sinners like us can obtain salvation by simply believing in Him.

That said, it isn't easy for one to come to put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it pales in comparison to what the Lord had to go through in order to provide salvation for the whole of mankind. And for us who have accepted Christ, the difficulty or discomfort we face in sharing the gospel with others pales in comparison again with the rejection and oppression the Lord faced from those He came to save. May we consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that we may not grow weary or fainthearted (Heb. 12:3).