

(Son of man) to forgive sins in the name of God as to invite a person crushed by illness to stand and walk free again .

Jesus speaks out for justice and speaks in God's name, God who does not punish but desires life to flourish.

The religious leaders' reaction is in sharp contrast to the caring response of the man's friends. Jesus' confident pronouncement and healing flouts their jealously-held narrow understanding of 'divine' judgement. From this time on, they see Jesus as a threat to their power over people.

Decapolis: ten towns on eastern shore of the lake between Susita and Bethsaida.

## 7. Closing Prayer

God gives us the power  
to create beauty  
to make another smile  
to be a healing presence  
to console those in difficulty  
to bring peace and joy to others  
to help those in need  
to laugh and enjoy life  
to do good and turn from evil  
to forgive anyone who has hurt us  
and most of all, to love.

You are beauty, you are goodness.  
You are our protector, our guardian and defender  
You are courage, you are our haven and our hope



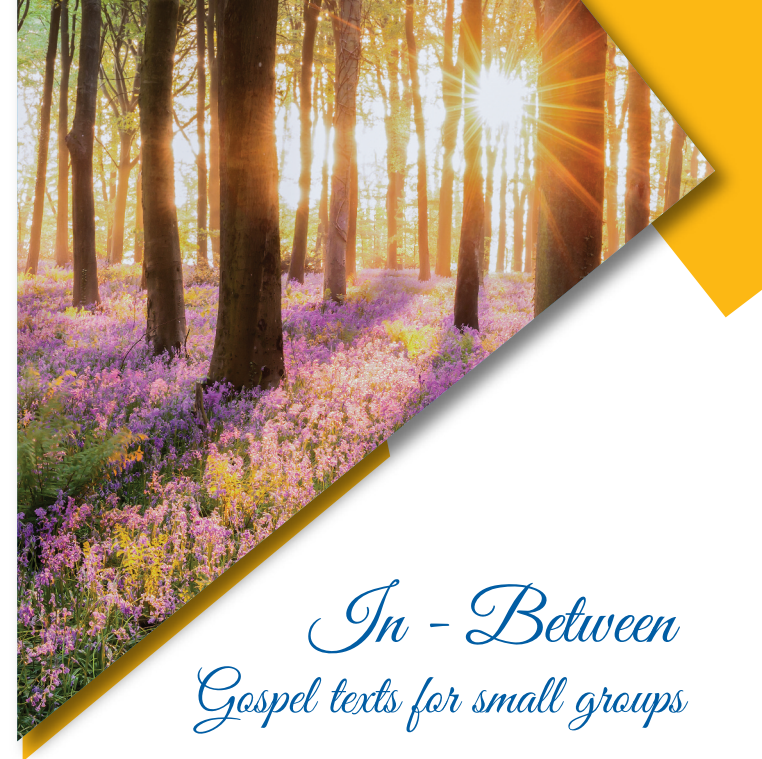
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*In - Between*  
*Gospel texts for small groups*

**First Gospel Text**



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## 1. Welcome and Opening Prayer

Gracious God, maker of the skies above,  
lowly Christ, born amidst the growing earth,  
Spirit of life, wind over the flowing waters,  
in earth, sea and sky,  
you are there.  
O hidden mystery,  
sun behind all suns,  
soul behind all souls,  
in everything we touch,  
in everyone we meet,  
your presence is around us,  
and we give you thanks.

But when we have not touched  
but trampled you in creation,  
when we have not met you in one another,  
when we have not trusted  
in your guiding, sheltering love for us  
let us wake up to the way  
you want us to live.

**Iona Abbey Worship Book,  
page 51**

## 2. Gospel Text Mark 2:1-12

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come from home. They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get 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. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

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? Which is easier: to say to this paralysed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?' But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

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!"

## 3. Quiet Moment

*People can read over the story again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society/world. Then some sharing.*

*NB Not a time for argument.*

## 4. Reflection Questions

- a) Have you ever found yourself blaming God for something that happened? Why or why not?
- b) The man's friends go out of their way for him. When have you experienced a friend's kindness? What effect did it have on you?

## 5. Prayers

*Mentioning the people/situations we want to pray for....*

## 6. Background Notes for Mark 2:1-12

Jesus had gone from Nazareth to Capernaum, Peter's town, about 30 kms from Nazareth at the top end of the Sea of Galilee. The houses were generally made of mud bricks, easily removed. Friends of the man managed to dig through the roof and lower him down in front of Jesus. He lay there, full of pain, in rags, body falling apart.

People at that time took illness/disability as a sign of God punishing the person. Jesus confronted by the suffering man takes a stance he hasn't taken before. He is emboldened by the goodness, faith and courage of the man's friends. In response to their brave, caring gesture he declares the man's sins dismissed, wiped out, gone, and of no account. His action and words shocked everyone around him. In his milieu, to forgive sins was the prerogative of God. In Jesus' mind, however, God did not see the man as a terrible sinner, fit only to be discarded. Given the faith of man's friends, to Jesus it became as easy for the 'human one'