**“Hopeful Spirituality” week 2: Living with Compassion**

**Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What did you find uncomfortable?
2. Read this week’s story in Mark 2:1-12. Read it together out loud a couple of times and let the story grow imaginatively in your heart and mind. Then discuss the following:
   * With whom do you most immediately identify in the story?
   * What would it have been like to be Jesus in this story? Have you ever been in a situation like this when you are being pressed on all sides with high demand?
   * How do you think Jesus’ disciples felt in this situation?
   * What strikes you most about the friends of the paralyzed man?
   * How do you think the paralyzed man felt before he encountered Jesus in the story? What about afterwards?
   * Why do you think the “teachers of the law” are so angry?
   * After discussing the above, share what challenges you most about this story.
3. Have you ever been helped and supported by friends in this kind of way before? Share what happened and what it felt like. Did you have to ask for help? Was it freely given? How did it impact your relationship with the people who helped?
4. Do you find it easier to ask for help or to offer help? Reflect on your response for a moment and consider what lies behind your preference.
5. Look at verse 5 in the above story. Why do you think Jesus emphasizes how the faith of the friends affects the outcome for the paralyzed man? What are the implications of this for us today?
6. This is a story about the giving and receiving of forgiveness. Read the ending of the version of this story in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 9:8). Read also Jesus’ words in John 20:21-23. How do you feel about the kind of power Jesus is saying we have to forgive? How do you feel about the kind of power Jesus is saying we have not to forgive? What are the implications of this in practical life?
7. Break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 (if that feels more appropriate) to discuss the following:
   * Have you ever experienced a situation where someone has seemed unwilling to forgive you? What impact has this had on you?
   * Have you ever struggled to forgive someone else? What impact has this had on you?
   * Have you ever struggled to forgive yourself?

After discussing, each take a moment to reflect in silence on any action you feel you need to take in light of this week’s story. Then spend some time praying for one another.

**Practice for the week: Self-compassion**

Take a moment each day to read this week’s story in Mark 2:1-12 and consciously adopt the posture of being a friend to yourself. Throughout your day, whenever you feel a sense of failure, weakness, or inadequacy look on yourself and treat yourself as the friends treat the man in the story.