

Mark 2:1–12

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[0 : 0 0] Your sins are forgiven. Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Rise, take up your bed and walk.

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic, I say to you, Rise, pick up your bed, and go home.

And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We have never seen anything like this.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Good afternoon to you.

[1 : 1 0] Before we get into the passage on today, I do have one more announcement. How many of you enjoy our family dinners that we have about seven times a year?

Guess what is happening on next week? We're having a family dinner. That is, if someone signs up for it. Because we still have two months that are unsigned up.

April and this month. So if you're interested in hosting, preparing the family dinner, Jill White or Jennifer Green can give you all of the information that you need, that you might be used of the Lord to serve the body on next week.

So preferably consider that. Would love to be able to sit under your preparation of our meal on next week. So, Jill, Jennifer, raise your hand so people can see who you are.

Right there and right there. They'd love to see you. Let's pray. Father, thank you for this afternoon and the marvelous opportunity that we've had to sit and worship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

[2 : 2 2] I pray, Lord, that you would now glorify yourself through the proclamation of your word. I pray, Lord, that my words, my meditation would be pleasing in your sight.

That your word would come through this heart and these lips of clay. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Our series that we began on last week, Who is Jesus and does he still matter?

It's a double kind of question. And a question that is just right. We're answering that question these days from the book of Mark. And had you asked this particular question or these questions 25, 15, 10 years ago or as recently as five years ago, the answers that you received would be different than the ones that you would receive today.

It seems like interest in Jesus, certainly there is an academic interest in Jesus. But sort of a life altering interest in Jesus.

It just doesn't seem to be like it used to be. For all too many, the one that most of us here this afternoon call Lord is virtually unknown to them.

[4 : 01] Used to be that there were times when, I mean, coming to a household of faith, being part of a Christian community was very much a part of our cultural life.

Not so these days. There was a time, and this is way back then, even in weekdays, they would let out a couple of hours during the week.

I believe it was on Wednesday. And each of us would go to our church schools and receive Christian instruction during the week. Those days are long gone by.

They don't know who Jesus is. And for all too many, they just don't seem to care.

And that should concern us. That should concern us as those who are on mission with him in this world. Drayton has read our text on this afternoon, and there are several things that I want to call your attention to from these 12 verses.

[5 : 10] The first thing that I want you to see, you can see that in verses 1 through 4. And I would call that the faith of five men.

The faith of five men. If you look at chapter 2 and verse 1, it notes that Jesus had returned to Capernaum. This was the place that our Lord had taken up residence during his ministry years.

We know that he was reared or raised in Nazareth. Nazareth was about 20 miles east of Capernaum. Capernaum was one of those villages on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, really on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

And Jesus took up his ministry residence there. Verse 1 of our text says that Jesus, he's back home. You see that there? And when he returned to Capernaum, after some days, it was reported that he was at home.

The word had hit the streets that Jesus was back in town. Of course, if you look at chapter 1, you would see the great things that the people of Capernaum had experienced of Jesus.

[6 : 32] They had experienced his preaching, his teaching, they had experienced his hands-on kind of ministry. And because of these things, when Jesus returned, they wanted to have an audience with Jesus.

Notice, they came in numbers. Verse 2, so much so that there was no more room, even at the doors.

they could not get in, even if they wanted to. A couple weeks ago, CCDA was in town, and my responsibility as a volunteer was to invest five hours, five hours of work.

And I had the task of being a room monitor. Anybody ever been a room monitor? You remember how they used to assign the kids? And one of the worst things that a child could get assigned to, at least in my day, was taking names of those who talked.

Anybody ever have to take names? Oh, they didn't do that when you all were in school, huh? But again, I was a room monitor. It's what that meant, that I had to pass out kind of thing, handouts if the instructors had handouts.

[7 : 40] And by the time I had made it to the room that I was assigned to, it was really a parlor in the downtown Sheraton. And it couldn't hold that many people. But by the time I had gotten there, and I should have been there earlier, but the room was just about filled.

And it was so filled that people were sitting around, and even their backs to the door, and you couldn't let anybody else in. And being the room monitor, I had to tell all of those people who wanted to get in, I'm sorry, you just can't come in.

I can't let you in. I can't let you in. The room was packed. Probably a similar kind, or even worse, as what we see in the text that is here before us.

The crowd had gathered, the house was full. What was Jesus doing in the house? Look at the last part of verse 2. And he, that is Jesus, was preaching the word to them.

Jesus knew the value of the word proclaimed. While there would be varied responses to the word, and we see that in Mark chapter 4, verses 1 through 20, his role as the sower of the seed, the proclaimer of the word, was to faithfully sow the seed, and let it fall on the hearts of the hearer.

[9 : 04] And eventually, though it would be a different kind of ground, those seeds that fell on the good ground would produce fruit, some 30, some 60, some 100 fold.

And I would ask on this afternoon, what's the condition of your heart? What is your response to the word? Do you see actions that follow the proclamation of the word?

Or is it simply an exercise in hearing versus an exercise in doing? He was simply uttering, speaking the word.

This wasn't the word that he was proclaiming, but he was just sort of speaking, uttering God's word, perhaps even in a conversational way, to them, the people in his hearing.

That was the scene on the outside. It doesn't take us very long to note what the scene on the outside was. Look at there with me in verse 3. And they came bringing to him a paralytic, born by or carried by four men.

[10 : 16] Four able-bodied Galilean men were carrying a fifth person on a pallet or on a bed.

And they were carrying him because he was paralyzed. He had suffered the loss of motion to the point that he had to be carried. We don't know the specifics, but all we do know is that he couldn't walk and he had to be carried by his friends.

These men were driven by faith in Jesus to get their bedridden friend to Jesus.

Undoubtedly, they had heard of his ministry in Galilee or perhaps even had experienced it, had witnessed it. His ministry was noticeably different than the religious leaders of that day.

As a matter of fact, turn over with me to chapter 1 and verse 22, and we can see that it was. As a matter of fact, look at verse 21. And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath day, he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

[11 : 26] That's Jesus. And notice, they were astonished at his teaching. For he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes, who were used to quoting rabbinic kind of authorities.

They did not have the fresh bread, as it were, from heaven. Huh? He was preaching the word unto them. It stirred the attention of demons and men.

Look at verse 27 of chapter 1. And they were all amazed so that they questioned among themselves, what is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.

His handling of the word was fresh and powerful. It was life-related and life-touching. And his reputation spread because of that.

Look at chapter 1 and verse 28. And at once, his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. His reputation as a powerful preacher, a communicator of God's word, a worker of miracles, encountering the unseen spirits of the underworld.

[12 : 40] That was his reputation. And because of that, no wonder the crowds had gathered in chapter 2, verse 2. Those men could only get so far who had carried their friend because of the crowd.

But they did not let the crowd shut down their mission. They had come with the intention of getting their friend before Jesus, and that is what was driving them.

When it couldn't happen in the more conventional way, they found another way. Isn't that the nature of faith? The persistence of faith? The persistence of faith in spite of resistance in getting to Jesus.

The plan was to get to Jesus. How to do it was absolutely secondary. And get to him they did. We see that in the text. They went through the roof, a flat roof, probably a one-room house, probably could get up to the roof from the side stairs.

The roof was composed perhaps of branches and sticks combined with clay. The Lucan version says that they were tiles of clay, but it was such that they were able to break through it and let down their friend before Jesus.

[14 : 00] The text says that Jesus saw their faith. Their faith was made visible. Though Jesus could see their hearts and knew what was in it, their faith was also made visible by their efforts.

Certainly Jesus knew their hearts, but what was in their hearts was made visible. Five men with faith.

Five friends with faith. Do you have any friends with faith? I know with this group we probably have some young adults and adults who are on Facebook.

And on Facebook you've got a lot of what? Virtual friends. A lot of friends. This is the kind of friends that you want here that when there is a need, they know how to get to Jesus for you.

This was indeed what we could call a community of faith. And guess what? This week our community groups begin. And what a model we have here in this very small community of faith.

[15 : 18] Community that bands together where there is a need. And sometimes in community, large or small, we find ourselves being the fifth person, don't we?

The person that's on the mat. The person that's needing a helping hand. And oftentimes in the context of community, it takes more grace to be a receiver than it is a giver because, you know, we can put on a good face, can't we?

We can, we're so self-sufficient and we are so independent. And sometimes it's difficult to be the fifth person, the man or the woman or the child with the need.

Oh, but these are the kind of people that I want in my community group this year. This is the kind of person that I really want to be that, number one, is in touch with the needs of those who are in the group and are people who are able to get to Jesus.

What a great illustration we have here in these men in this small community of Galatians, I believe it is six and three. Bear one another's burdens, what?

[16 : 33] And so fulfill the law of Christ. If we can just get before Jesus, the one who had done great things in their midst, we can just get to the one who's had the reputation for healing people and making people whole.

If we can just get to Jesus, who's the bread of life, the water of life, the resurrection and the life, and all of those things, he's the one that we can go to and he's the one, friends, that you and I can go to together.

There are five people with faith in getting to Jesus. But, oh, it's quick to see, friends, that there is a contrast here between these five men of faith and other people that we see in the text.

These five men, they had faith in Jesus, but there are those who are in the text who found fault with Jesus. Men with faith in Jesus is contrasted with the folly of religious men with their questions about Jesus.

The folly of the religious leaders in the passage before us was as distinct as the faith of these men who brought their friend to Jesus. But in the midst of it all, and I'll get back to more of this letter, so you had the faith of five men, you've got the folly of religious men, and I'll talk more about that, but then, in the last, it shines in the midst of it, you've got the forgiveness of the Son of Man, and the midst of it, and that, friends, is really the crux of the passage.

- [18 : 16] In verse 5, you see the pronouncement of forgiveness. Son, your sins are forgiven, but then, in verses 11 and 12, you see the proof of forgiveness.
- You have a physical, bodily act that vindicated a spiritual, invisible transaction. You know what? That sounds like the gospel to me.
- Huh? Jesus' cross work, how do you know that your sins are forgiven? Because there is a physical, miraculous act of the resurrection, a rising up, if you will.
- Huh? We'll say more about that later, but look at the folly of religious men that we see.
- The religious leaders' perspective, the words of Jesus, your sins are forgiven, actually stirred up the wrath of these religious leaders.
- [19 : 20] Look at chapter 2, verses 5 and 6. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven. What wonderful words.
- Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts. Huh? They saw Jesus as treading on ground that he should not.
- He had crossed the line. He was treading, at least in their minds, on holy ground. ground that was only allowable for God to tread on.
- They sensed the questioning, the dialogue. Jesus sensed the questioning and the dialogue that was going on in their hearts. Huh? Why does this speak, why does this man speak like this?
- Who can forgive sins but God? Huh? This was the beginning of Mark's account of religious opposition against Jesus. Why was, why was it that they were so opposed to Jesus?
- [20 : 26] Because Jesus was not playing by their rules. Huh? He was not playing by the rules of the religion of his day. And guess what? He doesn't play by the rules of religion of our day.
- Religion likes to put Jesus in a whole lot of boxes. I mean, there is a Baptist box and a Pentecostal box and all of these other kind of box.
- Jesus will not be confined by denominational or religious kind of boxes. He's who he is. He's God. Huh? They questioned the company he kept.
- Look at chapter 2 and verse 16. And the scribes of the Pharisees when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors said to his disciples, why does he eat?
- with tax collectors and sinners. He wasn't playing by their rules. His observer of the Sabbath was called into question. Look at chapter 2 verse 24.
- [21 : 27] And the Pharisees were saying to him, look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? Huh? They said that he was empowered by Satan, chapter 3 and verse 22.
- Look over there with me. And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, he is possessed by Beelzebub and by the prince of demons. He cast out demons. Huh? Jesus endured three years of harassment from these religionists and they finally ended up condemning him to death.
- Huh? Rather than prayerfully withholding judgment, they began to question him in their hearts. their question concerned what right did he have to utter such pronouncement?
- Who does he think that he is? Huh? Who had left him in charge of such matters? Who had given him the authority to speak like that? While their questions were legitimate questions, their motives were absolutely wrong.
- They did not want him to succeed because his success would put them to shame. Huh? What Jesus pronounced as for us the forgiveness of sins was greater than an Old Testament prophet like Nathan who had told David, the Lord has put away your sin.

[22 : 54] Huh? His words were not prefaced by thus saith the Lord. If it was in fact his words were God's words, in their minds Jesus had crossed the line.

Huh? Jesus challenged and corrected them in the verses that follow. Huh? Verse 8 He didn't let their faulty thinking go unchecked.

He challenged the incorrect thinking of these religious leaders. And he goes on to say it was easier and let's look at the dialogue there just a little bit.

Perceiving in the Spirit verse 8 that they questioned within themselves he said to them why do you question these things in your heart? Which is easier to say to the paralytic your sins are forgiven or to say rise to take up your bed and walk huh?

Certainly it was easier to say your sins are forgiven any of us could say that couldn't we? But there was no way to check if that spiritual transaction had gone through or if it bounced back or if there was an insufficient funds kind of notice no way to check that huh?

[24 : 13] But saying rise up and walk was a statement that could be validated the paralytic obeying Jesus command to rise up and walk was proof of Jesus ability to do that which could not be checked even with the naked eye huh?

The faith of five men the folly! of religious men huh? And isn't it just like religion?

to challenge our Lord and our Lord's claims today? If there's any place that people are in sharp contention it is on the claims of Christ as seen in passages like this as seen in a passage like John 14 and 6 where Jesus declares that I am the way the truth and the life and no one comes into the Father but by me huh?

The claims and certainly there are those who will give Jesus credit for being a good teacher there are those who will give him credit for being a good prophet they credit him with being among the philosophers but for him being viewed as Lord huh?

Wow! They would cry uh Jesus response huh? Pronouncement but notice the faith of five men the folly of religious men but the crux here is the forgiveness of the son of man the pronouncement Jesus pronouncement huh?

[26 : 00] In response to these men's faith what we have in verse 5 is the very tender exercise of God's grace Jesus had ministered God's word to them to be now he was extending God's grace huh?

Words of life were followed by life changing ministry that addressed the man's absolutely deepest needs needs and if we were to make a list of man's deep deep needs there are those of us who would go through a list and we probably could come up with a dozen things and among those would be well pastor I'm unemployed right now there are economic needs and there are relationship needs and there are other kinds of needs sometimes we think our greatest needs are physical or financial or social and certainly we cannot dismiss the importance and the gravity of such needs our economy remains in the tank unemployment hovers above 9% that's a real need crime is an all too real fact in our communities that's a real need great social ills indeed yet at the root of these ills huh?

these great ills is a need for our right relationship to God these expressions these ills that we see in this world are rooted in man's universal and individual alienation or separation from God huh?

man's greatest needs in fact are spiritual the need to be right with the God of all the earth in right relationship with him and God through his son has provided a remedy for our alienation for our separation caused by our rebellion yes your rebellion and my rebellion huh?

I love the way Romans chapter 3 puts it Paul when he catalogues the disease and humankind he begins to describe how man is infected from his head to his toe his feet are swift to run his under his tongue are the poison of ass and he goes on to say that all have gone astray all sin they fall short of God's standard huh?

[28 : 41] the disease friends that cripples our bodies is one thing the disease that cripples our soul is more even more debilitating and Jesus acting with the very authority of God he went to the crux issue first things first of course in that day there were those who were made the quick cause effect kind of connection in that the reason that this man is sick is because he had done something sinful well certainly again sickness is a result of the fall of man from the grace of God but here we don't see though that may have been again in the religious circles it doesn't go into all of that but Jesus made the connection this man received forgiveness look at verse 10 but that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sin son of man

Jesus favorite designation of himself used 14 times in this gospel this is the first you'll see it use more in the second half but this title reveals something about Christ as much as it conceals something about him it speaks of his earthly ministry chapter 10 verse 45 the son of man didn't come to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many it speaks of his earthly ministry and suffering but it also chapter 14 verse 62 you'll see the son of man coming in glory it speaks of his majesty it speaks of his glory the title connects him both with his humble mission on earth and his majesty that would be connected with his glory so in the minds of the religious leaders Jesus had crossed the territory where God alone had jurisdiction and these traffic cops these religious traffic cops they said foul Jesus if they could they would have put him under arrest right then huh but the crowd looking at these things exclaimed we've never seen anything like this what this man did after not only pronouncing a forgiveness but demonstrating the proof of forgiveness that he got up he rose up huh wow we see that in the in the physical but that's the nature of forgiveness of sins huh the crippling effects of sin that have bound us and that have confused us we are there's a liberation that comes with the receipt of the gospel there's a liberation that comes with forgiveness have you received that liberation you know anything about that liberation because your sins are forgiven huh it's like having a bath it's like having a spiritual shower huh that's what forgiveness is huh

Jesus forgives sins how do we know this his ability that could be to do that which was witnessed by the eyes had not the father born witness to the son chapter 1 verse 11 you are my beloved son with you I am well pleased and friends with that particular declaration thematically the course of the entire gospel of Mark is set huh it's established and everything that the son does in the book it validates the father's witness that this is my son huh who was Jesus he is the son of man on mission for God the God of heaven and again the book validates the claims that the father makes of the sons his words and his works validates the father words that's my son huh that's my son huh he was and he is

God's agent of forgiveness he pronounced it he paid the price and he offers forgiveness for all who receive it huh who is he God's agent for forgiveness does he matter you better believe he does as long as man's basic need of forgiveness remains and it will he will always matter because man will always need forgiveness that he came to give huh what am I saying today faith in Jesus brings forgiveness huh then and now the pronouncement of forgiveness the price of forgiveness Jesus death for our sins the proof of forgiveness just was like a physical kind of proof even so now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of those who slept the resurrection is the receipt the proof that sins have been forgiven because

Paul said if Christ is not raised from the dead then we are still in our sins but now he proclaims Christ is risen from the dead and because we are forgiven friends that is reason enough to say oh what wonderful things we've experienced because our sins are forgiven are your sins forgiven have you trusted Christ as your Lord and Savior have you received!

[34 : 51] forgiveness if not it's yours in him for the asking let's pray dear Lord we praise you for your word this day faith folly and forgiveness oh God thank you may we be people who bypass the follies of those who don't recognize you and may our faith in you as the one who has come to forgive us be firm in Christ's name we pray amen let's stand and sing our way out of here today rise let's do it if