

The Preacher, the Paralytic and the Power to Forgive Sins

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[0 : 00] of the preacher, the paralytic, and the power to forgive sin, Mark chapter 2. And some people might ask us, you know, why in the year 2018, why is it that we come to, you know, a service, a gathering such as this, and, you know, to hear about an incident regarding the healing of a paralyzed man that happened some 2,000 years ago?

I mean, if this were a history class, you know, we'd want to look at the social context of what we've read here. We'd perhaps want to know about the living conditions at the time.

We might want to know about the human needs of that man who was unable to walk. We'd want to know about what provisions there were in a society that wasn't, you know, didn't have the facilities that we have nowadays.

I'm sure that'd be very interesting in itself. I was studying for the sake of learning of a time long ago. But we don't come to church to read and hear of this man for the sake of a history lesson.

We come to hear, and we come to hear, preach the marvellous truth of the living reality of a saviour, the saviour, the Lord Jesus, whose actions 2,000 years ago in healing that man have present impact now.

[1 : 26] Even this we read there of Jesus' action in healing that man, Jesus declaring that man's sins forgiven, point to the reality. This we'll find out more.

We'll point to the reality of the one who forgives us our sins, the one who raises us from our spiritual paralysis. Just as we see, shown for us here in the, if we like, the visual impact of this story.

Jesus raising this man from his physical paralysis, pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ, and what he does and can do for those who are paralysed, spiritually lost in sin.

And that's why, that's why this story of the healing of this man, and all the events surrounding that healing, this story is as fresh now as it was 2,000 years ago.

And as we've seen so far when we've been looking through Mark's gospel, we see Mark wastes no time. He doesn't, you know, he gets straight to the point. He's driving forward his narrative about Jesus.

[2 : 35] He's wanting us to see who Jesus truly is. He wants us to see that Jesus truly is the Son of God, that Jesus truly is the Saviour, that Jesus truly has come to save his people from their sins.

And Mark wants, in the way that Mark is writing, he wants us to see, to see the evidence for that truth, and to see the evidence of who Jesus is through Jesus' words and through Jesus' actions that point absolutely to the fact that Jesus is God, that he's divine.

And therefore, ask God, a Son of God, that he has that power to forgive sins, he has that authority to forgive sins, even your sins and my sins. So Mark, you know, is, we might say, relentless in driving forward that truth of Jesus and his authority as the Son of God in whom we can put our absolute trust in his work of salvation for us.

Because the authority of Jesus is no ordinary authority. It's not the authority of the political rulers I met just a few days ago in London. It's the authority of the divine King of Kings.

The authority that each one of us has to recognise that demands our full submission to is that submission, the submitting to Jesus.

[4 : 05] That submission that we're going to be confronted with again and again as we look at this story. The story, as we said, of a healing of the paralyzed man and what this story tells us about Jesus.

And of course, what it tells us about ourselves in our response to the Lord Jesus is in his authority to forgive us for our sins. Because, of course, what's more important than anything else in your life and in my life is that our sins are forgiven.

Is that you know the gospel. Not just indirectly. That you know the gospel directly. That you know that good news that Jesus has come to save you from your sins.

And he's made it possible. And he alone has made it possible for you, for sinners, to come before a holy God. So that you're washed of your sin.

Washed by the blood of the Lord Jesus that he shed on the cross. And in this well-known miracle, in this well-known miracle, as we said, to help us to see his authority in forgiving us our sins.

[5 : 17] And showing that in what he says and what he does in that little house in Capernaum. And because what he says and what he's doing there in that house that points forward to him in his power to forgive sins that lead, that are going to lead to his crucifixion and dying for sinners.

So that sinners might be forgiven and come into that saving relationship with God. So, three things that we look at in this passage.

Let's look firstly at the preacher, the preacher of the word. When he returned to Capernaum, verse 1 and 2, after some days, it was reported that he was at home. Many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even at the door.

And he was preaching the word to them. Now, if you remember, those of you who were here last Lord's Day evening, remember Jesus had to leave that immediate area, to leave for the wilderness area, to go there for a short time.

Remember, because of the unwanted publicity that was being given to him because of his healing the leper, that man that was designated as a leper, Jesus healing that man of his skin disease.

[6 : 26] Remember, Jesus had healed that stricken man. He had given him the command to tell nobody about that but to go straight to the priest who alone could pronounce him clean.

And before, of course, the man had been considered unclean. But of course, what did that man do? That man had been healed of his skin disease. He told everybody.

He made it publicly known what Jesus had done. And because of that, Jesus had to go to a desolate place. He was, we might say, forced to go away from the main population areas and go to the wilderness part of that territory.

before he returned back to his home base in Capernaum. Why? Remember? Because Jesus didn't want to be seen as a popular miracle maker.

Because remember, his miracles were intended to point beyond the miracle to the reign of the Lord Jesus. To the reign of the Lord Jesus entering into the hearts of those freed from the curse of sin.

[7 : 34] Just as this miracle of the paralytic would show. So, Jesus has spent a short time away from the crowds. But he returns. He returns to his, well, temporary home back in Capernaum.

But what do we notice? We notice that Jesus isn't going to be left alone. You see that in verse 1 when Jesus enters Capernaum. Capernaum, after a few days absence, people hear he's come back home.

Jesus spread around the area. Jesus back in that house where he'd set up his, his, his, his, his, his, his residence. The crowds have gathered. They've come into the house.

They're crowding around outside the house. It's a small house. If any, if any of you have been to Israel, I've never been to Israel, but I've seen a, a, a, we might say a life-size mock-up of a real, of a house at that time.

Very small. Really quite a short, a small house and not very high, flat roof. Steps to the side leading up to the roof. We could, I argue that perhaps some people estimate as much as 50.

[8 : 39] I'm not so sure as many as 50, but certainly the house would be crammed full of people and a lot more outside. And of course, in this passage, we're not told specifically why they're there apart from knowing that Jesus is there, but of course, the context would have to be the miracle maker is back, back in town.

They want to see more miracles. What do we notice? What do we notice that Jesus does first? Verse 2, he was preaching the word to them.

You might say, well, what's he preaching? Well, of course, yes, it says here they're preaching the word, what's Jesus already been preaching? We see that in chapter 1, verse 14. He's been preaching that the kingdom of God has come.

That those who are hearing him must repent, believe the good news of salvation, found in him alone. Surely that would be the message that these people are hearing in that house as Jesus is preaching the word to them.

The kingdom is near. Repent. Believe the good news. And of course, that's exactly what would be demonstrated in the miracle about to be performed in that house when Jesus heals that paralyzed man.

[9 : 54] What have we noticed? We've seen that Jesus has responded to those who are anxious to see him, giving them not what their senses wanted, but what their souls needed.

What do they need? What do you need? What do I need? They needed to hear the good news. That was the central aspect of Jesus' ministry to these people.

They're in that little house in Capernaum as much as it's here in this little church in Livingston. To hear the word preached, to learn the way of salvation, to hear the Lord Jesus speak to us through his word.

And yes, through the preaching of that word. And so we have to ask what central to our worship. What's central? Well, of course, it has to be that we're worshipping God.

We've come to this place to worship him, to offer up unto him the praises of our heart. And as we offer up to God the praise and worship, that we hear the word preached and act upon what that word tells us, God's word tells us.

[11 : 05] So the preaching of the word is absolutely central to proclaiming the truth of the gospel. It was for Jesus and surely it's for us to follow his example because God has given the church, God's given us the means whereby he's made known and he's made known through preaching.

And where Jesus is proclaimed as the way, the truth, and the life, he's proclaimed through preaching. And it's for preacher and hearer, yes, to grow in knowledge of who God is.

But remember, to be changed, to be changed by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be changed when that word is proclaimed so that we're faithful to that word, faithful to all that God's word instructs of us as to how we are to honour him and glorify him.

And please remember to, and, you know, pull me up when this doesn't happen. The word has to be preached in plain style.

We're not, preachers aren't there to bamboozle a congregation with difficult to understand language with using all the kinds of jargon that, you know, can so easily fall into.

[12 : 24] No, we're to preach in the plain language of the gospel. Just as Mark is showing us here. You know, it really should concern us when preaching isn't central to worship.

You know, it should concern us if preaching somehow is, you know, minimised just another part of the service. And it should concern each one of us. Preachers, hearers alike, if we're not engaging our hearts in the word of God as the word is preached.

Because preaching, or response to preaching, I should say, preaching itself, but preaching isn't passive. I'm active in preaching, but you too have to be active.

Active in your listening. Active in engaging with the word of God as that word is preached. It's for you to draw near to the gospel and to have that resolve to apply what you're hearing of the Lord Jesus.

Apply in terms of faith, following, serving, loving, in obedience, living by faith in the Son of God. We're not here for half an hour of feel-good fun that, you know, hits the senses but misses the hearts.

[13 : 39] No. We're here to meet together around God's word. We're here to, yes, to listen to the Lord Jesus being proclaimed.

We're here to listen to His voice as He speaks to us through His word. Just as those there in that little house in Capernaum, as they listened to the voice of Jesus preached to them of the kingdom of God.

So, the preacher, Jesus, the Lord Jesus there in that little house in Capernaum, but secondly, of course, the paralytic, the man who is paralysed, and the word.

Verses 3 to 5. Notice, notice this, as Jesus is preaching, something dramatic happens. You know the story well, I'm sure, even from Sunday school days, you know the story.

The paralysed man is utterly incapable of, you know, walking through that door. He's been carried in some kind of stretcher. The foremen are doing it. Obviously, they can't get through the crowd that's gathered at that little door, and so they manoeuvre the stretcher.

[14 : 51] It must have been quite an operation to do, but the steps at the side is to take the man up and to make that hole in that flat roof and to lower the stretcher down towards Jesus.

You know, just visualise that in your imagination. Just visualise that. It's drama. It's drama. And Jesus is telling the people in that cramped house, just as he's telling them that he's the only way of salvation, that he's telling them that they're to put their faith in them, repent and turn to them.

As he's speaking of these truths, a man's coming to Jesus from above. He's lower to where Jesus is preaching. You might say that he's coming to Jesus by faith.

His faith and the faith of those who are lowering him to be near Jesus. And obviously, Jesus stops preaching. And you can just see the crowd, you know, just wondering what Jesus is going to do next.

Is he going to rebuke this man for interrupting him? If someone came through the roof here, we would be startled. Jesus turns to the man and he looks at him.

[16 : 03] What do we notice? He looks at him not with eyes of indignation, but with eyes of compassion. And he speaks to him. Speaks to him not with words of rebuke, but words of compassion, words that respond to the faith of that man.

Son, son, you know, this endearing of Jesus towards that man. Son, your sins are forgiven. In many ways, I'm sure, certainly to those who are in that house and outside, this was so unexpected.

Son, or even my son, your sins are forgiven. But why does Jesus say that in the first instance? Why doesn't he just go straight to the healing? Why deal with this man's spiritual needs before his physical needs?

Well, we'll look at the situation here. There's four men plus that paralyzed man. They're driven by something that Jesus saw. Jesus saw faith.

Faith in him to heal. And Jesus recognizing these five men. He recognized faith in them. So, here, verse 5, when Jesus saw, he saw their faith, he could see into their very hearts.

[17 : 23] When he saw their faith, he said to the paralytic son, your sins are forgiven. Here's Jesus addressing the spiritual need, the spiritual aspect of these followers before he's going to address the physical need of that paralyzed man.

Jesus is dealing, first of all, with that man's soul and then his body. Well, Jesus has come to save souls. And, of course, one of the signs of Jesus saving souls was the healing of broken bodies.

As we said right at the start, that healing that pointed to the healing of someone's relationship with God that could only be possible through the forgiveness of sins, and only possible through that forgiveness by Jesus.

So, here's Jesus preaching, having preached the word of God, preaching that the kingdom is near, saying that man has to repent of their sins and believe the gospel.

He's showing his authority to receive that repentant sinner and he's forgiving him his sins. He's showing the reason why he's come in human flesh.

[18 : 31] He's showing why God has become man. It's because of sin. It's because of sin that Jesus came to earth in human form. Of course, the paralyzed man had to be healed of his physical illness, physical sickness.

That's perfectly obvious. But that man's first need, your first need and my first need, that man's primary need was within, was in his heart.

And only Jesus, only Jesus, has that authority and that power to forgive sins and bring about salvation. Salvation from eternal death.

Now, of course, that's not the same thing as saying that that man's physical needs were somehow irrelevant. No, because Jesus, of course, does heal this man of his paralysis. But the crucial and most fundamental need that that man had wasn't physical, it was spiritual.

And that's what the crowd there had to realize. That's what we today need to grasp. That our soul's eternal need, our soul's eternal well-being depends on Jesus' forgiveness of our sins.

[19 : 45] Because unless you have your sins forgiven, you won't know the joy of heaven. Unless you're born again through the forgiveness of your sins, you will not know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

When that man, that paralyzed man would not have been able to follow Jesus unless, first of all, his internal, his soul's paralysis was dealt with, the paralysis of sin.

And it's surely for us to, well, to heed that priority that Jesus showed, you know, regarding our own selves. Your most important concern now is your relationship, a right relationship with the Lord Jesus.

You've been gifted a physical body, yes, we're physical beings with all the wonder of physical creation. Don't ever despise your physicality.

You do it anyway, you look after your bodies, you make them presentable, you care for what God has given you in his creation. what we've seen in our prayer meeting recently where some 139 were fiercely and wonderfully made.

- [20 : 59] But a far more value and concern has to be your relationship with God that can only be made right through being transformed in heart through the forgiveness of your sins.

God. So be the more concerned about who you are in relation to God than seeing yourself as merely physical.

That's what Jesus was impressing in this paralyzed man. Son, your sins are forgiven. Naturally takes us to a third and last point, the power to forgive sins, verses 6 to 12.

But let's look at the context when, you know, when Jesus utters these words. Because, you know, when Jesus says, when somebody becomes a Christian, there's going to be hostility.

Hostility with those who cannot accept that Jesus is Lord and Saviour. Who won't even accept that there's some kind of sin to forgive or a saviour to do the forgiving.

- [22 : 01] And for Jesus to have uttered these words to show the power of Jesus in forgiving that man his sins. Well, you see the response. You see the hostility in verses 6 and 7.

These scribes, these teachers of the law, these legal experts in the law of Moses. Mark tells us, they're sitting, they're assuming a position of a teacher, obviously indicating that they are trying to show Jesus that they have authority, not Jesus.

I mean, they hadn't come to hear Jesus with gladness. they've come to find fault with Jesus. And in their sitting, it's as if they're sitting in judgment in Jesus.

And there they are in their sneering attitude. And Jesus sees into their hearts. He sees what they're truly thinking about him.

Verse 7, why does this man speak like that? He's blaspheming, who can forgive sins but God alone? They don't even call him by his name. They don't even say, why does Jesus, it's just, well literally just this one.

- [23 : 11] Why does this one speak like that? They wouldn't accept Jesus for who he is. Of course, they're quite right. Only God can forgive sins.

But they fail to see that Jesus and his divine authority as Son of God, that Jesus had that power, that authority to forgive sins. They didn't recognize Jesus for who he is.

They didn't take Jesus at his word. They didn't take Jesus' claims about himself seriously. And so there they are, criticizing, finding fault with Jesus.

They, themselves, had set them up as those who, you know, would say what's right and what's wrong. And therefore they're jumping to conclusions.

Jesus is blaspheming. He's, in other words, declaring himself to be God. Well, of course, he is God, but not in blasphemy. Isn't that the age-old obstacle to faith in so many, that age-old stumbling block?

- [24 : 17] The not accepting Jesus as the divine Son of God? You know, you go through the centuries of time, heresies, even to this day, and so often it's that obstacle, to knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The Jehovah's witnesses that you see standing outside railway stations, they're peddling a false gospel. They don't accept the full divinity of the Lord Jesus. Mormons, again, false teaching, denying that Jesus, the Son of God, is equal with the Father, denying that Jesus is fully God.

God. But you must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is God in this divinity. I mean, these critics there, they knew their theology.

They knew that, you know, for Jesus to claim to forgive sins was the same as saying that Jesus is declaring Himself God. they wouldn't believe the Word of Jesus. They wouldn't believe that He was the Son of God.

And so they condemn themselves by their unbelief. And I pray there's no one here who's at this moment condemning themselves in your doubts about the divine nature of Jesus.

[25 : 36] That you're not doubting Jesus' claims about Himself. That these doubts are not obstacles of faith. May they not be obstacles to your faith.

And please, no, don't have anything to do with even these modern day heresies that deny the lordship and divinity of the Lord Jesus have nothing, nothing to do with those such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons.

But you see the divinity of Jesus is shown in His words and His actions that we've read of in verse 8 to 12 that we see Jesus confronting His accusers. He's confronting them with truth about Himself.

and the actions that prove who He is. As we see there, Jesus knew their thoughts. He knew their thoughts about Himself.

He knew their hardened hearts that accused them of blasphemy. I mean, because, as we're saying to the children this morning, they couldn't hide from the all-seeing God.

[26 : 39] That's why Jesus confronts them, as we see in verse eight to ten, he knows what they're saying, what they're thinking. 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.

what's Jesus saying to these scribes? Well, listen carefully to Jesus' words. Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up, take up your mat and walk?

Of course, it's easier to say, your sins are forgiven, than it is to say to a paralysed man, get up and walk. I mean, you know, saying your sins are forgiven, well, we would say that's an invisible action.

You know, immediately you can't see, physically see anyway, sins being forgiven. So, easy to say to someone, your sins are forgiven. There's no way to test the reality of forgiveness happening there and then.

[27 : 50] There and then, of course, it will happen in the life of a person that will demonstrate that sins are forgiven. But there and then, who can prove you wrong if you claim you're forgiven someone sins.

But it's a totally different thing to say to that paralysed man, get up and walk. You know, the statement, you're healed, I mean, it's got to be seen in its evidence.

I mean, if a person isn't healed, then the words have become meaningless. And the person who spoke these words seem to be a fraud. God. But Jesus is going to prove that he's accomplished the invisible act of forgiving sins by accomplishing the visible act of healing that paralysed man.

He's going to prove that he has the power to forgive sins and as a sign of that power, a sign of his authority, a sign that the kingdom of God has come, Jesus is going to heal that paralysed man.

And there'll be no argument and what he does, what he does there in that healing will show that he has that authority to forgive sins.

[29 : 02] So he's confronted the opponents, his opponents, and he turns to the paralysed man. What do we notice? We notice the opponents have nothing to say to Jesus, but Jesus has words to say to that man.

Jesus tells the paralysed man, he says, get up, take your mat, go home, do we notice the man responds in faith? Faith, in the one who's first forgiven him his sins, and he gets up.

Here's a sure sign of active faith in Jesus, a sure sign of Jesus' power, pointing to Jesus' power and authority to forgive sins.

Again, just picture that scene as the crowd's watching astonishment, as that man who'd been, you know, lowered down on the roof because he couldn't walk.

And he now gets up and he takes the mat he's been lying on for perhaps years and he leaves that house on foot. That mat that had spoken of his paralysis is now carried as a symbol of the forgiving power of Jesus, that power to restore sinners to himself.

[30 : 17] the four friends who took that man to the house, they're praising God. We're told here the crowd's praising God. They've heard, they've seen wonderful things in that crowded house in Capernaum.

And certainly when we look at the reaction of these people in that house, well, we might say it's at best, but it's certainly amazement, amazement at Jesus' healing. we don't see the evidence that they're putting their trust in him as a saviour, but certainly they're amazed at that work.

We've never seen anything like this. They're astonished, astonished at what they've just seen. Jesus declaring this man's sins forgiven, then immediately followed by Jesus' word of raising that man from his mat to walk.

In wonder they're praising God. never seen anything like this before. They've seen the power of Jesus' word. They've seen his actions in healing that man.

Actions that pointed, we would say, to the supernatural power of Jesus and his authority as son of man, son of God. People certainly recognize his authority in their amazement at his teaching, at his healing, rather, just as the people earlier had expressed amazement at his teaching that we saw in chapter one.

[31 : 49] I mean, you know, just think of Jesus' words, think of his actions here. I mean, obviously they couldn't but elicit a response of amazement and astonishment.

what about you? Are you amazed at the amazing grace that saved a wretch like me? Are you amazed?

Are you astonished that Jesus should leave the glory of heaven to come to earth and identify with fallen humanity in order to rescue us from our sins? Are you amazed?

Are you astonished? a bit more, a bit more. Are you so responding in love and gratitude and faith in the one who left that glory of heaven to come to earth to save you from your sins?

Are you truly lost in wonder, love and praise and faith? Or is there still we would say a blank response of indifference?

[32 : 51] Because the world's full of that kind of response, indifference. I pray you're not amongst those, any of you here, amongst those who are indifferent to the claims of Jesus, or even sneering at Jesus claims.

You come to the Saviour who alone can free you from that paralysis in your heart, that paralysis of sin. You come to Jesus who alone can make you whole.

who alone can make the spiritually lame walk. Well, you walk, walk with him and walk on that narrow road. Walk with him all the days of your life.

Walk with him on that road of life. And you know when you walk with him, he walks with you. He promises never to leave you, never to forsake you.

Surely that's cause enough to give glory to God this evening, to come before him glorifying God and to worship him as Lord, as God.

[33 : 58] And to rejoice in the Lord Jesus and to give thanks to him for his healing you of that paralysis of sin that once kept you on that mat of indifference and hostility.

But you who have known that forgiving power of the Lord Jesus, you know that you go in your way rejoicing, walking with him all your days as you follow him.

So, may God have the praise and the glory. Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we stumble so much in our thoughts, but we know, Lord, that you make clear by your word the wonderful story, the wonderful reality of the forgiving power that you show us through the Lord Jesus and his work of salvation.

Help us to know that work in our hearts. Help us to know the reality of the forgiveness that you give to those who are yours, whom you have called to yourself.

Help us, Lord, to know that that forgiveness is true, is real, that the Lord Jesus has given his life for us, so that we might be forgiven of our sins, so that we might be cleansed of all our unrighteousness.

[35 : 20] Draw us close to you, we pray, that watch over us, even in this week that has begun. Take care of us in every way, in every step that we make. Help us, Lord, to trust in you for all things.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's close in Psalm 146 that we were singing at the start.

Page 191, we're going to sing verse 10, just these three singing verses. He delivers from oppression and relieves the hungry's plight.

He releases those in prison to the blind, the Lord gives sight, those who are bowed down, he raises. God delights in righteousness, he protects and cares for strangers, widows and the fatherless, and so on, 7 to 10, to God's praise.

Amen.