

Christ's Forgiveness Of Sins - The Power And The Proof

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Good morning to you all and thank you again for joining us for this service of worship from Stornoway Free Church. We're glad to have your company and pray that the Lord will bless us as we come together in this way to worship him. I have a few intimations I need to read out firstly for the main mainly for the benefit of the congregation. First of all of course due to the lockdown which came into effect a few days ago we were not able to do the collections in the hall as was intimated last week. Anybody who still wishes to contribute to the Bethesda collection can do so by sending a cheque made payable to Stornoway Free Church to Myrtle Macphail, the treasurer at 12A Jameson Drive, Stornoway. Also because of the lockdown we will not be able to use the seminary now for the midweek services until further notice. The midweek will continue with Zoom and services on the Lord's Day like today will continue by live stream and also pre-recorded material for the other service. Now for CAP, the Christians Against Poverty, there is a course called CAP, Kickstart, Money, Worries and How to Overcome Them. This course has been run here by some of our own folks from Stornoway Free Church. The course begins on the 11th of February, Thursday 11th

February at 7.30pm and that'll be over Zoom. There'll be a short video and a discussion afterwards. This is run in association with CAP, Christians Against Poverty and we do appreciate that there are additional pressures on people since the lockdown especially and over the past year indeed. So please encourage any who you know may have difficulties in this way to consider coming to join with this course. It's not a high pressure course, it's just simply to give information and some advice regarding money matters and organising money and budgeting and so on. So I really do commend that to you.

If you want to take part or find further information just contact Stornoway Free Church at outlook.com or else you can direct message by way of our Facebook page or through Instagram.

Also just a reminder that the monthly prayer meeting which we join in with the Presbytery's prayer sessions, that'll be tomorrow by Zoom at 8pm. It'll just be ourselves as a congregation but others in the Presbytery will be meeting personally and privately for prayer as well. Tomorrow by Zoom at 8pm. Thank you. These are all the notices. Now let's begin our worship. Firstly we're singing today from Psalm 92, Psalm number 92 in the Scottish Psalter. You'll find that on page 297 of the Psalm books. We'll sing to the tune St. Bernard. To render thanks unto the Lord it is a comely thing.

And to thy name O thou most high, due praise allowed to sing. Thy loving kindness to show forth when shines the morning light. And to declare thy faithfulness with pleasure every night. We'll sing the first four stanzas, verses 1 to 4. To render thanks unto the Lord it is a comely thing.

[3 : 25] To render thanks unto the Lord it is a comely thing. And to thy name O thou most high, due praise allowed to sing.

Thy loving kindness to show forth when shines the morning light. And to declare thy faithfulness with pleasure every night.

On a tenth stringed instrument upon the psaltery, and on the harp with solemn sound and grave sweet melody.

For the Lord by thy mighty words hast made my heart bright glad. And I will triumph in the works which by thine hand were made.

Let's read now from God's word. We're reading from the book of Psalms for our first reading today. And Psalm 130. The book of Psalms, Psalm 130.

[5 : 45] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. We pray God to follow with this blessing of reading of his word.

Now we're going to call upon his name in prayer. Let's join together in prayer to God. Almighty God, we give thanks today as we have been singing and as we have cause to give thanks according to our reading.

We give thanks today, O Lord, that you have given us the knowledge of our dependence upon you, that it is in you we live and move and have our being.

But we give thanks for more than that. We give thanks for the desire you create within us to depend upon you, to trust in you, to draw our strength from you, to believe in your word, and to come to ascribe worship and praise to you in the knowledge that you are worthy of it.

[7 : 12] We come before you, Lord, like the psalmist today, to confess our sin with thankfulness that there is forgiveness with you, that there is steadfast love with you, that you do not mark our iniquity against us, even though we know that we are born into this world under condemnation due to our sin.

Yet you have not made it eternal. You have not sealed us in that condemnation in such a way that we could never be released from it. We thank you today, Lord, for your salvation.

We thank you for the joy of your salvation, for the way in which we can rejoice in you through Jesus Christ. We bless you as we confess our sin, our need of pardon and of cleansing, that we are, Lord, familiar with the sound of redemption, that we are brought to know the redemption that is in Christ, that liberty with which he makes us free.

We pray today, O Lord, that that song of celebration and rejoicing may be in our hearts, in the midst of all that would cause us disquiet and to be cast down, in the midst of everything, Lord, in this world, besides what we find in ourselves.

We pray today that you would lift us up, that you would enable us to focus upon you, upon the glory of your being and of your redemption, upon the wonder of your grace in Christ and of the ministry of your Holy Spirit creating in us new life.

[8 : 39] O Lord, bring us today, we pray, to rejoice indeed in that provision. Bring us to, in focusing upon yourself, to realise that all the things that take place in the world are by your own appointment, in your own wisdom.

We thank you, thank you for that wonderful emphasis in your word, that the Lord Jesus Christ has been made head over all things to his church.

We thank you even in his time of pandemic, that he reigns not only over that pandemic, but over its purpose. We thank you, Lord, that all things ultimately are for the benefit of your people, that you move heaven and earth in their interests.

We pray that we may see things during these critical times in the light of that great truth. For you will bring all things to their appointed end, and you will bring all things to work towards the glorifying of your name and the glorification of your people.

We thank you today for heaven and for the reality of heaven, for the way that there is indeed a place and a state far beyond our present state, so much above it in terms of its quality and its perfection.

[9 : 57] We give thanks, Lord, that there there is no death, there is no pandemic, there is no infection, there is no sin, there is no mourning or crying or tears. We bless you, gracious one, that you invite us today to come, to step into that way to heaven, if we have not already done so, through trusting in your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, Lord, we come today seeking your help. We come today seeking that you would help us in our time of crisis as a people. We know, Lord, that the providence that has brought this COVID virus to us is one that was unexpected, unexpected, one that we were unprepared for, and one that still has such a devastating effect among us in our communities.

We pray for the whole world, oh Lord. We give thanks for vaccines now made available and pray for their effectiveness. We pray for our own community here, where the virus is now obviously present with us, and where people have become infected.

Lord, we pray especially for the group in the hospital. We give thanks, oh Lord, for the way in which you have contained us so far. We pray that that will be the case with this latest outbreak also.

We pray for the patients and the staff that are caught up in these circumstances. We pray especially for those who have had positive results to tests and those who have contracted the virus.

[11 : 34] Lord God, we pray for them especially. We pray for those who are attending to their needs in the nursing care that they receive. We bless you, oh Lord, that we can bring all of these things to you in the knowledge that you are able to do for us far more than we are able to ask or even think.

So bless the hospital at this time, we pray. And bless too those who are charged with its administration, for whom there are added difficulties at this time. Not only ward managers, but admin staff and management.

Lord, bless them, we pray, as they wrestle with the difficulties now provided by this virus and its outbreak. We pray, Lord, for them and ask that you would be gracious to them and give them the strength and the guidance that they require.

We pray that you bless us in our community. We ask, gracious one, that you'd continue to protect us. We pray that you would help us. We pray to observe all the regulations that are necessary for the protection of life.

And we ask that you would be pleased, oh Lord, to give us patience and to grant to us that we will further wait upon yourself from day to day. We pray also for those who have other illnesses at this time.

[12 : 56] Help us not to forget them. Grant to them, Lord, those especially who have serious illness, grant that you would bless them. Those who have been suffering with cancer for some time.

Those who are in the hospice. Those who have other illnesses too. Lord, bless them and bless their families. Especially when they are unable at this time to go to visit them. We ask that you would bless the dying.

Those who are reaching end stage of life. Grant to them, Lord, the preparation of your grace for that great step out of time and into eternity. We ask your blessing for them.

We pray your blessing for our children and for the younger generation too, as well as our old age. We pray, Lord, that you would bless them. And in their young years, help them, we pray, to know the formative influence of your truth upon their souls.

Fill their minds, we pray, with your truth. Give them to walk in your ways and to respect you and to honour and to fear you and to love those who love you. And we ask now that you would continue to bless us and to hear us as we cry out, like the psalmist did, out of the depths of this crisis that has affected the world.

[14 : 07] Lord, hear us, we pray. Lord, answer us, we pray. Lord, come to our aid, we pray. And reveal yourself, we pray, in your power. Turn us, we pray, to yourself.

We ask all of these things in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Children, today we're continuing to look at the number seven in the Bible.

We looked at it last week. And today we'll look at a few other passages, the other things to do with the number seven in the Bible. Let me turn your mind back again to Leviticus chapter 25.

We looked at the passage last week. But there's another thing in the passage in addition to last week. Last week we looked at the number seven in terms of the number of seven days in the week. We also looked at seven years where Israel had to give the land rest in the seventh year.

Now we're coming to the way the Lord said they had to celebrate a year of Jubilee, as it was called, which was the 50th year. So that's seven times seven.

[15 : 10] And then the year after that is the year that they actually celebrated the Jubilee. So you had to be able to do your arithmetic if you lived in Israel during those days. Seven times seven, 49.

And then the year of Jubilee. And one of the main features of that year was that people would be freed from being hired as hired servants in people's homes.

Israel had, the Lord gave to Israel, really a means of protection. If you got into severe debt as a person who belonged to Israel, you could then sell yourself to somebody either in your family or whatever or people who had people in their families falling into debt were responsible to take them in and to look after them.

It was a kind of safety mechanism, a kind of social welfare, if you like. But in the 50th year, those who had been hired and perhaps working for many years for a relative to try and pay up for their debts, they had their debts cancelled and they were released from that service back to their homes, back to things as they used to be.

And that's a reminder to us that freedom is something that is very special that we have in Jesus Christ. Freedom from the guilt of our sins.

[16 : 29] Freedom from everything that sin has brought in that makes us unacceptable to God. We are released from that in the life that Jesus gives us.

So the year of Jubilee was a year of freedom and that pointed forward to what you find coming with Christ. Then secondly, Leviticus 16, there's a chapter that deals with the Day of Atonement, mentioned in Leviticus 25 as well.

But the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 was one day in the year when a great sacrifice was given up to God and this day was marked as the Day of Atonement.

It was the only day in the year when the High Priest was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies, the furthest in part of the tabernacle and later the temple.

That's where this one sacrifice was actually, the blood from that sacrifice was sprinkled on the altar. That of course also pointed forward to the death of Jesus.

[17 : 34] And where the Day of Atonement had to do with that great sacrifice, that also has to do with forgiveness of sin, that brings us forward to Jesus. The sacrifice that Jesus himself is in his death on the cross.

And that's for our redemption, for our salvation, to bring us forgiveness of sins also. Then in Numbers chapter 29, I'm giving you these passages, you can maybe note them and just look them up afterwards.

Numbers chapter 29 mentions the seventh month of the year where the people of Israel could actually spend a week living in booths.

They were made out of palm branches and they lived within those little huts, if you like, made of palm branches. And it was a week of wonderful celebration to do with crops and harvest and so on.

But it was a week that was marked with rejoicing. They really were able to rejoice during that week. The festival of booths or the feast of booths used to be called the feast of tabernaculus, another word for these booths.

[18 : 44] And because that was marked with rejoicing, that pointed forward to the rejoicing that we have in God's salvation. Now God's salvation is the main reason we have for joy.

The joy of salvation. Remember Psalm 51, where David was making his prayer of confession of sin and repentance to God over what he had done. Restore to me, he said, the joy of your salvation.

He had lost the joy. He didn't lose his salvation, but he lost the joy of it. That's what he wanted God to restore. The joy of salvation. And you don't have joy anywhere else like you have in the joy of being a Christian.

The joy of salvation. The joy of knowing Jesus as your Saviour. And then in the New Testament, I'm just going to mention one more passage. It's in the Gospel of Mark in chapter 8, where you find Jesus feeding 4,000 with seven loaves and a few fish.

And he took the seven loaves and he got the crowd to sit down. And he took the seven loaves and gave them to the people and they set them to the crowd along with a few small fish.

[20 : 00] Of course, you remember that Jesus, like with the 5,000, he also fed the 4,000 with what was to begin with, just a tiny amount of food. But he made that stretch to actually feed the 4,000.

Now, there were seven loaves and we're told afterwards that there were seven baskets full of leftover food. An amazing miracle. And the word, the number seven there really stands, you remember last time we looked at seven as indicating in the Bible something complete or something perfect.

And you could say in Mark chapter 8 there that the number seven really shows us how perfectly or how completely Jesus meets all our needs.

Remember, what you need is not necessarily the same thing as what you might want. I might want something today and it might not really be something I need at all.

When it comes to your Christmas prezzies, you might be saying to your parents, well, I'd like or I want a new computer. And your parents might say, well, that's maybe what you want, but maybe that's not what you need.

[21 : 10] And all the way through life, we've got to think of what we need and all our needs, what we really need, anything that we really need to have, Jesus is able to provide.

And especially in salvation, in forgiveness of sin, in putting us right with God. So these are other ways in which the number seven is used.

I'm sure you'll find other places in the Bible where the number seven is used. And where it's used in these ways, it's always to do with something complete or perfect.

and especially it brings us to think about Jesus as the perfect, complete Savior. So let's again say the Lord's Prayer together.

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

[22 : 09] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. We're going to read again now from the Gospel of Mark and this time chapter 2, verses 1 to 12.

And we'll turn then to look at this passage as our second study in the miracles of Jesus. So it's Mark chapter 2 from the beginning down as far as verse 12.

When he returned to Capernaum, after some days, it was reported that he, that's Jesus, was at home. And many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even at the door.

And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him.

And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, My son, your sins are forgiven.

[23 : 16] 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 never saw anything like this.

And we see God's blessing on this portion of his word as we now turn to it and to look at this miracle that Jesus worked with this paralytic. The key to the passage is really what you find in verse 10.

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He then went on to say to the man, Pick up your bed and go home.

[24 : 40] The key is in these words, that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. In other words, it was a public demonstration of Christ's authority and authority especially to forgive sins.

More than power is required to forgive our sins. It needs authority and as we'll see from this passage, only God can do that.

only divine authority can dismiss the guilt of sin. And what Jesus is demonstrating here to the crowd is that anybody who has the power to dismiss the paralysis that this man was suffering from, well, that itself is an indication and a proof, if you like, that that person has authority to forgive sins.

That's really what Jesus is about. That's why the key is in these verses 10 to 11. Whoever is able to do this with such a plight as this man was in, that itself shows that that person, that divine person, is able to forgive sin also.

Now, four words that might guide us through our study of this passage. First of all, attraction. Then there's announcement. Then there's authority.

[26 : 01] And fourthly, there's amazement. There's attraction. First of all, this crowd are attracted to Jesus. There's the announcement, secondly, of Jesus to this man, announcement of forgiveness of sins.

Thirdly, there's authority, the authority of Jesus himself to forgive, which is demonstrated by working this miracle with the paralytic. And fourthly, there's amazement, the amazement of the crowd and reaction to what they have seen.

We never saw anything like this. So let's just focus on the passage using these four words. First of all, the attraction that you find when this crowd is attracted to Jesus.

He had just come back as we read in the previous chapter. He's now back in Capernaum. And it was reported that he was at home. You know, sometimes we pass over these little statements as if they're not that significant, but it is very significant.

It was reported that he was at home. The news about Jesus, or if you like, there's rumour about Jesus in the district went about and people heard of it. So many gathered together to this place that he was in.

[27 : 17] And they were gathered around, so many of them, that there wasn't room even at the door to accommodate the large crowd that had actually gathered. It's a huge crowd.

A really incredible interest in Jesus when they heard that he had come back and that he was in this place. If only, if only, we saw such a reaction to this pandemic that people would be so desperate to seek Jesus, to look Jesus out for themselves.

If only God, and we pray that God will bless this time of crisis to all our hearts so that whether we know Jesus already or not, one of the main outcomes of our thoughts about this pandemic, about this crisis, will be that it brings us to Jesus.

That we will make such an effort to reach Jesus as was made in this passage. You can see the efforts that were made by these people who brought this man lying on a bed.

It would really be just like a stretcher that you could carry yourself as he did when he was cured, but they brought him on this stretcher. And that effort came from faith.

[28 : 31] Faith is what Jesus actually refers to, or what Mark here refers to. When Jesus saw their faith in verse 5, he said to the paralytic, my son, your sins are forgiven.

So we'll take it from that, that the paralytic himself also had faith. They believed in Jesus. They believed the reports they'd heard of him or they believed in him as somebody who had already shown his power as was mentioned in the previous chapter.

But here's the thing about faith. Faith always wants to get to Jesus. Faith always wants to get to Christ himself. That's the nature of faith.

Faith is not content with something less than reaching Jesus himself. And you do that by your prayers. When you pray, you're really exercising faith and coming to Jesus, coming into the presence of Jesus, getting to Jesus.

Even today, as you're listening to this message, as you're reading this passage, as we're sharing together in this wonderful emphasis of this passage of Christ's power and authority, what you're really in faith doing is seeking to get to Jesus.

[29 : 45] You don't just want to hear a sermon. You don't just want to get to whoever's preaching the sermon. You don't want to just simply have the Bible read or read it for yourself. You want to get to Jesus through that.

That's the nature of faith. Isn't that how it is for yourself today? That's what faith is concerned to do. But it's more than that.

Faith is also concerned to bring others to Jesus. Look at the efforts that these four men went to to bring this man into the very presence of Jesus.

They couldn't get into the house because of the crowd so they removed part of the roof that was very easily done in those times. They were just loose tiles and they could easily make an opening there so that's what they did and then they lowered the man down into the very presence of Jesus.

They removed the roof above him when they made an opening they laid down the bed on which the paralytic laid. Look at the effort they went to just to get this man to Jesus.

[30 : 50] That's really saying something to us today in regard to our own concern as Christians to make Jesus known to people and to bring people into the presence of Jesus.

We can do that even though at this time we're not able to use our church buildings and we're not able to use them rightly for the reason that we're seeking to protect lives whatever others might say that's our concern to protect other people's lives to comply with the measures that are needed for that and here is an emphasis that whatever our circumstances are we are still in the business of seeking to bring people to Jesus whether it's by speaking to them by phoning them by whatever means God has given us to actually use here is an example to us here is an illustration to us of the efforts that we have to in evangelism make to bring people to Christ that's what it's about the attraction that Jesus has for this crowd here and we pray that that will be replicated not only in our own lives personally but in our community as well and today isn't it the case with yourself that you are attracted to

Jesus that as you learn more and more about him so all the more you want to come to know him and you want to come into his presence and you want to have your personal dealings and relationship with him that's what faith is about faith connects you to Jesus faith brings from Jesus into your life the things that you need the things that are necessary for your life to be a life of fulfillment a life that is right with God so today that's the attraction the attraction of Jesus to this crowd the attraction that he must have for ourselves too secondly we'll leave that point the announcement that Jesus makes to this paralytic when they had let him down here he is now in the presence of Jesus when Jesus saw him he said to the paralytic my son your sins are forgiven how interesting that Jesus doesn't pay attention first and foremost to his physical need what he says to him he announces your sins are forgiven and frequently you find in the gospel that Jesus pays gives priority to our spiritual needs ahead of our physical it doesn't mean he's not concerned for our physical needs it doesn't mean that that's not important to ourselves either but what is important is our spiritual need what was important more so than his paralysis for this man was the condition of his soul was his relationship to

God was how his sins needed to be forgiven how he needed to be forgiven his sins so the priority for Jesus and indeed must be for ourselves without in any way ignoring people's physical needs but this is what he said first my son your sins are forgiven now that's the reverse of our natural thinking isn't it that's the reverse of what you find in the world at large because people are sometimes concerned so much with their bodily needs that they're just obsessed about things physical but here is Jesus reminding us that whatever we may say of our physical needs or however we may pamper our bodies what we really need is forgiveness of sin what we need above all is for our sin to be covered for our sin to be forgiven for us to be right with God that's what is at the heart of his statement and you can see the reaction in response to that of the scribes the scribes were some of the religious officials along with the

Pharisees very often mentioned in the Gospels here 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 well in that last question they were actually right theologically their theology was perfectly orthodox when they said who can forgive sins but God alone but the rest of what they were saying was certainly not right because what they're saying was well only God can forgive sins so what's this person doing making it his business to say that he forgives sins how can he possibly have the authority to do this and of course what they don't realize or don't accept is that Jesus is God that he is a divine person that he has that authority himself to forgive sins the claim that Jesus has to forgive sins or the statement that this man's sins are forgiven is only valid if he is divine if he is

[35 : 49] God and it's not that Jesus doesn't know what he's doing of course he knows what he's doing he's not actually speaking as somebody who is beguiling people or somebody who's just mistakenly presenting himself as something he's not he's the son of God in this world in our nature as a human being making this pronouncement as the son of God son your sins are forgiven you'll find the same accusation of blasphemy because that's what you were really saying here he's blaspheming he's blaspheming against God this is not right for him to do the same thing comes across in chapter 14 and verses 63 and 64 where in his response there to those who are putting him on trial what they hear there amounts to them saying well this can't be acceptable this man is blaspheming he's a blasphemer let's just crucify him and here is Jesus staking his claim and making the claim rightly that he is the forgiver of sins son your sins are forgiven you that is the announcement and what a great announcement that is and that brings us thirdly to the authority that he has to forgive sins now first of all notice he read their hearts you see all the way through here you find references to Jesus verse 5 when Jesus saw their faith and then you find here in verse 8 immediately

Jesus perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves said you see what's happening there Jesus saying within himself in his own mind this is the conclusion he's come to but he's actually dealing with something that wasn't made visible it's just the reasoning that they had in themselves they were questioning in their hearts they didn't blurt it out so that everybody heard it they were just thinking this in their mind and their hearts but Jesus read it Jesus knew it and that is still the case and it might be somewhat unnerving that Jesus actually has that ability had it then and has it now to read into the questionings that are in people's minds and in people's hearts and it's so right now for me and for you because as we're listening to this message as we're reading this passage as we're seeking to learn from this part of the Bible what the meaning of this passage is as you and I are doing that something else is happening unseen to us but Jesus is reading your thoughts he's reading your mind he's analyzing your questions he's saying into your thoughts and it's not just that he knows them but he's weighing them he's analyzing them if you like he's judging them for what they are whether they're according to truth or not Jesus sees into our hearts today we cannot avoid that fact wherever we are whatever we're doing whatever we say and that's not just unnerving and maybe uncomfortable as it is for every one of us knowing that Jesus is reading our hearts it can also be immensely comforting remember

Peter came and Jesus questioned him three times in John's gospel as to his love this is after Peter had denied him three times Simon son of Jonas do you love me Peter was grieved the third time that Jesus said this he was grieved it hurt him that Jesus said this to him do you love me what did he say in reply the third time he said Lord you know all things you know that I love you here you are today you know you're not perfect I know I'm not perfect you know you're a sinner I know I'm a sinner I know that my life is not what it should be before God we know that there are some things about our lives that make us shabby in the presence of God even as Christians but here you are you can apply and appeal to Jesus knowledge you can apply to Jesus and say Lord despite the fact that I have so much that's still wrong in my life I sincerely love you I sincerely want to serve you I sincerely want truly to be yours that's how wonderful it is that you can appeal to the knowledge of Jesus he's not going to be wrong in his assessment and all he wants us to do in that sense of coming to to know salvation is to come to himself other things can then be joined to that afterwards but that's the main thing that our sin to be forgiven and when you come like the man in Luke 18 who came and stood alongside the Pharisee who had a long prayer commending himself to God and thankful that he wasn't as this tax collector beside him the tax collector left him finish and then he beat upon his breast and said

Lord be merciful to me the sinner that's all it takes because Luke says this man went down to his house justified rather than the other one we don't have to be great theologians we don't have to be able to interpret the Bible successfully if you like for other people in order to be saved all you need is this cry you don't need to be able to enter into or have an ability to have long prayers and complicated phraseology not that that's necessarily in itself wrong I'm not saying that but what I'm saying is here is something that tells us that the announcement of forgiveness of sins and the seeking of forgiveness on our part is really just a simple trust in Christ to say Lord forgive me a sinner and of course this is really what Jesus says here as he reads their hearts and as he asks these questions of them which is easier to say to this man your sins are forgiven or to say rise take up your bed and walk and so it's not in a sense he's making a comparison but what he really wants to make them do is think think about what they're going to see think about what he's going to do to this man and as he's as they're going to see this miracle of this man being healed from his paralysis he wants them to think what does that make Jesus to be I know they're not going to accept it some will some won't but he wants to make them think that the authority that can dismiss this paralysis is the authority that's able to forgive sins also that's what he really wants them to think as they see him healing this man and that's what he goes on to do but that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sin he said to the paralytic I say to you rise pick up your bed and go home now you can you can actually just imagine yourself there on the occasion and these words he said to the paralytic they're just the words of mark so all you would actually have if you were there on that occasion would be this but that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins I say to you and he'd be pointing to this man I say to you rise pick up your bed and go home there is the evidence of Jesus authority to forgive sins in other words he's really saying I am the saviour and giving proof that I am the saviour because what I'm able to do for this man is itself an indication of what

I'm able to do with sins you find the same authority of Jesus of course in the previous chapter not the first reference to his authority you find it there chapter 1 verses 25 to 27 authority to cast out demons authority to heal the sick as well where you find Simon's mother-in-law healed of that that fever instantly and she took her place and began serving them thing was instant so that follows into the passage here in in chapter 2 and there's the leper as well at the end of chapter 1 all of that shows the proof of who Jesus is he's not doing this just to be spectacular not so that people can say this man has fantastic ability he's doing that to actually show that his claim to be who he is is valid that he is the forgiver of sins that he is God present in the flesh here's a man who came to Jesus carried on a stretcher and he leaves Jesus carrying his stretcher it's a miracle it's an instant cure of his paralysis and of course what that is really saying is not just proof about Jesus and who he is but proof about this man's sins being forgiven verse 12 there is an evidence of the man actually being forgiven his sin you have to keep the thing joined together the way Jesus did the fact that he's able now to stand up carry his bed and move out of the place is evidence that what

[45 : 44] Jesus has said is true his sins are forgiven the person who's done this to him physically is the one who has authority to say your sins are forgiven the proof of the inward change is in the outward action that follows through into your Christian life how do you know that a person is a Christian well we cannot judge of course infallibly the way God does but the Bible is clear abundantly clear in many places that the Christian the the proof of a person being saved Christian in that sense the proof is in the outward life the greatest evidence of of being born again this holiness of life and it doesn't just apply to an individual it applies also to Christianity itself one of the best books you find on the miracles of Jesus is by a professor John Laidlaw a free church minister at the end of the 1800s died in the early 1900s 1904 I think but he's got a book the miracles of our Lord and I found it really incredibly useful in actually preparing for this this sermon today and this is what he says and is still absolutely relevant to our situation today he says the physical and social results of Christianity are the patent proofs of its reality because they flow from its spiritual power

Christianity has changed the face even of the civilized world it has elevated woman freed the slave repressed public cruelty promoted constitutional government spread the blessings of light and liberty wherever it has come it has built hospitals refuges asylums institutions unknown to the world without Christ and before Christ the gospel of Jesus has promoted the healing of men's bodies the opening of their minds the elevations of their morals because first and deepest it speaks always to the conscience and to the heart and has for its main business to put men right with God in other words what he's saying is the gospel is the means by which God puts our heart into the right condition and putting our heart into the right condition our sin forgiven our standing before God in righteousness established the fruit of that is how not only we live personally but how we are with helping others as well that's what he's saying that's what this passage also includes this wonderful response to Christ's inner power the Christ power inwardly is the outward reaction response the carrying of his bed the outward proof and indication that he's a changed man inwardly so attraction announcement authority and amazement the crowd were amazed and glorified God saying we never saw anything like this because what they had seen was beyond the normal i know people who don't accept the miraculous the way the bible brings it before us will always argue that you can't change the laws of nature well the laws of nature are God established laws and the one who established the laws of nature has every right and every authority to actually set them aside if he sees fit for any purpose of his own so this is beyond normal and what he said here while it was to make these people think that crowd what you're reading here in this passage that mark has given us that is now part of the bible the authoritative word of God we are reading this today and we are dealing with this today and thinking about this today to make us think it's not about how we feel that's pretty much what you see nowadays that have had emphasis on feelings rather than what you think but the bible always begins with the mind before it moves to the emotions of the feelings and today as you and i look at this passage and read this miracle that took place here in Capernaum what is this is what we should be saying who is this person what is this about and who is this for the way it's written here well it's for me and it's for you so that we too will stand in amazement as we come to know the power of God in our own lives vaccines vaccines are crucial in a pandemic we're so thankful that vaccines are now becoming available in the crisis that we're in they are going to be of immense value to us but there's something even more important something to give priority to the way Jesus did with this man son your sins are forgiven even

more crucial than a pandemic than a vaccine in a pandemic is the forgiveness of our sins to be in a right standing with God because we can survive a pandemic and still be lost eternally or on the other hand we may die from a virus but still be saved forever in Christ that's the reality friends that's the kind of thinking this passage should actually bring us to to do to engage in we never saw anything like this because there's nothing else like this you can't find it anywhere else the authority to forgive sins do you know that for yourself son your sins are forgiven is that true of me today is that true of me today is it true of you do you have that in place in your life because if you do whatever else happens you have the first thing that you need to have the forgiveness of your sins may god bless our thoughts on his word today let's conclude by singing um in uh psalm 32 psalm 32 this is in the sing psalms version on page 38 i'll sing to the tune orlington but psalm 32 verses 1 to 5 how blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sin whose sins are covered in from god's face whose sins are covered in from god's face whose debt is cancelled in god's grace there's no deceit in him in him verses 1 to 5 psalm 32 how blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sin whose sins are covered whose sins are covered in from god's face whose debt is cancelled in god's grace there's no deceit in him when i kept silent all my bones where groaning where worn out beneath your hand i felt and trapped oh day and night my strength was i felt as in a summer as in a summer a summer drought then i i did my sin to you the guilt that lay within i said o lord i have i have transgressed and you forgive when i confess you pardoned all my

sin thank you again for joining us for this service of worship we trust that it's been of benefit to you that you'll know god's blessing and his keeping in these days to come do please join again if you can this evening when the service will be conducted by rev and kenny i mcLeod that's at 6 30 this evening he's going to be preaching from the book of ruth now the benediction now may grace and mercy and peace from god the father the son and the holy spirit be with you now and evermore amen thank you