

Meet Jesus, Find Forgiveness

Mark 2:1-12

I'm Andy

Transcripts/Outlines

Bibles in the foyer

All 3 of the next talks from Mark's gospel

Over the next 3 weeks

Christianity Explored

Gospel of Mark in the foyer with postcard and QR code

Tuesday Oct 7

Pray

In September 1928 Scottish researcher Alexander Fleming was studying the influenza virus

He was often described as a careless scientist with a messy and disorganised lab

This meant that when he returned from summer vacation

A petri dish containing a staphylococcus culture was cross contaminated with a mold

Upon examining the culture more carefully

He noticed that the mold was inhibiting the growth of the bacteria

That mold was called penicillium

Fleming had just discovered the world's first antibiotic

And years later penicillin would be mass produced and would go on to save millions of lives

Fleming wrote in a report

"One sometimes finds what one is not looking for. When I woke up just after dawn on Sept. 28, 1928, I certainly didn't plan to revolutionize all medicine by discovering the world's first antibiotic, or bacteria killer. But I guess that was exactly what I did."

The people in the bible passage today

Came to Jesus looking for one thing

And a seemingly obvious mistake by Jesus

Gave them something far more important

Something that would go on to save billions of lives

Three things we're going to look at in our passage in Mark chapter 2

Our Deepest Need

His Greatest Authority

The Right Response

Firstly, our Deepest Need

At the start of the gospel of Mark

The early days of Jesus's ministry took place in the north of Israel

Around the region of Lake Galilee

And it was in this region that Jesus began his public ministry

Of preaching, driving out demons and healing sickness

So spectacular was the ministry of Jesus

That word spread and many people flocked to see him.

And so in our passage

We find Jesus is in the town of Capernaum

Near the northern tip of this massive lake
And it was a sort of home base at this time of his ministry
In chapter 1, we learn of Jesus spending time at Simon and Andrew's house
Two of his disciples, so it is most likely their family home

We're told in verse two of chapter 2 that true to form,
The house is packed full of people
And as is Jesus' usual practice,
He takes the opportunity to teach the bible to the crowd

And before you know it, Jesus is upstaged by what's happening above him

Chunks of straw, dried mud and reeds start
Falling from the ceiling in chunks
And eventually a shaft of light beams down from the rafters
As the hole in the roof gets larger and larger
More light floods down into the room
Then the unthinkable happens
A paralysed man is lowered down on a mat
Four of his friends lowering each corner carefully so he doesn't tip out

Now the first thing to note is that everyone needs friends like these four guys
These are good mates that come through for you when you need them
The crowd blocked their way to Jesus
But when you get four men together you get problem solvers
And where there's a will, there's a way
Yes it involves a bit of property damage but all for a good cause
They loved their paralysed friend enough to find a way to get him to Jesus
And it's clear to everyone in the room that he's there for healing
He and his mates, want him to walk again
And so over to you Jesus.
All eyes in the crowd are fixed on Jesus

Verse 5

Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

I can imagine one of the disciples standing Jesus
Psst. Jesus, you've made a mistake
Read the room.
It's his legs.
His legs don't work
He hasn't come for forgiveness.

Of course Jesus knows that the issue is his legs.
And Jesus could have healed him there and then
As he does many times in the gospels
And I want to make clear
I don't think Jesus is saying that this man's sin against God is causing his paralysis
No I think what Jesus is doing is he's teaching something
He's teaching us something about the human condition
Our needs are relative, not all our needs are equally important

The need to walk is a huge and genuine need
But Jesus wants us to see that our deepest need.
Is the need to be forgiven for our sin against God.

Psychology students learn about Maslow's hierarchy of needs
Which is a theory that human motivation is based on a pyramid of needs
Once you meet basic survival needs like food, water and shelter
You then move higher up the pyramid
To needs like emotional and personal growth
Now whether or not you agree with Maslow's model
All of us *rank* our needs don't we
We would say that some needs rank higher than others
For example, when you're young
You rank the need for wealth quite highly because you have no money
And when you're young you don't think twice about your health
But as you get older and accumulate more wealth
The need for health then outranks the need for wealth
because your body starts to break down as you age
When you start your work career you're ambitious
You have a need for recognition and status
But as you get older the need for peaceful relationships becomes much more important
Than ambition

I want to ask you this question
How would you rank your need for forgiveness?

In thinking about this bible passage this week I did a thought experiment
I thought of the most important relationships in my life
And what it meant to me to have forgiveness and love from these people
And then I thought what if I was the paralytic lying on that mat
I would have an overwhelming need to walk again and feel more fulfilled and productive

And then I thought, what if I had to choose between forgiveness and walking?
What if I could have the use of my legs for the next 30 years
But then die knowing that Emma,
My wife didn't love me or forgive me for the ways I've hurt her

Or here's the second option
I would be paralysed for the next 30 years
And die in peace knowing that Emma loved me and forgave me
In all honesty, I would prefer both walking and forgiveness

But in truth, I would give up walking
In order to have love and forgiveness from my wife
But here's the thing right
Love and forgiveness from God is even more important to me than that of my wife
As much as I love Emma
God is my Creator, he has shown me nothing but kindness and grace
And for all the ways that I have sinned against Him in spite of what He's done for me
That is a mountain load of debt that cannot be repaid.

And here is Jesus willing to forgive that debt

How did Jen describe forgiveness in the video?

I could never make up for the sins I've committed

Having Jesus pay the debt

Is a huge relief, a weight lifted because you're loved

Think of all your needs you're facing

And I'm sure there are many

How would you rank your deep, deep need for forgiveness?

This brings us to our second point

His Greatest Authority

Some people in the crowd would have thought that Jesus forgiving the paralytic's sins

Was irrelevant to his needs

But there's a group of people in the crowd

Who think that Jesus is impertinent

Look at verse 6

⁶But some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts: ⁷"Why does he speak like this? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

The scribes were religious experts in the Old Testament Law

And they were aligned with another group called the Pharisees who often opposed Jesus

Their focus in the gospel of Mark is to catch out Jesus for doing the wrong thing

And so they accuse Jesus of blaspheming,

Making light of God by saying that he could forgive sins

The Bible is clear that only God can forgive sins.

And so the question being raised by the Scribes is one of authority?

Sin is an offence against God

And so only God has the authority to forgive sin

And so Jesus is claiming an authority that he has no right to claim

And at one level they're absolutely right.

Imagine at the end of the service you're backing your car out of the car park

And you happen to crash into my car

Who has the authority to forgive you for doing that?

That would be me because it's my car.

I would need to forgive you.

But then imagine if someone else saw us talking

And then ran up to you and they said that they forgive you

For crashing into my car?

Well that's a bit offensive to me isn't it?

What authority do they have to forgive when it's my car?

So what authority does Jesus have to forgive sin against God?

Verse 8

⁸ Right away Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were thinking like this within themselves and said to them, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat, and walk’?

To demonstrate his authority to the scribes
Jesus meets their question with a question of his own?
Which is easier?
To forgive the man’s sin
Or to make him walk again?
Of course both are quite impossible for the average person
But what we see in the bible is that people chosen by God
Were able to heal people of sickness
Prophets in the Old Testament
And apostles of Jesus in the New Testament could heal
But in the Bible only God forgives sin
So it would seem that at least on the surface
It is easier to heal the man’s legs than to forgive his sins
And physical healing of his legs is definitely more visible
Than the spiritual healing of his relationship with God
But what Jesus is claiming
is that he has authority to do both
And if he can do one – making him walk
He can also do the other – forgive his sins

And so Jesus puts himself on the line
Verse 10

¹⁰ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” —he told the paralytic— ¹¹ “I tell you: get up, take your mat, and go home.”

Jesus often gives himself that title Son of Man
And it has a special meaning
Because on first reading it seems like it could just be referring to being human
As in “a Son of a Man”
But in the book of Daniel it says this about the Son of Man in chapter 7

I continued watching in the night visions, and suddenly one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him. He was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away.

The Ancient of Days is God who gives all authority to rule over the earth
To one like a son of man
And so Jesus with full awareness
Is using this term to describe his own authority
He has God’s authority to rule
He has God’s authority to heal
He has God’s authority to forgive

And as they say, the proof is in the pudding
Verse 12

¹² Immediately he got up, took the mat, and went out in front of everyone.

Jesus performed a stunning miracle in front of everyone in that room.

Showing His show stopping authority.

I've been running the Christianity Explored course here at this church for a number of years
And from what I've observed

The hardest thing about Christianity is not believing in miracles like this

There is eyewitness evidence both Christian and non-Christian

That Jesus existed and that people worshipped him like they did God

And that he performed miracles, even rising from the dead himself

And I think that when you read a gospel like Mark for yourself

And you see what Jesus said, and what he did

There's a high likelihood that you will *acknowledge* the authority of Jesus

But once you've acknowledged Jesus' authority

The hardest thing is actually *surrendering* your authority to his authority

It's not easy to confess your need for forgiveness

It's not easy to admit your need for help from Jesus

And none of us like to hand over the steering wheel of our lives to someone else

But that is a requirement for becoming a Christian

It is to surrender your life to the authority of Jesus Christ

It is to repent, to change the direction of your life from one of sinning against God

To one of trusting Jesus and following him with all your life

Sometimes we find it difficult to hand over authority to someone else

Because we don't trust how they will use that authority

And that is hard if you've ever experienced abuse or controlling behaviour

Often we find it difficult to hand over authority because we're just proud

And we think we know best

What if there was someone else who could do a better job

What if there was someone who not only had the authority to run your life better

And could produce an outcome much better for you and for others in your life

If only you would surrender your authority to them.

I believe that Jesus took this opportunity to talk about forgiveness of sins

Right at the start of Mark's gospel

Because he was leaving a breadcrumb pointing to his ultimate destination
and that is the cross

For the rest of Mark's gospel

Jesus is on a mission to save the world

And it is a mission that leads to the cross in order to save sinners like us

Because the only way that the sins of the paralytic and our sins can be forgiven

Is if Jesus dies as a sacrifice for that sin

On the cross, Jesus is our substitute

He dies in our place, taking the punishment for our sin

And there he pays the debt

He wipes the slate clean

And He gives us peace with God,

You can just rest and know that you're a child of God who belongs to her Father

Listen to how Jesus talks about his authority in relation to the cross
From John chapter 10

¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

I have the authority to lay down my life and to take it up again.
Jesus is talking about dying on the cross
And being raised to new life after three days
Jesus has full authority, given by God to willingly sacrifice his life for others
To demonstrate his identity as the Son of God His Father

All of us have experienced authority that is selfish and self-serving
Power that is arrogant and takes advantage of the weak
But how many of us know authority
That willingly and lovingly sacrifices for the good of those who hurt him and hate him
Authority that loves and cares for the weak and the vulnerable
That is the authority of Jesus

Will you surrender to His greatest authority?

Our final point is **The Right Response**
There are three different groups mentioned by Mark who respond to Jesus.

We’ve already met the Scribes

Who are immediately sceptical and biased against Jesus
And throughout the gospel we meet more people like the Scribes
The Pharisees, the Herodians, the chief priest
Regardless of the miracles they see
Or any of Jesus’ teaching,
They are determined to oppose Jesus
In fact in the next chapter of Mark’s gospel, early in the ministry of Jesus,
They are already plotting his death.

Don’t let your response be like that of the Scribes.
With hearts pre-hardened towards Jesus.
Lower your defensive walls and you might be surprised by the Jesus you meet in the gospels
Remember what Jen said in the video:
For years she trash talked something she knew nothing about
But if someone had introduced her to the Jesus of the bible
She might have known him sooner

Unlike the Scribes,
There’s another group who saw what Jesus said and did.
The crowd gathered in that house saw Jesus heal the paralytic
And they are filled with shock and awe
They are so astounded at what they’ve seen in Jesus
That they give glory to God
“We have never seen anything like this” they said

And that is what church is for those of us who've met Jesus
We meet every week to give glory to God
We are so astounded by Jesus
And what he has done in our lives that we sing His praises
That we want to tell others how great He is
And that's what he want to do for you today
We don't want your money
We're not trying to get you to join a cult
We want you to meet the Jesus that we've met.
That you might find the love and forgiveness that you long for
So that you will give God the glory.

The group I wanted to focus on

Is the four friends of the paralytic.

It was their faith that Jesus responded to in verse 5
And as we're going to see for the next two weeks as we meet other people
In the gospel of Mark who met Jesus
Jesus responds to faith
Faith in the bible can also be translated trust or belief
In Mark's gospel
I like to call Faith – DDT
Desperate Dependent Trust
Because the Faith shown by people in the gospel of Mark
Is often desperate and dependent
They come to Jesus because they have no other options.
And often that faith is not neat and tidy
It doesn't always know all that much about Jesus
It doesn't always get Jesus right
And sometimes that faith might be a bit shaky
But it's pointed in the direction of Jesus

The thing about Jesus,
Is that he can work with this kind of faith
He can work with people who are messy and broken
People who have a past that they carry immense guilt about
People who are trying to be good all the time but failing
People who are pretending but only fooling themselves
People racked with doubts
If this is you, Jesus welcomes you
Just as he welcomed these men to dig through Simon and Andrew's roof
And lower their friend down to him

And with whatever meagre faith we bring Jesus
Jesus is incredibly generous and compassionate
He can do even more than we ask or imagine
These four friends trusted that Jesus could do something about their friend's legs
And he walked way not only using his own legs
But he walked away with a heart forgiven by God of sin he could never pay for

For some of you, it's still early in your journey and we're glad you're here
And we invite you to come again

Faith is based on facts, it's not blind faith
So that's why we run Christianity Explored
So you can find out more of the facts about Jesus
We want you to meet Him before making a decision about putting your faith in Him.

But maybe some of you are like Jen
You've walked into a church
Because God is stirring something up in you to follow Jesus
And you might be ready to make a commitment to Jesus

It's as simple as **Sorry, Thank You, Please**

Dear God,
I'm sorry for my sin
Thank you for Jesus and his willingness to forgive my sins
on the cross.
Please help me to follow Jesus with my life.
Amen

Praying something like this.
Is the Right Response of Faith
And like Jen, it will change your life forever.

I wonder what you came to church looking for today?
As Alexander Fleming said
One sometimes finds what one is not looking for?
You might have come today, looking for something else.
But my prayer, my hope is that in meeting Jesus
You will find the forgiveness that will bring you peace