09. The Gospel of Mark—2:1-12

"Jesus, the Forgiver of Sins"

(10/25/26)

Let me set this up by saying that one of the things the Jewish people believed about their Messiah, as foretold in their Scriptures, was that he would have the power to work miracles and heal the sick—

Isaiah 35:5-6a (NKJV)
5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing…

This they believed would be the one sign that would prove and authenticate His ministry as the one and only true Messiah of Israel.

Luke 7:19–23 (NKJV)
19 And John, calling two of his disciples to *him,* sent *them* to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" 20 When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' " 21 And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. 22 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the* blind see, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. 23 And blessed is *he* who is not offended because of Me."

However, we need to understand that Jesus' miracles were not only designed to authenticate His ministry as Messiah, but to demonstrate His love and compassion for hurting people—especially those who were the least of society.

Mark 2:1-2 (NKJV)
1 And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. 2 Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them,* not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.

So, Mark tells us that this incident took place in Capernaum.

As we have said, most of Jesus' public ministry was conducted up in the Galilee region and Capernaum became His headquarters where He performed more miracles and healings than anywhere else.

In fact, by this time, it was already referred to as *"His own city."* (Matt. 9.1)

Mark 2:3 (NKJV)
[3] Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men.*

Matthew reads, ***"Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed."*** **(Matt. 9:2)**

Since this man was brought to Jesus while lying on a bed it indicated that his paralysis was severe and may have even affected his vocal cords.

In those days there were no wheelchairs and so those with severe forms of paralysis were dependent upon others to carry them around.

In this man's case, he had four devoted friends who carried him to Jesus that day.

What you need to understand is that in Jewish culture back then they believed that all disease and physical infirmities were the result of sin—either the sin of the person afflicted or the sin of his parents if he was *born* with a physical problem like blindness, paralysis or some other genetic defect.

I believe this attitude was clearly reflected in the disciples' question to Jesus as they passed a man who had been blind from birth:

John 9:2–3 (NKJV)
[2] And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" [3] Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.

Now while it is true that sickness is ultimately the result of sin (Adam's sin)—not all sickness is brought on by some specific sin in the life of the person who is suffering.

Mark 2:3–4 (NKJV)
3 Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. **4 And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.**

The roofs of houses back then were flat and often used as patios—a place for relaxation in the cool of the day and frequently were used for sleeping on during hot summer nights.

Therefore, they made outside stairs connected to the side of the house that led up to the roof.

Because the paralyzed man's friends could not get into the crowded room where Jesus was, they carried the stretcher up the stairs to the top of the house and proceeded to dismantle the roof tiles until they made enough room to lower the man into Jesus' presence.

One of the things I love about this story was the tenacity of this man's four friends.

Theirs was a strong faith that Jesus could and would heal their friend—but they also put *"feet to their faith"* and acted upon it by bringing him to Jesus and didn't give up when it looked like they wouldn't be able to finish their mission.

Thank the Lord for those who *"carry us to Jesus"* (in prayer) when our walk is *"paralyzed"* through suffering or grief, or even through backsliding and disobedience!

In Scripture we are called to persevere in the face of obstacles and to keep pressing on until we see the obstacle overcome and the victory won.

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)
9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

And yet, all too often we do 'lose heart' and give up when we face some opposition or obstacle—or when the problem isn't overcome quickly enough.

- William Wilberforce fought for 20 years to abolish the slave trade in Britain.

- Thomas Edison tried thousands of fibers (6000 plant fibers alone) before he found one that would make the incandescent light bulb a reality.

When his critics tried to discourage Edison by pointing out all the times he had failed he responded, *"I haven't failed (X number of times) I have ruled out (X number of possibilities)."*

It's amazing how two people can look at the same event, and one sees defeat while another sees an opportunity for success and or victory (David with Goliath).

Henry Ford said this during the Great Depression—*"Many people think these are bad times but actually these are good times—the problem is only a few people know it."*

What others saw as *tragedy* Ford saw as *opportunity*—in his case the opportunity to make money, while for us as Christians an opportunity to glorify God and save souls!

Your perspective of life will determine your persistence in life—whether you see a situation from the eyes of flesh or with the eyes of faith!

Mark 2:5 (NKJV)
5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

Matthew 9:2 says, ***"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."***

When Jesus said to the paralyzed man, **"Son, be of good cheer"** He was saying, ***"You no longer need to feel condemned or afraid—I am going to help you!"***

I would imagine that when this man heard Jesus say that his heart must have leaped for joy—only to come crashing down at the sound of what Jesus said next—**"your sins are forgiven you."**

I'm sure that the friends of this guy, who were up on the roof probably still holding onto the ropes they used to lower his bed into the room, were saying to themselves,

"No, no, no, Lord, that's not why we brought him here. We brought him here so he could get healed. We want him to be able to walk. We don't care about his sins!"

Most people today don't care about the 'sin' in their life—because most people don't take sin seriously, and therefore they think sin is 'no big deal'—if they believe in sin at all! (Comment)

What they don't realize is that sin is real and is a 'big deal' to God—and therefore must be dealt with and forgiven before the blessings of God can flow into a person's life (salvation primarily).

Isaiah 59:1–2 (NLT)
[1] Listen! The Lord's arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call. [2] It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

Mark 2:6–7 (NKJV)
[6] And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, [7] "Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" [Amen!]

The scribes immediately understood the significance of that statement and what Jesus was declaring by saying it.

They were the scholars who copied the Jewish scriptures by hand and meticulously studied them every day—in fact, some of them had memorized them verbatim and could recite them from memory without missing a single syllable!

And they knew that only God can forgive sins and therefore anyone who professed to forgive sins was claiming to be God—which was blasphemy!

One author said with regard to this—

"Up to this point, their logic was correct. But instead of acknowledging the Lord Jesus to be God, they accused Him in their hearts of speaking blasphemies.

And yet, Jesus knew what the man's real need was and what his greatest need was. What good was it if the man had two whole legs and walked right into hell with them.

Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. It meets the greatest need; it costs the greatest price; and it brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting results."

Mark 2:8–12a (NKJV)

8 But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?
9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, '*Your* sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, 11 "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." 12 Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all…

Several things we need to look at.

First of all, Jesus' statement in verse 9, **"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, '*Your* sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?"**

Well, in my mind, it's a lot easier to say, ***"Your sins are forgiven",*** because no one can tell whether or not anything really happened!

No one can verify whether or not someone's sins have actually been forgiven—they can't see a person's sins being wiped away and disappear before their eyes—"*Oh wow, your sins are gone*!"

But if you're paralyzed, and I say to you, *"Get up out of that bed or wheelchair and walk"*—well that's a lot tougher because now I'm giving people something they can observe, some kind of tangible evidence they can see to confirm something supernatural has taken place.

And of course, if the paralyzed person doesn't get up and walk—then everyone's going to know I'm a phony!

Now as God, Jesus of course did have the power to forgive sins—but no one would have been able to see that happen and therefore no one could have verified it.

So, Jesus in effect uses their own theology against them—you say, *"How so?"*

Well, the Scribes and Pharisees believed that all sickness and handicaps were the result of sin and couldn't be cured until the sin was forgiven.

Evan as well-known rabbi said, *"No sick person is cured from sickness, until all his sins are forgiven him."*

This was a common belief among the Jewish people at that time—that all sickness and physical handicaps were the result of sin and couldn't be healed until the sin had been forgiven.

So that when Jesus said to this paralyzed man, *"Your sins are forgiven, arise, take up your bed and walk"*—and he did! it should have been proof positive to all His critics that He had the power to forgive sins.

And since *they* said**—"Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7)**

They should have fallen on their faces and worshipped Jesus as God and Messiah!

But of course, they didn't because their hearts were too hardened by this time.

Mark 2:12 (NKJV)
12 Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, **so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw *anything* like this!"**

Of course, the crowd was impressed which was no surprise, as someone has said, *"The 'mind-less multitude is always entertained by the supernatural* (or by the pseudo supernatural)*."*

However, the point of Jesus doing this miracle wasn't to *entertain* but to enlighten that He had the power to forgive sins—and since only God can forgive sin, it proved that Jesus was in fact God incarnate.

Let me say this—the greatest problem facing the human race isn't Islamic fundamentalism; it isn't global warming; it isn't world hunger, or disease, or if we're talking about America, it isn't even the economy.

The greatest problem facing the human race is and always has been the problem of sin!

Which is what Jesus came the first time to do—He came to save us from our sins!

And yet because we live in the physical universe we tend to focus on the physical more than the spiritual.

So, people come to God wanting Him to fix their marriages, heal their bodies, supply their needs—focusing on the temporal and neglecting the eternal.

But God is far more concerned with our eternal good than our temporal comforts—and in fact will often allow physical problems and pain to break us of self and bring us to (or back to) Jesus.

The word **'forgiveness'** basically means to *'send away'*—but in the sense of sending away a debt that was owed.

In the Jewish mind all sin was looked upon as a *debt* that was owed to God which is why they brought God an animal as payment under the Old Covenant sacrificial system.

Israel's greatest holy day of the year was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

On that day the high priest selected two unblemished sacrificial goats—one goat was killed, and its blood was sprinkled on the altar as a sacrifice.

Then the high priest placed his hands on the head of the other goat, confessing all the sins of the nation onto this *'scape goat'* which was then taken out deep into the wilderness—so far that it could never find its way back

This symbolized that all the sins of the people went with the goat, never to return to them again (Leviticus 16:7-10).

But that enactment, as beautiful and meaningful as it was—did not actually remove the people's sins—and they all knew it.

It was but a picture of what only God Himself in Christ could do.

That it was only through the shedding of the blood of the innocent, sinless Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, Who took the sins of the world upon His own head, as it were, and carried them an infinite distance away where they could never return or be held against us ever again!

And yet it is tragic that many Christians seem ignorant of this reality—and as such they remain guilty and depressed over their failings and their sins—feeling condemned!

Many Christians are depressed because they feel God is mad at them, that He is holding their sins against them—forgetting that, because God has taken their sins upon Himself, they are separated from those sins *"as far as the east is from the west"* (Ps. 103:12).

Micah 7:19 (NIV)
19 You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

John 8:3–11 (NKJV)

[3] Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had
set her in the midst, [4] they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very
act. [5] Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?”
[6] This they said, testing Him, that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus
stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear. [7] So when
they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin
among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” [8] And again He stooped down and wrote on the
ground. [9] Then those who heard *it,* being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one,
beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in
the midst. [10] When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her,
“Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” [11] She said, “No one,
Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

Jesus is saying that sinlessness is the only thing that qualifies a person to condemn another.

Remember that next time you pick up stones to throw at someone to condemn them remember what group that associates you with.

There's a very powerful lesson that Jesus is teaching us through this story—and that is that God treats sinners with mercy, grace and forgiveness.

The only one who had the right to throw a stone that day—didn't!

The only one who has a right to condemn us is Jesus—but He wants to forgive us not condemn us!

Jesus looked at this guilty sinner with love in His eyes and called her ‘woman’—the same Greek word He used to address His own mother by.

It was a term of respect not a degrading or derogatory term.

Here is this woman standing naked before Him (as we all will someday as Heb. 4:13 tells us), who just moments earlier had been involved in sexual immorality.

She stands before Him as a guilty, humiliated sinner, the object of scorn by the crowd and yet Jesus gazes into her eyes and calls her 'madam'—not whore, sinner or looser but lady!

I don't know what sin you're involved in—maybe like this woman it's adultery.

And maybe you think that God is looking down on you for it, that He looks at you and says, *"You worthless sinner—looser! Get out of My sight!"* But nothing could be farther from the truth—

John 3:16 (NKJV)
16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

If you come to Jesus and receive the forgiveness He is offering you—He will forgive you (1John 1:9)—but go and sin no more!

He didn't say to this woman, *"I don't condemn you—go."*

If He had, we would have concluded that He didn't care how we lived our lives, that sin wasn't a big deal to God—but that is not true.

Sin *is* a big deal to God since it cost the life of His Son to pay for sin—all sin.

Just because salvation is free—doesn't mean it came cheap!

God loves you and wants to forgive you, your sins—but He doesn't want you to keep on sinning, because sin destroys every blessing God has given you—your health, your marriage, your walk, your ministry etc.