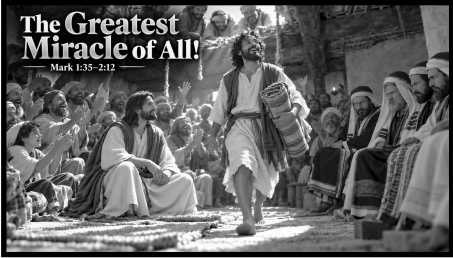


The Greatest Miracle of All!

Mark 1:35-2:21



4: The Greatest Miracle of All! (Mark 1:35-2:21)

What if your greatest need isn't the one you've been asking God to meet? Today we see "The Greatest Miracle of All" and discover why four words from Jesus—"Your sins are forgiven"—matter more than we may realize.

beourguest

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teachingnotes

* All Scripture is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise mentioned.

Mark 1:35-37

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and made his way to a deserted place; and there **he was praying**. Simon and his companions searched for him, "Everyone is looking for you."

If Jesus - God in skin - needed to PRAY, maybe I need to follow His example.

✓ *BEFORE going to serve others, Time with the Father was His First Pursuit*

The disciples were concerned when they woke up and Jesus was gone. They **searched for Him**. This Greek term means to **diligently follow after** or **track down**¹ or **hunt for**.²

Mark 1:38-39

And he said to them, "Let's go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come."

He went into all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out **demons**.

Then a man with leprosy came to him and, on his knees, begged him, "If you are willing, **you can make me clean.**"

Several different untreatable skin diseases were called **leprosy**. Leviticus 13-14 gives the command to quarantine the person with a skin disease to see if it would heal or spread. If it continued to get worse, in order not to infect others, the person was kicked out of the community.

Leviticus 13:45-46 The person who has a case of serious skin disease is to have his clothes torn and his hair hanging loose, and **he must cover his mouth and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean!'** He will remain unclean as long as he has the disease; **he is unclean**. He must live alone in a place outside the camp.

Can you imagine what that would mean? Fathers & mothers, sons & daughters forced to leave their families.

Beyond the physical struggles, *this disease caused them to become social & spiritual outcasts*. Leprosy left them with nowhere else to turn. So this disfigured man with open sores & dirty clothes entered the town crying 'unclean, unclean'. He approached Jesus humbly **on his knees, begging Jesus for help**. His one wish was to be made **clean**.

He had no other options. He was desperate & needy. He trusted that Jesus COULD heal but didn't know if Jesus WOULD heal.³

✠ This man's approach illustrates how sinners like US should approach Jesus. - humble, needy, desperate, & asking for something that we cannot do ourselves, "**Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.**"

Lepers were used to people moving AWAY from them, not moving TOWARD them. But check out what Jesus did.

Mark 1:41-42

Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. "I am willing," he told him. "Be made clean."

Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

*Did Jesus NEED to **touch him** to heal him?* No. Unlike others, Jesus wasn't concerned about being infected.

☀ **NT Wright** says: "It worked the other way round. His [Jesus'] cleanness, his healing power, 'infected' the man."³

Imagine the isolation. Imagine how long it might have been since someone willingly reached out to touch him. Now Jesus reaches out His hand. And after Jesus touches him, everyone could see that the leprosy was suddenly GONE - immediately clean!

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 330.

² William Arndt et al., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 516.

³ Tom Wright, Luke for Everyone (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 57.

Mark 1:43-45

Then he sternly warned him and sent him away at once, telling him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go and **show yourself to the priest**, and **offer what Moses commanded for your cleansing**, as a testimony to them." Yet he went out and began to proclaim it widely and to spread the news, with the result that Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. But he was out in deserted places, and **they came to him from everywhere**.

Jesus wanted this man to obey the Old Testament command for the priest to examine the person and declare him clean. After a week of sacrifices & physicals this man would be able to rejoin his family & his community never to cry 'Unclean' again! But this man didn't obey Jesus' command to keep quiet, telling everybody he could about what Jesus had done for him.

➡ His excitement was understandable, but even our enthusiasm needs to submit to Jesus.

As a result of telling everyone, Jesus and his disciples couldn't quietly enter these towns surrounding the lake. Instead, His celebrity status meant Jesus would have to meet people way outside the towns.

Mark 2:1-4

When he entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that he was at home. **So many people gathered together that there was no more room**, not even in the doorway, and he was speaking the word to them. They came to him bringing a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after digging through it, **they lowered the mat on which the paralytic was lying**.

These men are '*whatever it takes*' kind of friends. When there were too many people to get inside, they changed tactics, got him up to the roof, and then made a mess out of Peter & Andrew's roof!

Based on archaeological findings, these homes could not support much more than a thatch roof which consisted of wooden cross beams overlaid with reeds, branches, & dried mud.⁴ These faithful friends did all this difficult work because *they expected Jesus to heal him*. **Jesus saw their faith**.

Mark 2:5-7

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

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

These 4 friends wanted their paralyzed friend to WALK again. *All this effort to hear, "Your sins are forgiven."*

The scribes thought Jesus was **blaspheming**. A priest could pronounce that a person was forgiven on behalf of God after repentance, restitution, & sacrifice (Lev. 4; 5; 16; 17:11), but *Jesus was bypassing the temple, the priests, and the sacrificial system altogether - as if HE was forgiving sins*. No wonder they thought Jesus was **blaspheming** - a word that means "to speak harm."

Blasphemy is an attitude of disrespect...directed against the character of God. Sometimes people would 1) speak evil about God or even 2) claim to be God.

✓ *WE can forgive others for their sins against US.*

✗ *WE CAN'T forgive their sin against God.*

✝ THIS is what Jesus claimed, **to have authority to forgive sins on behalf of God**.

If only God can forgive sin, and Jesus claims to forgive sin, then He is claiming to have the authority of God..and in their eyes, this is **blasphemy** - a most serious accusation, since the Scriptural punishment for **blaspheming** was death by stoning.

Leviticus 24:15-16 LSB And you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If anyone curses his God, then he will bear his sin. 'Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of Yahweh shall surely **be put to death**; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.

This isn't the only time Jesus is accused of **blasphemy**. The people picked up stones to kill Jesus several times after this (Jn 8:58-59; 10:31-33). In fact, the accusation of **blaspheming** is what condemned Him to the cross (Mt 26:65).

Mark 2:8-9

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?"

Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat, and walk'?

It's **easier to SAY 'Your sins are forgiven.'** because no one can SEE it. But if you were to SAY '**Get up and walk**' then the audience WOULD see whether it happened or not.

*What if Jesus really COULD forgive sin? Wouldn't THAT be **The Greatest Miracle of All**?* Think about it. Let's say Jesus heals this man - a great miracle, but the guy dies 20 years later. He walked for 20 years but what is 20 years of health compared to eternity in hell? From THAT perspective, **The Greatest Miracle of All** would NOT be physical healing.

The Greatest Miracle of All is 4 words: Your Sins Are Forgiven!

⁴ David E. Garland, Mark, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 93.

We might be focused on what we consider an **immediate need**: health, wealth, successful relationships, successful business, popularity, & authority. *But what if we have ALL THAT...and die without seeking the **Greatest Miracle of All** - our **ULTIMATE need**...hearing those 4 precious words: **'Your sins are forgiven'***

⑦ *Saying **this is one thing**, but how could anyone know that it actually happened - **that his sins were really forgiven**, since that would be something that happens on the INSIDE of the man?*

Mark 2:10-12

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

Immediately **he got up**, took the mat, and went out in front of everyone. As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, **“We have never seen anything like this!”**

These people have not only seen Jesus heal all kinds of diseases, cast out demons, and teach unlike anyone they ever heard, now he stands toe to toe with the religious leaders - the scribes - **CLAIMING** and then **PROVING** that He can do more than heal the body. **JESUS can heal the SOUL!**



▶ Ask Jesus to make you CLEAN.

Your deepest need is something you cannot fix yourself. Come to Jesus humbly and ask for His forgiveness.

▶ Schedule time with God this week.

Pull out your calendar and schedule time to get alone with Him to pray & open the Scriptures.

▶ Meet the IMMEDIATE need and open a door to the ULTIMATE NEED.

- **Sunday, October 18** we will meet together at the Fellowship Campus for **Love LOUD** - breakfast @ 8:30am, worship, & short devotion. Then we will launch into our community to meet **IMMEDIATE needs** & address their **ULTIMATE needs**.

Let's be 'whatever it takes' kind of friends who want our friends to hear the 4 precious words: 'Your sins are forgiven.'
Pray for their salvation. **Serve** their **IMMEDIATE NEEDS**. **Share** Jesus - their **ULTIMATE NEED**.

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives**: **Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Derek & Emily Beaty** (813-763-4421), or **Chris & Caitlin Day** (850-673-7920), **Glen & Margie Peacock** (850-464-1484).

Discussion questions

These questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your family, friends, or small group.

1. If you could ask God to change one thing in your life right now, what would it be? Why is that need especially important to you?
2. Read Mark 1:35-39. Jesus made time to pray even when people were looking for Him. What competes with your time with God? What would it take to schedule time with Him this week?
3. Read Mark 1:40-42. The man believed Jesus **could** make him clean but wondered whether He **would**. When have you struggled with that same uncertainty? What stands out about Jesus' response?
4. Jesus reached out and touched a man others would have avoided. Who might feel overlooked or excluded in our community? What could it look like for us to move toward them with compassion?
5. Read Mark 1:43-45. The healed man's actions made it harder for Jesus to enter towns openly. How can good intentions or excitement lead us to overlook what Jesus actually asks of us?
6. Read Mark 2:1-5. What do the four friends' actions reveal about their faith? What obstacles keep us from helping our friends come to Jesus?
7. Imagine watching the man being lowered through the roof. How might you have reacted when Jesus first said, "Your sins are forgiven"? What does His response reveal about needs we can easily overlook?
8. Read Mark 2:6-12. Why did the scribes object to Jesus' words? How did healing the man demonstrate His authority to forgive sins?

9. How does knowing Jesus cares about both physical suffering and forgiveness shape the way we pray for ourselves and serve others?
10. Is it possible to spend time talking **about** God while neglecting time talking **to** Him? How can we recognize that pattern and change it?
11. Think of one person whose immediate need you could help meet. How could you serve them with genuine care while looking for a natural opportunity to talk about Jesus?
12. What is your next step this week: ask Jesus for forgiveness, schedule time with God, or become a “whatever it takes” friend? What specifically will you do, and how can this group support you?
13. **Close in prayer:** Thank Jesus for His compassion and authority to forgive. Pray for the people you hope to serve, opportunities to share His hope, and faith to act on what you’ve discussed.