

# THE GREATER HEALING

MARK 2:1-22

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The second chapter of Mark's account begins a string of four short narratives that shed some further light into the absolute authority that Jesus possesses as the Son of God. Already, he has amazed people with the authority in which he teaches, and the authority he exercises over evil spirits and physical sickness. But now, the authority he continues to claim for himself is about to hit a whole new level and intrude upon the conventional religious traditions and customs of the religious leaders during that time. In each of the next four narratives, Jesus does something that causes concern and sharp criticism from the religious leaders of the day. These four events lead to the following types of questions:

- Jesus forgives the paralytic's sins (2:1-12) – Who do you think you are?
- Jesus calls a tax collector to join his inner circle (2:13-17) – Why would you associate with these people?
- Jesus' followers don't fast regularly (2:18-22) – Why should we take your 'following' seriously?
- Jesus provides nourishment and healing on the Sabbath (2:23-3:6) – Why are you breaking the rules?

Again, Jesus forces us to get rid of our preconceived notions about what God is like and how God operates.

The longest narrative in this section of Mark's account is one in which Jesus heals a paralytic that is brought to him by four of the man's friends. Jesus is teaching at the house where he's staying in Capernaum, and a large crowd has filled the house blocking the entrance into the home. The four men carrying their paralytic friend are so desperate to get their friend to Jesus that they climb on top of the roof and lower their friend down through a hole that they make. They are hoping that Jesus will show compassion towards him and heal him.

An initial observation can be made at this point. Stagnant crowds can often be a hinderance for those truly seeking to come to Jesus. Now, such a statement may seem like a stretch from this particular passage, but typically throughout his gospel account, Mark paints the crowds

in a somewhat negative light. Most often the crowds in Mark's narratives prove to be an obstruction for those who truly want to get to Jesus. The people in the crowds often stand and observe whereas the people of faith always take some sort of action to get to Jesus.

It leads us to consider which one more appropriately describes our relationship to Jesus on any given week?

Do we more times than not just find ourselves as one among the crowd on Sunday mornings or at other various "*Christian*" events? Or are we like the four men moving outside of the crowd doing whatever we can to serve those around us by getting them to Jesus? We can consider that a step further:

Are we content with just getting people to join the "*Christian*" crowd or are we willing to go further and out of our way to get people to Jesus?

True faith is willing to do whatever it takes to get to Jesus.

So this man who is physically incapable of moving is lowered from the roof of this house down to the feet of Jesus. His friends go through all this effort and trouble to get their paralyzed friend to Jesus because they have heard of the miraculous healings that he's been performing, and they surely hope he will do the same for their friend. After going through all this trouble, everything stops.

This has obviously caused quite a scene. The crowd is silent with anticipation. Jesus looks at them, and then he looks down into the eyes of this physically disabled man laying on a mat. And then Jesus says, "Son, your sins are forgiven." By no means was this the expected response by anyone in that house! Imagine the confusion.

Coming before Jesus in faith almost always delivers more than a person bargains for. Jesus intentionally addresses this man's sin before he addresses his suffering. You see, a person's sin is a much more urgent condition than his suffering. It is sin that is terminal. It is sin that will separate a person from God forever. We need to be forgiven of sin way more than we need anything else in this life.

Almost always when we approach Jesus saying, "This is what I really want," his response is "You need much more than that." It wasn't wrong for this man or his friends to wish for his healing. It would've been wrong for them to think that physical healing would've been all that he needed to make his life complete.

This is foundational for our understanding of why we seek to bring others to Jesus in the first place. The world needs more from Jesus than healing from sickness, recovery from addiction, release from poverty and freedom from sex trafficking.

All of these are without question within the ministry scope of our loving Lord and Savior, but for someone to experience any of these without the forgiveness of sins tragically only ends up with a temporary form of healing that will result in an eternal condition that is actually much worse than their earthly condition.

**Everyone's greatest need in life is the greater healing found first and foremost in the forgiveness of our sins.**

Now, in saying, "Your sins are forgiven," Jesus is claiming to be able to do something that only God can do. In saying this, he is claiming to be the one chiefly offended by the man's sin and therefore is putting himself into a position that belongs only to God. He's not being discreet about this all; Jesus is claiming to be God. This was an extremely scandalous claim, and the religious leaders can barely stomach it.

Many of us are fine with Jesus as the great teacher or the great miracle worker. It's the Jesus who claims to be God that we have difficulties accepting.

The religious leaders say nothing out loud or amongst themselves, but in their hearts they are really bothered and troubled by what Jesus is claiming. But Jesus directly addresses what they're thinking in their hearts.

Jesus goes on to say that the visible miracle of actually healing this man would certainly appear to be more difficult than the invisible miracle of claiming to be able to forgive him of his sins. Therefore, as a testimony to his authority to do the invisible miracle of forgiving sin,

Jesus performs the visible miracle of healing the man physically which blows everyone's mind – "We never saw anything like this!" (2:12)

The physical healing was secondary. It was simply the proof of a deeper more important healing that Jesus had the ability and the authority to perform in the hearts of all men.

This healing was obviously an intentional teaching moment in the ministry of Jesus. For the person who comes to Jesus in faith looking for relief and getting redemption in the process, the message is clear: You need much more from Jesus than you think you need. For the religious person among the crowd who admires Jesus' message, compassion and way of life but is content with him as the great teacher and outstanding model in life, the message is clear: Jesus is much more than you think he is.