

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

09.27.2026 | Bring Them to Jesus | Mark 2:1-12 | Dr. Ben Day, Senior Pastor

If you have a Bible this morning, I want to invite you to turn with me to Mark, chapter 2. If you want to use the Bible that's in the pew or the chair in front of you, I could tell you that Mark, chapter 2 is on page 837. We're in a series called "Sent," and we were just looking at what does it look like for us to be witnesses of Jesus here in our city. So we were walking through the book of Acts. We were seeing how the early church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was empowered to be witnesses first in Jerusalem, the city that they were in. And so we're pausing our study of Acts to take five weeks to consider how are we empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Jesus in our words and in our actions right here in our Jerusalem, in the city of San Francisco.

And as we spend these five weeks considering this call and this idea of being sent, we're just trying to really focus on two particular areas that we are sent. One is the people around us. I want us, just over these five weeks, to consider who God has sent us to, who are the people that are around us, that we can be witnesses of Jesus to, who are our friends and our family, who are our coworkers, our neighbors, who are the other parents at our kids' school. Who are we placed around and who are we sent to that we might bear witness to Jesus to them? But also, who is right around our church that we have as a church been sent to? It's no coincidence that we are a church at the corner of Octavia and Waller. God has placed us here for a reason. He wants us to be a light in this neighborhood. He wants us to reach the people who are right around us. And so we're praying about how do we do that to the people in our own neighborhood?

Specifically, how can we use the space of our firehouse, which is just up Waller Street from where we're sitting right now? How can we use that to reach the people of this area? So we're taking these two focuses, and we are praying and we are fasting. Thank you to those who joined us. We're doing a Wednesday prayer time in the morning at 6 o'clock or in the evening at 6 o'clock. If you want to join either one of those or both on Zoom to pray together, fasting on Wednesdays to just seek God a little bit more intentionally with these questions of how can I reach those who are around me? How can we reach those who are right around our church?

Last week we began this series by just considering this fact that we are sent, that we have a God who is a loving God, a pursuing God, a God who is always sending out. It's in his very nature. It's in his heart to have an outward flow of love. He's seen it in creation. We've seen it in redemption. Now those of us who have received his love are caught up in this outward flow of God's love and are now sent out. As Christ was sent into the world, we are now sent to reach those who are around us. Now we want to build on that to really consider still more of this heart posture of us going and reaching people. Just to kind of let you know, over the next couple of weeks, next Sunday and the Sunday after, we're going to be looking a little bit more practically, how do we do this? How do we actually share the gospel in our culture? How do we live out our faith in the workplace and in other spheres of life? But today I kind of want to stay more on this heart posture, this approach, this mindset, that if we are taking the approach that we have been sent out by God, what is our heart posture as we bring people to Jesus? What is our approach as we bring people to Jesus? To consider that, I want us to go to Mark chapter 2. We're going to look at a story that might be familiar to many of us because it's a unique story in what happens. It's at the beginning of Mark's gospel. Our youth are walking through Mark's gospel over the course of this school year. In fact, they just covered this passage, I think it was last Sunday, and so hopefully it sounds familiar to them. Hopefully it doesn't mean that they just tuned me out. But I hope even a familiar story like this will instruct us and teach us and inspire us to bring others to Jesus.

Let me read the passage for us, which is Mark 2, verses 1 through 12. Mark writes, "And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 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 to 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 in which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'" 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."

In December of 1938, a man named Nicholas Winton canceled the ski trip that he had planned and decided to go to Prague because he heard that there was a dire situation going on there. When the 29-year-old stockbroker from England arrived, he found refugee camps that were packed with people who had been forced out of their homes by Nazis. When he interacted with the people in the refugee camps, he found that there was this plan to relocate many of the adults, but there was no plan to help the children. So he felt compelled to act. He went to the British government and worked out this arrangement where if he could find host families to take in children, they would allow him to bring in children from Czechoslovakia, that's a hard country, I should have just said "Brog," from that country and bring them to England. Over the next nine months, he was able to rescue 669 children who would have certainly been subject to the horrors of the Holocaust had he not brought them to England. There's something about being exposed to a need that compels us to take action.

You felt this if you've ever seen a commercial that just shows you the needs of our world. People are compelled to give when they become aware of a need. People are compelled to act, to volunteer, to take up some effort when they realize that there's a need in the world, a need in someone's life. So often, I think we're blind and ignorant to needs, and that's why we go about in action. But so often when we see a need, we take action. I think if we could really see the horrors of hell, I think if we could really grasp the eternal trajectory that people are on, we would be compelled to bring more people to Jesus. I think if we could see the spiritual need that people have and we just became more aware of it, we would be compelled to act....state of people.

What happens in this story is that you've got four people who are so moved by the need that they have for their friend, and they so believe that Jesus is the only hope for that need to be met that they'll do anything they can to get their friend to Jesus. And I think when we look at this story, when we look at the actions and the approach of these four friends, it helps us understand about what it takes to bring someone to Jesus. Now, I do want to be careful here because this story isn't a parable. It's not an allegory. Mark didn't necessarily write the story as giving us principles for evangelism or bringing people to Jesus. He wrote the story because it really happened. He wrote the story because it teaches us something about Jesus. And I think that what it teaches us about Jesus, the faith that we see from these friends, it does teach us something about bringing people to Jesus in faith. And I want to draw out from this story just four principles for bringing people to Jesus. If we have a heart that loves people in the way that God loves people, and if we have a heart that understands the need of each person, I think we'll be much more compelled to bring people to Jesus. Four kind of principles that I think we can draw out, steps that we can take to bring people to Jesus.

First is to recognize their great need. If we're going to bring people to Jesus, we have to begin with where I just began earlier. In order for us to take action, we usually need to see some type of need. So often we don't do anything because we don't think that there's anything to be done. But when we see a need, so often I do find that people are compelled to take action, to give, to volunteer, to support in some type of way. What happens in this story happens because you've got four friends who see that their friend has a need. They can recognize their friend's great need. This man, we don't know the extent of his paralysis, but we know he could not move himself. He's confined to a portable bed, a mat, really. He can't move around. People have to carry him. Probably often they would carry him to particular places so that he could beg. He could ask for people's support. The need of this man is evident, and it is a need that compels his friends to act.

The thing is, though, I think sometimes not all needs are so evident. I mean, this man's need is quite clear to all those who see him. He can't move on his own. He has to be supported. His friends know what his need is, but sometimes people have great needs that we can't see quite so clearly. I think Jesus even alerts us to this in a story. It says that these friends do everything they can to get their friend to Jesus because they recognize his great need. And when they finally get him to Jesus, it says in verse 5, that when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now, you kind of have to wonder, what was the man's immediate reaction to hearing this? You kind of have to wonder, what was the friend's immediate reaction to hearing this? I mean, we're told what the scribes and the religious leaders of the day began to start to think what their reaction was, but what about this man who's just been lowered in front of Jesus? Jesus looks at him and he doesn't say, "I've healed you of your paralysis." He says, "Your sins are forgiven."

Does this man start to think, "Well, maybe I was paralyzed because of some sin." Does he think, "Well, that's great and all, but I still can't walk. My situation hasn't changed." I mean, what about his friends? It seems like they probably got him there in front of Jesus, hoping he would be healed. What do they take away from this? You know, Jesus, I think he says this for a particular reason. I think he's trying to teach people something about himself, but I think also something about this man's needs. One of the things that Jesus is revealing in this story is that just as he has the unique ability to heal this man of his paralysis, he also has the unique authority to forgive this man of his sins. That's one thing that Jesus is trying to help people to see here, that he truly is God. His unique ability to heal is also his unique ability to forgive sins. But he's doing it in such a way, I think, to let us know that while this man has a need that is quite apparent to everybody, he also has a need that could be easily overlooked. Everyone could tell that this man was paralyzed, but do people see this man as a man who is a sinner needing to be forgiven of his sins?

See, all that I'm saying is I think that there's a great need that all people have that we could easily and we so easily often overlook. This need for us to be forgiven of our sins, this need for each person to be reconciled to God. I think it's a need that we so often overlook. Now don't get me wrong, I'm not saying we should ignore all other needs. I'm not saying Nicholas Winton should have just gone to Prague and preached the gospel to children and never gotten them on trains to England. No, the Bible says that Jesus met needs. He cared for people in their physical state. We are to care for people. We are to care about all their needs. But that should include their spiritual needs. How often do we neglect the spiritual needs of people? How often when we look at people and see what they're going through, do we think that their need is to be reconciled to God? I really think this is why so many of us are apathetic. I mean, we talked about this last week. I mentioned a story from a guy named Pinjalet, and he talked about how much do you have to hate somebody to not share the good news of eternal life with them. Sometimes I don't think we actually hate people, but we certainly are apathetic towards them.

I mean, I know I am. And I really think it's because I don't recognize all the time the great need that they have to be reconciled to God. Well, sure, I know this. I'm a Christian. I'm a pastor. But I don't think about this when I interact with people. I really think if we saw the need that people had to be made right with God so that they could be with him for all of eternity, that it would compel us to action. I've always been really convicted by this quote from a guy named A.W. Pink. Arthur Pink said, "If you can witness unmoved men and women hurrying down the broad road which leadeth to destruction, then it is seriously to be doubted if you have within you the spirit of that one who wept over Jerusalem." Jesus weeps over a city of lost people because they're like sheep without a shepherd. How often do we look at our own city and we're not moved in the same way? I think probably often because we don't recognize the need that people have. There's this less evident need that's being addressed here in this story when Jesus says, "Son, your sins are forgiven." It's a great need that each person has. If we're going to ever bring people to Jesus, we have to recognize that need.

But secondly, we have to believe that Jesus is their only hope. It starts with recognizing the need that each person has. But secondly, if we're ever going to bring people to Jesus, we have to believe that Jesus is their only hope. That's the next thing that you'll see in your outline and you'll want to fill out as you fill in blanks. Believe that Jesus is their only hope. We read in Mark chapter 1 that Jesus had just begun his ministry, that he was casting out demons and he's healing people of various diseases. He's performing all sorts of miracles and certainly that's why he's drawing a crowd in his home base of ministry in Capernaum. Jesus was from Nazareth but he had set up his ministry there in Capernaum, a port city where many people were coming in and Jesus is drawing a great crowd because of all the miracles he's performing. It's also why these four friends want to get their friend to Jesus. I mean, think about it. These people, they know a man who has a situation that seems like there is no hope. Paralysis is not something you just recover from.

I mean, he has something that seems incurable. Up until Jesus arrives, they probably thought this was his state forever. But now, they hear of what Jesus is doing, how he is casting out demons. He's healing diseases. Now they have to believe that Jesus is the hope of their friend. Like a parent who has a child with a severe injury, racing him to the hospital, here are four friends seeing that this is the only hope for our friend. We'll do anything we can to get him to Jesus. You see, if we're going to ever bring people to Jesus, we have to recognize their great need, but we also have to believe that Jesus is their only hope. And for you to believe that Jesus is somebody's only hope, what you actually have to believe is that that need to be reconciled to God is actually the greatest need that people have.

I don't want to diminish other needs. We need to just see people's needs in general and care for people. But we do have to recognize that the greatest need that each person has is to be reconciled to God. That's the only way we're ever going to bring people to Jesus, the way we're only ever going to see Jesus as the only hope for all people. Because he is the only one who can fix that problem. He is the only one who can forgive sins. Notice what a claim this is in verse 7. When he says, "Son, your sins are forgiven," it says, "the religious leaders of the day," they say, "why does this man speak like that?" He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? They're right. Nobody can offer the forgiveness of sins, but the one who has been offended. The only person who can offer forgiveness is the one whom you have offended. That means the only person who can truly forgive sins is God.

When Jesus made this claim that your sins are forgiven, he was revealing something about himself, that he was claiming to be God in the flesh and the people recognized this. They recognized how unique this is. And what I'm saying to us this morning is, until we really believe that people's greatest need is to be reconciled to God, we will not actually believe that Jesus is their only hope. Until we actually believe that the greatest thing people need is to be forgiven of their sins, we won't actually be that compelled to bring them to Jesus. I mean, if you think the greatest need of our world is just that we need to better redistribute our resources so that not so many people are living in poverty, that's where you're going to put your hope. That's what you're going to give your efforts towards. If you really think the greatest problem in our world is the way that we're using the earth and climate change is coming and needs to be solved, that's where you're going to put your hope and your solutions.

But if you believe that if all those things are real problems, again, don't hear me saying that they're not, unless you believe that all those things are real needs and they are, but they're actually only just symptoms of the fact that our world has been separated from the peace that God designed us to have. That each one of us experience a brokenness in our lives and we see it all throughout our world because we have not lived according to God's design. Unless you believe that, you're actually probably never going to try to get people to Jesus. Unless you actually believe that the greatest need that they have is to meet Jesus and be forgiven of their sins, you probably won't be that compelled to bring them, but if you believe that all those other things that happen in our lives and our world are merely signs pointing us to this deeper need that we have been separated from the life and the light that is in God, then you will be compelled to bring people to Jesus.

Ask you today, what do you think your greatest need is? I mean, do you look at your life and think that the greatest need you have is just for the circumstances to change, or do you recognize that it is your sin? You need to be reconciled to God. Do you believe today that Jesus is your only hope? See, until you believe that being forgiven of your sins is your greatest need, you actually won't believe that Jesus is your only hope. You might think Jesus is part of your hope, but so are your other actions. So are the things that you can control or that you can do. Until you believe that your greatest need is to be reconciled to God, that is when you'll believe that Jesus is your greatest hope. Do you believe that in your own life? Maybe for the first time today somebody will. Do you believe that for other people? I really think the only way we'll ever bring people to Jesus is to see their need, to believe that Jesus is their hope. And when we actually do that, then we will do anything it takes to get them to Jesus. And that leads us to the third step, which is persevere through obstacles. To bring people to Jesus, we've got to believe that they have a need that only Jesus can meet, but then we've got to be willing to push through whenever it gets difficult, to persevere even through challenges and obstacles.

One of the reasons this story is often so familiar is because of the unique things that happen in the story. The story is often told to kids because it's fun to act out or depict or think about what happens. I mean it says in verse 4 that they wanted to bring their friend to Jesus, but they could not get near him because of the crowd. So they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. Isn't it just fun sometimes to think about how did things transpire in stories like this in the Bible? Like four friends are carrying a friend on a mat, they're trying to push through the crowd, the crowd's not budging. Look, we've all got problems. I'm trying to see Jesus too, so they're not letting even somebody who's carrying a paralyzed person into the room. So they start to get creative. One friend says, "Hey, why don't we take him up on the roof?" You got to at least think one of the four was kind of against it, or at least nervous about it. Like did anybody say this may not be a good idea?

Physically it is hard getting him up on the roof. I mean probably easy, there's probably a staircase. These roofs were flat. They were built to be used as kind of a deck almost in the house, a place where people could lay down, especially on a

cool evening, escape the kind of the heat from the home. So this is a flat space, they're walking around on it. Imagine being in the room with Jesus, hearing them walk above you. Then they start to remove the roof. Mark's language here is actually kind of indicates this is a pretty big demolition job. Literally he kind of says they unroofed the roof. We don't know who the owner of the house is. Some people speculate that maybe it was Peter's mother-in-law. If so, she's going to have another headache. That's a Mark chapter one reference if you know that story. Just imagine all that's happening, and these friends, they're willing to do all of this. They're willing to make the physical effort. They're willing to create a socially awkward situation. They're willing to destroy someone's home because they're convinced that their friend has a need that only Jesus can meet.

If we really will believe that people have a great need, if we'll recognize it, if we really believe that Jesus is their only hope, I think it will compel us to persevere in the midst of obstacles, to get creative, to bring people to Jesus. Listen, the reality is that the ground in San Francisco is hard. Most people do not want to hear the message of the gospel. Most people in your workplace are not going to be very open the first time you bring up a conversation about sins, about needing to be forgiven of sins, about what does the Bible teach? Is the Bible trustworthy? About the existence of God? Many people come to San Francisco to get away from those things. They don't want to be around Christians or the church. Many people will be very opposed to the message of the gospel.

Don't let that discourage you. Don't let the first time someone rejects your invitation to be your cue to stop inviting them. Don't let the first rejection or awkward conversation be your cue to never share again. Now listen, I came up in the Q&A last week. There has to be a point in which we recognize that sharing maybe has become unwise with somebody. Maybe they've become very hostile. Maybe it's detrimental to our relationship or even to us personally. At some point we need to kind of dust off our cloaks and keep going. But don't just let the first rejection, the first opposition, the first obstacle stop you from bringing someone to Jesus. If you really believe that the greatest need can only be met by Jesus, you'll do whatever it takes. Let's get creative as a church.

When I think about this, as a church, we do things like yesterday with joy friends. Next Sunday with a fall fellowship. The end of October, a trunk retreat. In December, a Christmas concert and market. Those things take work. Why do we do those things? We're trying to create a space for people to come and be around Christians and hear the message of the gospel. Why are we praying about the firehouse? Because we want to have that space be a place where we can get creative. What needs can we meet? What people can we reach? Oh, it's going to take work. What are you willing to do to see people reach for the gospel? Because you're so convinced that they have a need that only Jesus can meet. Do it not just in our church but in your own life.

You know, I was so excited to have our global partner here with us, not just so we could see her and pray with her, but I wanted to take just a few minutes to share with you about how she first felt called to this type of ministry. It wasn't in East Asia. It was first here in San Francisco when she was a member of our church. She just started bringing Bibles to work, trying to share them with people at lunch. She started trying to use things that were happening in our world to just open up conversations about God and the hope that isn't Him. This is where I want you to begin. Just practice hospitality and have someone over for dinner. Or bring them a meal if they don't want to come to your house. Get creative. Use sports. Use entertainment. Use your life. Use opportunities to connect with people, to show them the love of God. Let me just think about who's around you. What opportunities do you have just to show them the love of God, that you might open up a conversation about the gospel of God. Persevere through obstacles. When someone rejects you, when someone turns you down, keep trying. Do whatever it takes because you're so convinced that they have a need that only Jesus can meet.

That will compel you to persevere through obstacles, and then you'll be able to bring them to Jesus in faith. This is the last step. It's kind of the step that underlines all the steps, I guess. This is a step in which we actually bring them to Jesus in faith. I think the other thing that makes this story so unique and why we often talk about it is not just what happens with the roof being taken out and somebody being lower, lower down in front of Jesus. But it's the fact that there is this collective faith of the group. In fact, Jesus sees their collective faith. Mark makes note of it. In verse 5, it says, "When Jesus saw their faith," he says to the paralytic, "sign your sins are forgiven." Now, we have to think probably the paralytic is included in that, that he has got some faith for Jesus to pronounce forgiveness. Let's not just say Jesus saw his faith, but Jesus saw their faith. Only one man is healed on this day, but there's a collective faith of the group.

Your faith in Jesus can't save other people, but it can have an impact on somebody else's life. Your faith can be contagious. Your faith can influence others. I wanted to end on this point because I wanted us to see, again, that sharing the gospel with people, bringing people to Jesus, is not a duty or an obligation that we have to do. It should be something that comes natural from our faith in Jesus. That when, again, you found Jesus as your firm foundation, how much should you want other people to find that firm foundation as well?

This is where I think the table is connected to evangelism. For us to gather around the table with our hope in Jesus, shouldn't that compel us to want other people to join us at this table as well? That they might have hope, that they might have peace, that they might have joy, that they might have life that isn't him. The more that we grow our faith in Jesus, I think the more we will want to bring other people to Jesus. Bringing them to Jesus, trusting that he is the only one who can save. That doesn't have to be our actions, it doesn't have to be our conversations, it doesn't have to be our persuasive arguments. Rather, we just bring them to Jesus, we just make an introduction. Trust that he alone can save. He alone can save because he not only has the authority of God, but he has the ability to forgive sins because of what he's done.

It's kind of interesting, Jesus asks a question in this passage. It's kind of a trick question, I think. In verse 9 he says, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, that your sins are forgiven, or to say rise, take up your bed, and walk?" Well, which is easier? In some ways, both are kind of easy to say. Any of us could say either one of those things. The reality is, if you told someone who was paralyzed, rise, take up your bed, and walk, and they couldn't actually get up, you'd be exposed as a fraud right there. But you could tell somebody their sins are forgiven, and people wouldn't know whether or not you were able to prove that, able to do that. Jesus could claim to be God, but how do we know that Jesus actually has the authority and the ability to forgive sins?

Kind of interesting, the word that Mark uses here, when Jesus speaks over this man, when he says, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk," we'll see that same word used in Mark, chapter 16, when it talks about Jesus rising from the dead. This man got up from his mat, but Jesus got up from the grave. Jesus has the ability to forgive sins, not just because he is God, but because he laid down in death on our behalf, and then he rose for our justification. The more we believe that, the more I think we will be compelled to bring other people to him. The more we will trust that, as long as I bring someone to Jesus, he is the one who can forgive, he is the one who has laid down his life, he will do the work, not me. So as you sit around this room and you see people, as you walk out of here and you pass people on the street, if someone serves you lunch today, you interact with someone this week, would you recognize that they've got a great need that's maybe not always so apparent? Would you believe that Jesus is the only one who can meet that need? And would you have such a faith in Jesus to save, that you would do anything you can to bring them to Jesus?