

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

For All People

PART

3

TITLE

Good News For Guilty People

SCRIPTURE

Mark 2:1-12



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So the words that you've heard several times tonight, good news, great joy for all people. If you really think about those words, for all people, it seems unthinkable. We all live in a world we know is broken and we have all contributed to that brokenness. In its brokenness, it forms groups, and those groups are formed on the basis of differences. Over time, those groups that are formed by differences, they sort of crystallize in their understanding and perspective, and sometimes historical hostilities even form between one group and another. That said, just imagine how remarkable it would be? Is it even possible for any news to be considered good news for all these different kinds of people? Yet, that is precisely what the angels said when Jesus was born, he said, "Fear not for I bring you good news, great joy that will be for all the people."

The only way that this is possible, the words for all people, that all people, all kinds of people, all groups of people could recognize in him a news that was so good that it could spark joy in their hearts. The only way for us to understand that is for us to see that there are people in every single group of people who have specific needs and problems that only Jesus can fix. One of those problems is guilt, every one of us is familiar, even from a child, the sensation of guilt. We cross a line of some kind, something that we do and we know it's a line that's crossed, and almost immediately, we feel a sense of shame. Sometimes that shame even forms physical sensations, some of us, when we feel shame because we've crossed a line, the back of our neck feels warm or maybe our chest feels tight. We start wondering, someone is probably watching me do this and that's going to be embarrassing.

We even look around to make sure, is there anyone else who could shame me on the basis of the shame that I already feel in my heart? So we try to hide. There's not a single one of us in the room that's not familiar with this sensation of guilt. Well, the Bible tells us that when God created us, that he wove or wrote God's... His law upon our own heart. What that means is that when we sin against God in his law, we cut our heart. And that cut, the Bible calls guilt. It's real and it's also felt, and that guilt, it actually changes the way that we relate to everyone, it changes how we view God, himself. Many people around the world, they're convinced that if there is a God, that he's probably mad at me because I feel guilt in my heart, so I need to do something to appease him.

Many of us, when we feel guilty, it breaks our own relationships with each other. The reason is because God creates us as a relational person, and so we want to have friends. We want to draw close to people, and yet we know that we have something to hide, and so we don't want to draw too close to people, because they might find out and we might be embarrassed. It also changes our relationship with ourselves, and that we look into the mirror, we see somebody that has not had... Well, we've had a lot of days that we wish that we could redo, a lot of relationships that we wish could be restored, a lot of things that we've said that we wish that we could pull back. What we find in the Bible is hope.

You say, "Is there any hope whatsoever that the guilt that we've experienced for the things that we've done that's even shaping our current relationships with God, each other, and ourselves, is there any hope of restoration?" This is the hope of Christmas. You see, Jesus came to the earth, and when he came to the earth, he

says that he was sent not to condemn the world, but to save the world and this is precisely what we find. In the Book of Mark, in the second chapter, we find a really brief story that I want to share with you. In this brief story, it literally encapsulates how Jesus would give us hope, people like you and like me, who have experienced this sensation of guilt. What happens in Mark chapter one is Jesus, he has distinguished himself as someone who can heal people of sickness and who can teach with remarkable authority. In Mark chapter two, he's in somebody's home. We don't know who it is, but it's in a home, and it says that there's so many people who would come to this home.

It says that there was no more room, not even at the door. People wanted to be near him, broken people wanted to be near him. Well, there were four buddies, four friends, and they had carried with them one of their friends who was paralyzed on a stretcher. Yet, they couldn't get close enough to Jesus, because they couldn't get through the door because there was too many people. It says in the Bible, it says that they became so desperate that they went up on top of the roof, roofs at this time weren't made necessarily with metal shingles or anything, it was thatch, and so they were able to bore a hole into someone else's roof, that's how desperate they were. They lowered their friend in the middle of the room in the presence of Jesus. You can imagine that this would catch everyone's attention if suddenly there was a hole, someone up there and they lowered someone down, you would stop looking at me and listening to me, and you start looking at them, and that's precise to what happened.

In this moment, that had to be a little out of place, a little socially awkward, and yet also, absolutely magical, Jesus, in all of his mercy, he stops what he's doing, he stops what he's teaching. He walks over to the man, and the Bible says that he saw their faith, and then he looked at this man in mercy, and you can imagine what he would say. Yet, what he said isn't what you would imagine he would say to a man suffering paralysis. He looks at this man and he says, "Son, your sins are forgiven." His friends had to be thinking, if not saying, "No, no, no forgiveness, no, you're missing the whole point right here, Jesus, he has a more immediate need." Jesus' point is, no, you don't, you do not have a more immediate need. We all walked in this room tonight and we all have problems, I know you have problems.

Some of them, it may be with family, some of you may have been recently diagnosed with a sickness, for some of them, maybe finance, or job, or marriage, or your children, or your parents, we all came in with problems. Those problems are real, and sometimes those problems feel more urgent. I want you to know that Jesus cares about those problems, and yet, he knows that there is nothing more vital to life than our relationship, a right relationship with our creator. Therefore, there is nothing more important than having our sins forgiven, our guilt removed, and our relationship with him restored. Well, you can imagine in this moment that there were people who were there who were his critics, and his critics began to speculate, they began to question what he was saying and what he was doing. Sure enough, they say in verse two, they say, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" You know what? They were right. Think about it for a moment, if somebody right now sitting behind you just smacked you in the head, and I watched and then I said, "Hey, don't get mad, I forgive them."

Well, you would be mad at the person who hit you and you'd be mad at me. You would presume, or you would assume that I had presumed upon some kind of authority that I don't have, and it's true. Only God has this kind of authority. Jesus, in this moment, not only with compassion for this man who's suffering paralysis, but also in order to answer all of the skepticism in the room of his ability to forgive sin, he asked a very important question. He said, "Let me ask you, which is easier to say, your sins are forgiven, or rise, take up your mat and walk?" Everyone in the room, just as you, if I ask you, which is easier for me to do, just verbally say you're forgiven or to actually heal a man of paralysis? To prove that Jesus had authority to forgive sin, he looked at this man who had been suffering paralysis. He spoke his restoration and healing into existence by saying, "Stand up and walk," and he did.

It says that the full crowd, you think about this, this is the credibility of the Bible is that there was all of these eyewitnesses that was packed into this house who all saw this took place, everybody is overwhelmed at the fact that he healed him. But I want to leave you tonight with one question, was healing him the easier of the two? It may have been the more dramatic in the moment, but was it easier? You see, the Bible says that God is just, the Bible says that as a just God, the wage of sin is death. What that means is for Jesus to declare this man's forgiveness was his stated commitment to be the substitutionary sacrifice.

In order to forgive that sin, someone had to die for sin. In his life, in my life and in your life. Sure enough, three years later, Jesus looked at his disciples in the face and he says, "We're going to Jerusalem, and when we get to Jerusalem, I'm going to be bound, I'm going to be falsely accused, I'm going to be condemned as a criminal and then I'm going to be crucified. But on the third day, I'm going to rise from the dead." Sure enough, that's exactly what he did. He, without any sin, took our sin upon himself. Jesus Christ, in all of his grace and all of his love and all of his power, he humbled himself and he died on a cross in order to pay for our sin, my sin, so that he could say, "Son or daughter, your sins are forgiven."

On the third day, he rose from the dead, and this is the gospel. You say, "What does it have to do with Christmas?" Jesus had to be born in order to live, in order to pay for our sin. The gospel is simply this, is that Jesus looks us in the eye and he says, "You have not lived as you ought, but I have. But if you'll put your faith and trust in me and stop believing in your own morality or righteousness. Then all you deserve in your sin will fall upon me on the cross and all that I deserve in my righteousness will fall upon you. I will forgive you of your sin, I will remove your guilt, I will restore your relationship with me, with God Almighty, and I will give you eternal life."

Everybody who's ever heard this message responds in one of three ways, you see the same response throughout the pages of the New Testament, and you'll see it tonight. Some of us in the room are going to feel a sense of anger, anger that someone is encroaching upon our space, telling me that I'm a sinner, telling me that I have guilt, guilt that I already know that I have. Some people, they listen to this and it creates anger. If that's the case, I hope that you'll still listen, we really are glad that you came. For others, it creates a sense of apathy, you're just wondering who won the game? When's this guy going to get off the stage so that we can sing some more songs?

Others will believe, others will do just what we're told in Romans where he says that if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in a heart that God raised him from the dead, we'll be saved. You see, friends, this is exactly what Christmas is all about, Jesus coming to meet our deepest need. My question is this is have you come to that place where you believed? Do you believe now? Have you ever put your faith in trust in Christ? If you have trusted Christ, I pray not only that this reminder of the gospel, but also these songs that remind us of his grace and his glory to us will spark a fresh sense of wonder this month in your life that Jesus Christ, the son of God, took on flesh to come and rescue you, to forgive you of your sin. For those of you who perhaps you believe, but you've never put your faith and trust in Christ, I want to give you an opportunity right now to do just that.

He says that we're supposed to confess, which means we're supposed to say something. You don't even have to use audible words, you can just think it, you can pray in your own heart. What I want to do is to offer us literally about a minute to pray, if you know Christ is your savior, why don't you just take this moment and just thank him for what he did? For those of you who would like to put your faith in trust in Christ, and would like some help, I want to be able to offer that help to you. Would you bow and let's pray together? Father, we pray in each of our lives, God, that you would meet us just where we are at. When we read this story in Mark chapter two, we see a surprising turn at the very beginning when somebody who has a great need, a great problem in their life, and yet, you addressed a deeper problem that they didn't even know they had.

I pray for those who came in the room tonight, whether it's their finances or their marriage or maybe their own physical body, and they just simply have problems, I pray God for your grace and their life, that you would provide and protect and heal. Yet, you teach us in Mark two that we all have a more significant need and that is for our sins to be taken away. We thank you that you came. If you are here tonight, and if you are believing this, you recognize that you have a sin problem, that you have experienced that sensation of guilt, and it comes from being actually guilty because you crossed the line, you don't know what to do with that. If you believe in Jesus Christ, there's no magic words. But you could say something like this to the Lord, "Father in heaven, I thank you for sending Jesus. Thank you that we get to celebrate you sending Jesus something called Christmas."

I confess to you that I have crossed many lines, I have felt guilt, I have things to hide. There's nothing that I've been able to do to get rid of that, and I confess that to you. I also confess my belief that you sent your son, Jesus Christ, to the earth. I confess that I believe that he lived without sin, he went to a cross where he died from my sin, and I believe he was buried and he rose from the dead. I ask that you would heal me, I confess you as my Lord, would you forgive me of my sin? Would you take away my guilt? Would you restore me to a right relationship with you? Would you give me courage and understanding to know what this means and enough courage to be able to live it out the rest of my days? We bow before you, we thank you, Jesus for coming. We pray this in Christ's name, amen.



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