

Sermon Series: *The Gospel of Mark*



"Your Sins Are Forgiven"

The Most Politically Incorrect, Unfelt Need

Mark 2:1-12, (ESV)

¹ And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.

² And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³ And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ 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 on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ 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? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹² 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!"

Leading

I believe that the Lord would have us live in the gospel of Mark for then next eight weeks (through April 14), which corresponds to the duration of Christianity Explored (CE). I think this will be good for us for several reasons.

1. **It is always good to be reminded of the powerful, true, historical facts of Jesus' life.** *God's word does not merely convey information, but rather reveals truth which in turn can effect transformation.* The Bible is not a product to be consumed, but one the primary means of personal communion with God. So let us be on guard against thinking that would say, "I've already read this. I know everything that's written there." This would mistakenly assume that reading the Bible is like reading any other book. The Bible is not a dead book whose words can be dissected and examined and categorized into an information retrieval system. The word of God is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword."¹ The Bible is God's word and through it he speaks to his people. So ***if we would hear God's voice we must consistently be in his word.*** A slow, measured, reading through God's word is like having a conversation with him.

Approaching the Gospel of Mark by saying, "I've already read that and know all the information recorded therein," would be like me saying to my wife, "I've been married to her for a several years now and I've spoken to her at great length about various topics, and so there is no longer any need for me to converse with her. I know all about her that I need to know." This, of course, would be ridiculous.

2. **We should spend time in Mark because our guests in Christianity Explored will be spending time in the Gospel of Mark.** *Shared commonality among people naturally and easily engenders an almost instant sense of community, even among people who do not know each other.* We see this in many ways.

Many Jeep owners express this in the windshield decal "It's A Jeep Thing... You Wouldn't Understand."



¹ Heb 4:12.

Motorcyclists express this by their unique downward wave.



I experience this among runners. Yesterday I was out for a run and I passed about 6 other runners, none of whom I knew, but all of which smiled and waved at me. One lady, with whom I was on the same path and running towards, when she drew near me, smiled, held up her hand for a high-five, and said, "Hey, how ya doin'?"



Commonality yields a sense of community. I believe preaching through the gospel of Mark will provide one way in which we might enjoy a deeper sense of community with our guests who attend CE. It will also do the same for all of us.

3. **Spending time in the Gospel of Mark will help you be prepared and equipped to discuss what your guests are reading.** If we together move through the Gospel of Mark, then we'll all be reading and discussing the same couple of chapters which will allow conversations to naturally happen that may give opportunity for some deeper exploration of the text than might otherwise happen. It will be up to you and me to make this happen. Deeper discussions do not happen accidentally. Intentional conversations do not take place unless someone intends to make them happen.

From Nazareth to Capernaum

As Jesus began his public ministry, he made a personal move. After John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin was arrested, he left Nazareth and moved about 10 or 12 miles away to Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee (Mt 4:13). Peter and Andrew lived in Capernaum and many scholars believe that Jesus lived with Peter in his house during this time.



When word got round that Jesus was in Capernaum, crowds from all around came to the house filling all available space (Mk 2:1-2). When Jesus saw the crowds, he began *preaching the word to them* (v.2). He did not only heal those who were sick, but he also taught them.



At Capernaum, ruins of first-century homes have been excavated. There is today a church built over top of what has been understood to be the site of Peter's house in.



These first-century homes are very small, essentially one-room structures with a few inner dividing walls and an small outer courtyard.

Bringing the Paralytic on a Bed to Jesus

While Jesus was preaching, *four men came carrying a paralytic on his bed* (v.3). These four men intended to bring this man to Jesus. Not only did they intend to bring him to Jesus, they were determined not to allow anything to stop them. The crowds didn't stop them and neither would walls or even a roof. The roof was most likely made of sections of tiles laid on top of roof beams which were then covered over by a top layer of thatch. Since the crowds were so thick, they decided the easiest thing to do was to tear open a section of the roof and lower this man on his bed down through the opening in the roof right in front of Jesus—which they did (v. 4).

Bringing People to Jesus Through Christianity Explored

This is exactly what we are desiring to do in Christianity Explored. We are bringing people to Jesus. We are tearing down walls and tearing wholes in roofs so that we get people in front of Jesus. We know that we ourselves cannot solve the problems, supply the satisfaction, or fill the longing of our hungry friends. However, we do know that Jesus is the source of all the needs of our friends, whether they be felt needs or unfelt needs. This is our goal—to bring people to Jesus. Notice Jesus' response.

When Jesus Saw Their Faith...

Mark 2:5 (ESV)

⁵ *And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."*

Mark tells us that Jesus responded *when he saw their faith*. One question to ask is, "When he saw whose faith?" It must be the faith of the four men carrying the paralytic, for they were the only ones doing anything noteworthy. The paralytic hasn't done anything. He's just lying there. However, the four men carrying him were so convinced that getting their friend in front of Jesus was worth all the time and effort of carrying him up on and tearing apart a roof. They were convinced that all the expended energy would be worth it in the end. They were going to do what was needed for their paralytic friend to meet Jesus face to face and that was the reason they undertake such dramatic actions. Their faith in Jesus resulted in their *doing* a lot. What they believed about Jesus worked its way out in their actions. Their faith was an active faith. And Jesus responded to *their* faith. *Jesus responds to those who have faith in him.*

Can anyone *see* your faith? Does what you *believe* about Jesus get demonstrated by your actions? Would anyone know by observing your actions that you have faith in Jesus?

CE will require the expense of a lot of energy. We will not have to carry men up on the roof, but we will have to carry tables up the stairs each week and set out table cloths and move chairs and adjust sound boards and put out decorations and vacuum floors and wash dishes and clean up messes and a whole lot more. Will it be worth it for your friends and family and coworkers to be able to see Jesus face to face? Do you believe that in the end all the

expended energy will have been well spent? Let your faith in Jesus shine. Let your faith in him be seen... by your friends, by the watching world, by angels, and by the Father in heaven.

Given That For Which He Was Not Seeking

Jesus saw the faith of these four men and he said to the paralytic, "*Son, your sins are forgiven.*" Amazingly *Jesus offered this man that for which he was not asking.* In fact, in this case we're not told that he asked for anything. Yet one might think that it would be fairly obvious to Jesus that this man's greatest need was legs that worked properly. However, at this point Jesus is unconcerned for the legs and he is concerned for the soul. He bypasses the faulty legs and goes straight after the faulty soul.

The greatest need of humanity is not functioning bodies, but cleansed souls. We need to remember that the greatest need of our unsaved friends is forgiveness of sins. They most likely will not be asking for this—this man was not. His greatest felt need was working legs, but in reality his deepest need was an unmet need—the forgiveness of his sins.

It's not politically correct to talk about sins. Sometimes I wonder if the world still even has a category for sins. We've redefined everything into a syndrome or a disorder and it's doubtful that culturally we even have an understanding of anything we might call 'sin.' Yet, nevertheless, having our sins forgiven still remains our deepest and greatest need for without having sins forgiven, there can be no true, personal communion with God.

1 Peter 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God...*

Having sin forgiven is the only way to enjoy fellowship with the Father. And forgiveness of sins is what Jesus offered the paralytic. Jesus just blurted it out for the whole room to hear, "*Son, your sins are forgiven.*"

How sweet it is to have one's sins forgiven! How sweet it is to hear the words, "Son, daughter, your sins are forgiven." Our culture today would silence all those who refer to any behavior as a sin. Yet, if we fail to call sin sin, then we will gut the gospel of its transformational power and authority. And demonstrating Jesus power and authority to forgive sins is Mark's purpose for recording this event. Mark wants the world to know that *Jesus is the only person who has the authority to forgive sins.* The scribes rightly have a problem with this kind of language.

Mark 2:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ *Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,* ⁷ *"Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

The question they're asking is the right question, "Why does this man speak like that?" Why indeed? They are not wrong. Only God can forgive sin because it is God who defined the parameters of sin. Sin is defined by failing to obey God's command and falling short of his glory and his perfect expectations. Sin is an offense against God and therefore only God can forgive sin because sin is first and foremost disobeying and disbelieving him.

And yet what if God were to grant a man the authority to act on his behalf? What if God gave someone the authority on earth to forgive sins? How could we verify that what the man was saying, was in fact true. Jesus offers an answer.

Mark 2:8-12 (ESV)

⁸ 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?"⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?'¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" —he said to the paralytic—¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."

Jesus' point is clear. Anyone can say, "Your sins are forgiven." But how can anyone verify that they actually have been forgiven. God is unseen and so would be his forgiving of someone's sins. So it's easy to say, "your sins are forgiven," but it is impossible to prove. Yet, Jesus offers proof that his word is backed by God's action. He says to the man, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." This would clearly be a demonstration of Jesus' authority to forgive sins, because everyone knows no one heals without the power of God enabling him to do so.

Authority to Forgive Sin Demonstrated by Healing Lameness

Mark 2:12 (ESV)

¹² 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!"

God gave Jesus the power to heal this man. Why? So that the world would know that Jesus is the one person on earth who has been granted the authority by God to forgive sins against God. No other person has been granted such authority. The world has never seen anything like this.

The man rose and took up his bed and walked out of the room, not only healed, but also forgiven—cleansed, washed clean from every sinful defilement of his soul. Everyone was amazed and they glorified God saying, "***We have never seen anything like this!***"

Jesus demonstrated his divine authority by exercising his authority to heal this man's paralysis. Jesus demonstrate his unseen authority to forgive sins, by publicly demonstrating his authority

in healing paralyzed legs. He offered evidence to the truthfulness of what could not be seen by a clear demonstration of what could be seen.

Having sins forgiven is the greatest need of those who are lost. They may not even be aware of this. It may be politically incorrect to talk about sins, but it is unloving not to. All we have to do is deliver our unsaved friends face to face with Jesus. CE is one way to do that since it is an overview of the gospel of Mark and Mark's point is let Jesus stand out in full view. Bring your friends and coworkers on February 25 @ 7:00 p.m. Let Gail Mills (gailmills@aol.com) know how many you will bring.

Jesus responds to those who have faith in him, even to those who have only a little faith. *"A bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out."* People need to know their sins can be forgiven. They may not be asking for this yet, but when they meet Jesus face to face, he will bring this up. We need to be careful that we do not presume the role of the Holy Spirit. Why don't we let Him convict people of sin. We'll just stand by and point people to the truth of God's word and then allow the Holy Spirit to do the convicting.

Jesus is the only person in all the history of the world who has authority to forgive sin. No one else has this authority. He came to this earth to demonstrate this authority. And demonstrate it he did! All that he did do served to prove that he possessed this forgiving authority. The Bible tells us if we look to him and ask him for forgiveness, then he will freely give it! He will say, "My son, my daughter, your sins are forgiven." This is the greatest news we will hear today.