

In the previous chapter we saw that Jesus moved to Capernaum to the home of Peter's mother-in-law. On the Sabbath He preached in the synagogue, cast the demon out of a man, then went to the house and healed Peter's mother-in-law of a fever, and in the evening the whole town came out to bring the sick and demon possessed to be healed. That was one long day! Before dawn the next morning, Jesus went to an isolated place to pray. The disciples found Him and told Him everyone was waiting to hear from Him. And He said to them, *"Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."* Mark 1:38 Then He went throughout all Galilee preaching in the synagogues. We do not know how long that preaching trip was. It may have been weeks or months. During that trip, Jesus healed a leper. Even though Jesus told him not to tell anyone, the leper could not keep quiet. So many people were seeking Jesus that He had to stay out in desolate areas where there was space for the crowds, and perhaps to hinder those who were simply curious from making the journey.

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.* Mark 2:1,2 Jesus returned to what was now considered His home base, Capernaum. The people again gather around the door to hear Him preaching the Word to them. I have a sense of what this was like when I preached in the slums of Mumbai. We had the use of cement structure about the size of a two car garage with a door and one window. The floor was covered wall to wall with people sitting on the floor and waiting. The window was full of faces from the outside. The doorway was packed with men and behind them more men looking over their shoulders. I preached with a translator who spoke Murati. Every face was intently clinging to every word. After I preached people crowded around asking for prayer. It broke my heart to hear of their needs for healing or a family member. I prayed for people for about half an hour until the team that brought me whisked me away. I did not see any instant healing, but I know the Father heard my prayers and trust that people were drawn to Jesus as their Savior. I share that just to try to give you a small picture of what it must have been like.

We do what Jesus did. We preach the Word (John 20:21ⁱ). Paul told Timothy, ² *preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.* 2 Timothy 4:2 Paul did not tell Timothy to preach against Nero's persecution and perversions, or against the corruption of the powerful or the wickedness of the culture. Those things are obvious. Preaching about the world being evil is like preaching about the sky being blue. He told Timothy to preach what can make a difference in our lives, the Word of God that renews our minds (Romans 12:2ⁱⁱ). When we are changed, our family is changed, and when our families are changed society changes. When we are changed others who are being drawn by the Father ask us what is different about us and then they change (1 Peter 3:15ⁱⁱⁱ).

This whining we hear about Christian nationalism is really people just worried they will not be free to practice their perversions. The kingdom of God is not of this world, at least not until Jesus returns (Daniel 2:44,45^{iv}) The broad road will always be full of those who want nothing to do with any restraints (Matthew 7:13^v). I pray for revival, but revival will never win the majority. It would affect the majority, and society

would be more pleasant, but the selfish, the greedy, and the lustful will always be a majority until we reach our heavenly home where sin is no more. There is a reason God calls us strangers and pilgrims, a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9^{vi}). We do what Jesus did, “Preach the Word!” That is the only true power to make a difference.

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. Mark 2:3,4 These four men must have heard the accounts of Jesus healing people. They had a friend or family member who was paralyzed and loved him so much that they brought him on a litter to Jesus, but the crowd would not let them through. Not to be deterred, they carried him up onto the roof. Roofs in Galilee were accessible by stairs on the outside. On hot summer nights the family might sleep on the roof. Sometimes it was used as a work space. Palm branches or twigs and thatch went over supporting beams and was plastered over with mud or clay totaling about a foot thick. These men were so desperate to see their friend healed, and so sure Jesus could heal him, they broke up the clay and pulled off the palm branches and lowered the man between the beams. Imagine doing that today. Would you have the faith to rip off shingles and with your battery powered saw cut through the plywood, rip out the insulation, cut through the sheet rock to the shouts of those inside threatening you? Then lowering your friend down between the rafters to the feet of Jesus.

How far would you go to see someone saved?

Imagine what it was like in the room as debris started falling. I wonder if Peter was yelling at them, but he probably could not get through the crowd to stop them. One face appears, then another, and another and finally the litter is lowered down in front of Jesus as those four faces peer through the opening and watch in anticipation.

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?” Mark 2:5-7 Note whose faith Jesus saw. It was the faith of the men that brought the paralytic. They were certain Jesus could restore his mobility, or they would not have torn open the roof. The whispers in the crowd must have fell silent when Jesus began to speak. “*Son, your sins are forgiven.*” Then the whispers began again, “What did He say?” “I wonder what he did that would bring a judgment of paralysis?” “Will this mean he can walk again?”

It is important for us to see that some illness or affliction is due to sin in our lives (John 5:14^{vii}). Doctors today acknowledge that sickness can be due to guilt or anxiety or some other psychological state. But that is not always the case. Sometimes God allows affliction to teach us faith, trust, humility, compassion and like virtues. Sometimes it is for the glory of God to be seen when we are healed (John 9:3^{viii}). But Jesus did not say that sin caused his affliction. *Jesus knew what the man’s real need was and what his greatest need was. What good was it if the man had two whole legs and walked right into hell with them. Whenever there is a problem, almost always, sin is the real problem. Jesus got right to the problem.*

“Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. It meets the greatest need; it costs the greatest price; and it brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting

results.” (Wiersbe)^{ix} The scribes were correct, only God can forgive sins. He is the one offended by our sins. This was Jesus’ declaration that He is God!

I wonder if the men on the roof thinking Jesus would stop with forgiveness were telling Jesus, “We brought him because he is paralyzed.” And if Jesus only forgave him, it would really have been all the man needed throughout eternity.

When the scribes heard Jesus declare the man’s sins were forgiven, they were offended. They rightly thought that God alone could forgive sins. They did not ask themselves if this meant that Jesus is God, instead they considered His declaration of forgiveness to be blaspheming. It would be a giant leap of faith for them to believe He is God. They knew with horror that the Caesar thought himself to be a god as most Romans thought him to be. They thought like most good Jews that man could never be God. We are created beings, and He is the Creator, but they missed some important clues in their Scriptures, such as the verse we talked about last week from the prophet Malachi (Malachi 3:1^x). The messenger, John the Baptist, was preparing the way for the Lord to come suddenly to the temple. Isaiah also predicted the son that would be given will be called Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6^{xi}). The author of the proverb asked if we knew the name of God’s Son (Proverbs 30:4^{xii}). And if the branch of Jesse who is the one from the line of David would reign forever, then He must be an eternal being (Psalm 89:36^{xiii}). The Baptist was asking them to prepare the way for the Lord (Mark 1:3^{xiv}).

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?’ Mark 2:8,9 Jesus perceived what was in their hearts. Having set aside His omniscience to become a man (Philippians 2:6,7^{xv}), Jesus did not know exactly what they were thinking, but He could read their faces and sensed in His spirit their shock. He is going to graciously show them that their assumptions were wrong, and He does it in a typical rabbinical way of asking them questions. First He asks why they question in their hearts if He is blaspheming. Did they not know the Scriptures that teach the Messiah will be divine? Were they not waiting for Him to come? Was Jesus not already showing signs that only the Messiah could do (John 3:2^{xvi})? Then why do they question in their hearts? Do not be faithless but believe. Check your motivation for rejecting Him. Are you looking on outward appearances rather than the heart (1 Samuel 16:7^{xvii})? Are you afraid that your interpretations might be proven wrong if He is the One? Do you refuse to believe because you have something to lose?

Then He posed a question that would force a decision on the first question. *Is it easier to say your sins are forgiven, or to say rise up and walk?* The answer is, “Neither is possible with man!” Only God can say each with absolute authority and certainty. That is the obvious answer. He was giving them a little taste of humble pie. He will be firmer and more direct later after they have seen more fulfillments of the prophecies. Now Jesus has them trapped in their own misunderstanding, for they knew the rabbinical saying, *“There is no sick man healed of his sickness until all his sins have been forgiven him’ ... to the Jews a sick man was a man with whom God was angry.”* (Barclay)^{xviii} and could not be healed unless his sins were forgiven. I think Jesus really wanted them to believe and be saved. That is loving your enemies (Matthew 5:44^{xix})!

Look for a moment at the faith Jesus had. He laid it all on the line. If the man is not healed people will doubt He is the Son of Man. The scribes will be sure He was

blaspheming. Peter's mother-in-law will be really upset about the hole in her roof! But Jesus is as cool as a cucumber. Remember when Satan tempted Him it always began with, "*If you are the Son of God, then...*" Jesus knows who He is. He will tell Nicodemus that He is the only One who has come down from heaven (John 3:13^{xx}). He will tell His enemies, "*Before Abraham was I Am!*" (John 8:48^{xxi}). He will declare, "*I and the Father are one*" (John 10:30^{xxii}) and "*No one comes to the Father but by me!*" (John 14:6^{xxiii}). Everyone in this scene except Jesus is wondering what will happen next.

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!"* Mark 2:10-12 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority ... He wanted them to see irrefutable proof that He is the Daniel 7 Son of Man who will be worshiped by the whole earth (Daniel 7:13,14^{xxiv}). Jesus wanted them to come to the conclusion that He was indeed Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14)^{xxv}. Only the offended party can forgive a sin against them. Sin is offensive to our holy God. He created us and has a right to demand that we be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15^{xxvi}). When Joseph was seduced by Potiphar's wife he said he would not sin against God (Genesis 39:9^{xxvii}). It would be a sin against Potiphar but ultimately it was sinning against God. Satan tempts us with private sin by saying that no one is harmed. Sin harms our soul and is rebellion against God, even if no one else is affected. When Jesus said He has power to forgive sins, it is a declaration that He is the offended party and therefore is God incarnate.

He commanded the paralytic to get up, pick up his bed, and go home. The One who commanded light to come into existence is now commanding a human body to have all nerve connections to function as if they were fully trained, and muscles to form, and balance to interact with the nervous and muscular system so that the man could not only stand, but bend over and pick up his bed, and walk through the stunned crowd. Spurgeon wrote: "*I think I see him! He sets one foot down to God's glory, he plants the other to the same note, he walks to God's glory ... he carries his bed to God's glory, he moves his whole body to the glory of God, he speaks, he shouts, he sings, he leaps to the glory of God.*"^{xxviii}

"They were all amazed and glorified God saying, "We never saw anything like this!" That is because it had never happened before. God in the flesh never walked the earth showing His power to forgive and heal. "*The experts in the law were hoist with their own petard. On their own stated beliefs the man could not be cured, unless he was forgiven. He was cured, therefore he was forgiven. Therefore Jesus' claim to forgive sin must be true.*" (Barclay)^{xxix}

Matthew records the response a little differently. ⁸ *When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.* Matthew 9:8 That is an interesting way to describe the presence of God. There is fear because we realize the presence of our holy God who is just and is aware of our sins (Job 42:5,6^{xxx}).

There is a desire to glorify God because He has stepped into time and space and healed this suffering person. They thought God had given such authority to men. That is true, but He is not just a man. He is the Son of Man of whom Daniel said the whole earth will worship, and yet the commandments say we are to worship God alone (Exodus

20:3^{xxxii}. That must mean He is one with God, one in essence while still three beings. Isaiah 9:6^{xxxiii} tells us that the Son who is given to us will be called *Everlasting Father!*

Have you ever wondered why Jesus could just grant forgiveness without a penalty for the sin committed? Jesus' death about two years after this miracle would pay that penalty. Jesus knew it. He told Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, that like the bronze snake Moses lifted up in the wilderness, so He must be lifted up so that whoever believes in Him might have eternal life (John 3:14,15^{xxxiii}). The saints of old, all those in Hebrews 11 and countless others had faith in the coming provision of God for their sins. They trusted in God to provide the sacrifice acceptable to Him for all the heinous sins of mankind. They looked forward to the coming provision of God as we look back to it. In the timeless realm of God, it was as if it was already done. God put the names of the redeemed in the Lamb's Book of Life who was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8^{xxxiv}). ESV translates it as their names were written before the foundation of the world which is not the Greek order of the words. Still, taking that interpretation, it was still the Book of Life of the Lamb that was slain before the world was created. Jesus said that no one comes to the Father except through Him (Jon 14:6^{xxxiii}). Jesus coming death, reckoned in heaven as if already done, applied the atoning sacrifice to the paralytic.

Hughes imagines the scene that followed with spiritual insight. *What a display before the wondering crowd! Who is to say that the paralytic and his four friends did not dance down the street while the multitude clapped in rhythm? And as he went home, he bore something far more impressive than his bed. It was a clean heart, the greatest miracle of all—no guilt, no bitterness, no tension. Someday those newly restored limbs would wither. But there would remain in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life, for his sins were forgiven.*

The Lord can do anything he wants. He can heal any disease he pleases. But the greatest miracle, the only one that is eternal, is that he forgives sin. Has he ever said to you, "Your sins are forgiven"?^{xxxv}

It is ironic that the ones who were really paralyzed were the scribes. They heard of all the people being healed, and instead of directing people to Jesus, that watched to find fault. They had irrefutable evidence of Jesus' divinity backed by their own saying, but apparently they remained paralyzed by the crippling disease of pride. They would not accept God had come into the world to forgive sin. And so it is today. People are rejoicing and transformed by the forgiveness of Jesus while others stay paralyzed and critical of the joy and peace we have found. To which group do you belong? If it is the latter, know that Jesus is willing to say to you, "Son or daughter, your sins are forgiven, rise to new life."

Questions:

- 1 Review the events of chapter 1.
- 2 What did Jesus preach?
- 3 How was the faith of the four men expressed?
- 4 Why were the scribes shocked by Jesus' words?
- 5 What were they missing?
- 6 What was the saying Jesus challenged them with?
- 7 What is one reason Jesus healed the man? (verse 10)
- 8 Who can forgive sins?

9 Why could Jesus forgive this man and God be just?

10 Who was really paralyzed?

ⁱ **John 20:21 (ESV)**

²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

ⁱⁱ **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

ⁱⁱⁱ **1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

^{iv} **Daniel 2:44-45 (ESV)**

⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,

⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”

^v **Matthew 7:13 (ESV)**

¹³ “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

^{vi} **1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)**

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

^{vii} **John 5:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”

^{viii} **John 9:3 (ESV)**

³ Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

^{ix} David Guzik, *Mark*, David Guzik’s Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), Mk 2:5–7.

^x **Malachi 3:1 (ESV)**

¹ “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

^{xi} **Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)**

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

^{xii} **Proverbs 30:4 (ESV)**

⁴ Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name? Surely you know!

^{xiii} **Psalm 89:36 (ESV)**

³⁶ His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me.

^{xiv} **Mark 1:3 (ESV)**

³ the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’ ”

^{xv} **Philippians 2:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

^{xvi} **John 3:2 (ESV)**

² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”

^{xvii} **1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV)**

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have

rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

^{xviii} ¹ David Guzik, *Mark*, David Guzik’s Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), Mk 2:8–12.

xix Matthew 5:44 (ESV)

⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

xx John 3:13 (ESV)

¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

xxi John 8:58 (ESV)

⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

xxii John 10:30 (ESV)

³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

xxiii John 14:6 (ESV)

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

xxiv Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

xxv Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

xxvi 1 Peter 1:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

xxvii Genesis 39:9 (ESV)

⁹ He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

^{xxviii} ¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*, vol. 1, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 65–66.

^{xxix} ¹ David Guzik, *Mark*, David Guzik’s Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), Mk 2:8–12.

xxx Job 42:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; ⁶ therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

xxxi Exodus 20:3 (ESV)

³ “You shall have no other gods before me.

xxxii Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

xxxiii John 3:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

xxxiv Revelation 13:8 (ESV)

⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

^{xxxv} ¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*, vol. 1, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 66.