

Mark 2:1-12

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[0 : 00] As we begin to consider this very dramatic event in the life of the Lord Jesus.

! Let me introduce it by quoting some words of Jesus that we find later on in Mark's Gospel.! Jesus will later say, what does it profit a man or woman to gain the whole world but then lose their soul? If you could ask God for one thing and know that he would give you that one thing, what would you ask him for?

Just think for a moment, one thing, you have the assurance that whatever it is you ask, God will give it to you. Maybe it's health, maybe it's a job, maybe it's a husband or a wife, a place to live. If you could ask God for but one thing and know that he would absolutely grant you that request, what is it you would ask him for?

[1 : 27] In this passage we find some friends obviously deeply concerned for another friend who is paralysed and incapable of moving or going anywhere under his own steam.

They hear that Jesus has come to Capernaum and agree that they will take their friend that he might meet with Jesus.

Most probably they've heard stories that the man from Nazareth can heal and make whole. We don't know anything really of the background, we don't know anything really of the background, but we do know that they come to Jesus.

And they are so determined and so resolved for their friend to meet with Jesus that they refuse to be hindered, they refuse to be put off by the fact that the crowd in the house where Jesus was was so large that they couldn't get in the front door.

So what they do is they go round the outside of the house and I once spent two months in Israel as a student and you see these houses still, they were little stairs up to a flat balcony and they take their friend up, you can almost imagine the scene, each perhaps four, we're not told how many there were, each corner of the pallet lifting him up tenderly, gingerly.

[3 : 02] And then they reach the roof and then they reach the roof and then they begin to tear away at the roof and uncover a hole big enough for their friend to be lowered down into the presence of Jesus.

And you don't need much imagination.

To think what excitement there must have been for the man, the paralyzed man and his friends.

They had come to Jesus and now they were actually in the presence of Jesus.

I wonder if their excitement was just overwhelming them. And Jesus sees the paralyzed man. Well you couldn't miss him. And he says to the paralyzed man, Your sins are forgiven.

I've often wondered what the first reaction of the paralyzed man and his friends must have been when Jesus spoke those words. Your sins are forgiven.

[4 : 38] I wonder if they were thinking, Well, yes, I'm glad to hear it. But, but, the reason why we've come is our friend is paralyzed.

There was no social security. There was no social network to help a man like this. He would be housebound. He would be at the mercy of friends taking him here and taking him there.

They longed for him to be made whole. Jesus was making him whole. But perhaps at first they didn't realize it.

Jesus looked at the man. Jesus could see the man's physical problem. He could see that the man was incapable of walking. He was utterly dependent on the kindness and generosity of others.

Jesus looks at him. And says to him, Your sins are forgiven.

[5 : 46] Some of you will have heard about the phrase referred pain. You know, you go to the doctor and you've got a pain in your knee.

And you say, Doctor, I've been really struggling with this pain in my knee. Can you help me? And the doctor examines you. And he says, Yes, I can really help you. Here are exercises for your neck. And you say, Excuse me, Doctor. My neck's fine. My neck's not the problem. It's my knee. And the doctor says, Well, no.

Your problem is your neck. And the pain is coming out in your knee. It's referred pain. What you think is the problem really isn't the problem. The problem is somewhere else.

Here is this man. And he's coming to Jesus full of hope, no doubt.

[6 : 47] Walking. Walking. Would he be able to lead Jesus with new legs? Would the healer from Nazareth heal him?

Jesus isn't oblivious, as we'll see in a moment. To his physical needs. But Jesus goes to the root and heart of his deepest need.

And his deepest need was to be right with God. His deepest need was not to have new legs, but a new heart. His deepest need was to know that whether he lived or died.

God would look upon him with grace, with mercy, with love. That God would make him right with himself.

And that's why Jesus came into the world. He came principally, primarily, to make us right with God.

And so Jesus says to the man's son, your sins are forgiven.

[8 : 05] Now that was an astonishing statement for Jesus to make. And it's so astonishing to the religious elite who are there, the scribes and the Pharisees, that they're appalled at what they've heard, at what Jesus said.

They began to say, who does this man think he is? He's blaspheming God. Now that word blaspheme means to speak evil of God.

He is taking to himself that which only God has the right to do. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Sin is against God primarily.

That's the heart and horror of sin. It is against God. Against his nature. Against his will. Against his word.

Who does he think he is? And Jesus looks around and he knows that these men, inwardly, if not yet outwardly, are critiquing him.

[9 : 15] And saying, who does this man dare to think that he is? And so Jesus says to them, why do you question these things in your heart?

Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven. Or to say, rise up, take up your bed and walk. Now words are cheap, aren't they?

Anyone can make any claim about themselves. I could say to you, your sins are forgiven.

Who am I? And nobody from nowhere. Well I'm from somewhere, I'm from Scotland. And that's something to be thankful for. But who am I?

And Jesus does something that must have absolutely dumbfounded. Not only the religious elite who were there, but everyone else who was there.

[10 : 22] He turned to the man and he said, I say to you. Notice the emphasis. There is an emphasis in the original text.

I say to you. Rise up. Take up your bed. And walk. In the Old Testament.

In the book of Isaiah chapter 35. God gives his people a picture. There are a number of pictures in the Old Testament of the coming Saviour.

And the picture in Isaiah 35 is of one who will come and heal the sick. Give sight to the blind. And cure the lame.

And Jesus says to the man, I say to you, pick up your bed and go home. And he rose and immediately picked up his bed, went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.

[11 : 37] You see, Jesus' words weren't empty. They weren't vacuous. They weren't cheap. He backed up his declaration of divine pardon.

With the evidence of his divine power. And the man was never the same man again.

He picked up his bed. Perhaps wondering if he was living out a dream. Is this for real? Is this really happening to me?

I've often wondered, and probably often is the right word. I've often wondered, whether when Jesus said to this man, son, your sins are forgiven.

I've often wondered if his train of thought went something like this. Well, that's fine, Jesus. Thank you very much.

[12:44] But, but, do you realise why I've come? Do you see my real need? But then I've wondered if the very words of Jesus, your sins are forgiven, began to penetrate.

And the man began to realise, I came to Jesus thinking, my greatest need was new legs. But now I see that my deepest need was a new heart.

I wonder if the man, before Jesus, actually cures him, heals him, raises him up.

I wonder if the man could have left the presence of Jesus. Still a paralysed man. But now a new man, in Jesus Christ.

Knowing that he had come to the Son of God. And that God in his Son had met his deepest, most urgent, most pressing, most vital need.

[14:05] What's true for that man is true for all of us. Whatever our needs are. And we live in a world where people have needs that are unimaginable in their, in their awfulness.

There isn't a day I don't read in the newspapers or read reports of this or that. And I think, Lord, I can hardly read these reports. They're just so, so awful.

The poverty, the, the dereliction, the, the sufferings that many people are enduring in this world. And yet, the good news of God, in Jesus Christ, is that our greatest need, towering above all other physical, social, even psychological needs, our greatest need, is that God deals with the sin that would ultimately separate us from him for eternity.

That God would reach into our lives and through his Son, Jesus Christ, wash us clean from the inside out. I wonder how many people there will be in heaven who will bless God that he loved them enough, not first to cure them of their ills, to heal them of their diseases, but that God came and had mercy on them, forgave their sins.

You see, what Jesus spoke here so simply, son, your sins are forgiven you. Actually, as you read through Mark's Gospel, you realise now, what does this actually mean?

[16:10] And it takes to the 15th chapter, the penultimate chapter of Mark's Gospel, to realise what it would cost Jesus Christ himself. In order for him, in order for him, effectively, to forgive and put away our sin and reconcile us to God, it would take him himself, becoming the sin bearer of the world, taking all the estrangement, the rebellion that lurks and lies deep within us, taking it upon himself, paying God's righteous judgment in our place.

It would cost Jesus to speak those words. And so the last thing I want to say, just for a moment, is, I wonder if the Lord Jesus Christ, when he spoke those words to that man, your sins are forgiven, I wonder if the Lord Jesus Christ was thinking, it's going to cost me everything.

So that that declaration of mine to you, will actually, and truly, be real for you.

So what is our greatest, deepest, most pressing and urgent need? It's to know that our sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to his cross, and we bear it no more.

It's to know that all my sin has been fully and freely and finally forgiven by the mercy of God in the giving of his Son, Jesus Christ.

[18:13] Thank you for listening.