

VI. Project Andrew
Bring Them to Him
“Your Sins Are Forgiven”
Mark 2:1–12

Dr. Harry L. Reeder, III
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Let's come to the Word of God that we might focus upon the gate that brings us to which we go for heaven and that's Jesus. He has some words for us in Mark 2. This is God's Word which is inspired, inerrant and sufficient. Mark 2:1-12 says [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!”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I would be derelict of duty if I didn't say in this sermon, we have a test. It's not my question that is the test. It's the test from Jesus. He has a question in this text, ‘What's easier to say; your sins are forgiven or rise, take up your bed and walk to the paralytic? We are going to answer that. Before you answer, I'd like for you to maybe think about this perhaps in a way you haven't before. That question, of course, is from our Savior Himself and He always gives us questions to teach us, to show us what we know, to show us what we don't know, and to show us what we need to know. This question is not incidental or trivial but this question is crucial.

I also would like to ask a question, in fact I'd like to ask a couple of questions. If somebody was to say to you, “I understand your Christian, so can you tell me the essential foundational truth of Christianity? Let me be more specific. You say that Jesus is the Son of God who came in the flesh, and this happened 2000 years ago. Would you tell me why? Just give me the bottom line, why did He come?” How would you answer that? It's a good question. It's one that we ought to be able to answer. Why did Jesus come? Jesus came in the Incarnation of Christ. That is the Son of God in full humanity. He had a human mind. He had a human soul. He had a human body. It was the humbling of the Son of God, not by subtraction, but by addition, as He takes upon Himself a human body. We call this the Incarnation. Emmanuel – God with us, God one of us, God among us, to take the place of us. Why? To save us from our sins. That is the essential message of the Gospel.

Are there multiple benefits that come from that essential blessing? Yes, Jesus came with the declarative blessing that you can be forgiven of your sins. Jesus has come with the glorious blessing; the power of sin. Not only does He remove the penalty and the shame of your sin, He will break the power of sin and increasingly you will be able to put to death sin and pursue obedience. And one day there will even be the absence of the presence of sin, or even the ability to sin when He brings you home to Himself. He has come to give you victory over sin. The crucial issue in life is not the consequences of sin simply in this world, but the reality of sin in your life and He has come to set you free from your sins. That is the essential message that we have in the Gospel.

Perhaps another question would come, now that Jesus has come in the flesh. What did the angel say to call Him? You shall call His name, Yeshua – Jesus. Why? It means Jehovah saves – God saves, from what? Sin. There are multiple blessings that come in our life, our family, our marriage, our business, our work, into nations, cultures, cities and communities. But what He comes to deal with is the rule, the reign and the ruin of sin in our lives, and in our hearts. He has come in order to accomplish that, but only He could accomplish. Yet thus God has come in the flesh. Now Jesus goes to bear our sins on the cross. He is raised bodily on the third day. He bodily ascends with that glorified body to the right hand of the Father, and then He will come for His people – their bodily return of Christ and we will be able to see Him in that glorified body for all eternity, no longer by faith, but by sight when He comes again.

The question is, what is the church here for? Why are we members of the church – the body of Christ? It is because we are the church body number two. We are to bring into the world the message of what Jesus accomplished in body number one. The Incarnate body, He takes our sin, bears it and redeems us at the cross. The indwelt body, His church, which He and dwells by His Spirit, has a mission and this is the way that I've tried to share it for this year. Until He returns, Christ has unleashed His church on an enterprise of a God glorifying, Christ exalting, Spirit filled enterprise called 'make disciples of all the nations.' This is why we exist. This is our purpose as the body of Christ. He gave it to us on a mountain after His resurrection prior to His ascension and it's called the Great Commission.

It has multiple consequences when it is carried out and this year, we want to really go not only to this basic of the mission, message and ministry of the church, but what of the ministries of the church should we make sure is in place? It is the rudimentary, fundamental ministry of the church and its personal evangelism that we share with the lost Jesus, that we bring them to Him. Thus, we took the time this year on what we're calling Project Andrew – bring them to Him. Every time you see Andrew in the Bible, he's bringing somebody to Jesus or he's bringing Jesus to somebody in order to bring them to Him. John the Baptist brings Andrew to Jesus. Andrew brings Peter to Jesus. Then he brings a little boy to Jesus. When we see him again, he brings some Greeks who have been moved by the hand of God to seek Jesus. Andrew is always bringing people to Jesus.

So, we ask ourselves, first of all, a searching question, who am I bringing? Who am I inviting into a worship service to meet Jesus; into a small group, to meet Jesus; into a Sunday school community to meet Jesus; into my home for a meal, to meet Jesus. They aren't going to look for Him. There is none who seek Him, no not one (Romans 3:11). We are long past being in a culture where people are going to knock down doors if you do church right, because they want to find one. No, we're on a mission field with a mission and a message and it's glorious when we gather to be equipped, encouraged and to praise God, but it's paramount that when we scatter, we bring them to Him. That's what Andrew taught us.

Then we looked at our need to pray for God to prepare hearts when we bring Him to them so that we can bring them to Him and we need to pray that God will send workers into His harvest field. Now, we have come to the last two studies on this project Andrew. It's not surprising that we are in this Mark 2 passage because it says right in this text, that four men brought a man to Jesus. There is so much here so let me try to share it with you this way. We are in Mark's Gospel which means we're in Peter's gospel but we call it Mark because he's the secretary writing this down. The reality is, this is Peter, and Peter likes to get to the point. Now, many times Peter misses the point, but when he gets the point, he likes to get to the point. He doesn't pick up the birth of Jesus. He doesn't pick up he doesn't pick up the childhood of Jesus like Matthew and Luke do. He goes right to the ordination of Jesus when He is baptized, begins His ministry and starts to unfold His ministry in Mark 1.

Mark 1 is a victory tour. Jesus is going everywhere. Mark is astoundingly focusing our attention on what Jesus came to do. As He is doing it in these opening weeks and months, there's no adversity. There's very little question. There are very little roadblocks. In fact, Jesus is going everywhere. In fact, Mark 1 is where Jesus shows His power over demons, over sin, over darkness and over those who were in need of healing. He shows His power constantly. People are amazed at His power displayed. They are amazed at the sermons He preaches but there's only one problem. Now, this is going to be interesting. There's only one problem that Mark shows before you get to Mark 2.

What is the problem? It is something that we wouldn't think is a problem. Crowds. In Mark 1, there are so many crowds in Capernaum, He leaves there to escape the crowds. Now in our mind the metric of success is what? Big crowds. I'm not opposed to crowds, in fact, I woke up this morning, said 'I'm in trouble.' I've spent some hours in preparation and I've got spring rains, spring forward and spring break. This is going to be a challenging day today. We got the spring rains. It showed up as it was pouring down at the house and I know every five drops I lose ten attendees that turn day. Spring break is the wonderful movement where most of Briarwood goes to the Gulf Coast. Then there is the time change of Spring forward where as those leaving today will see others just coming in.

Crowds are not always a sign of success. They can be the sign of something else. They can be the sign of self-absorption. Who had the biggest crowd at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses or Baal? It was Baal. Jesus had a pretty big crowd at Palm Sunday, didn't He? What did it do on Good Friday? They crucified Him. Crowds are not always the measurement. God has come to save His people from their sins, and that means He's looking to preach the Gospel and if necessary, the crowd when it becomes an obstacle, He leaves as He did in Mark 1. But now we see in Mark 2 that He has returned to Capernaum. He's back and He has the crowd problem again. Jesus is back at His hometown.

You may be thinking "I thought he was I thought he was raised in Nazareth." He was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth but Capernaum in His ministry became His hometown. Not only did He have a hometown, but He had a home. Mark 2:1 says He was at home. Did He buy one? I don't think so. Did He rent one? I don't think so. I've stood there on numerous occasions and I think His home base became a home and that it was Peter's wife's mother's home – Peter's mother-in-law. It's almost positive that this location was the home of the mother-in-law. In fact, in the fourth century, you can see the walls of a church that were built on its foundation and now there is a church that's on stilts up over it, where you look down on the glass, down into that home.

It's clear that they that Jesus is standing in that house and what is He doing? Notice His primary calling is not healing people. It says in the text He was preaching the Word – the primacy of preaching. The biggest decision a believer makes after the decision to come to Christ is the preaching they listen to. It is not the exclusive means of grace, but is the primary means of grace in evangelism and discipleship. As He is preaching the Word the text says that many were gathered together – a crowd – so that there was no more room. So there were people He couldn't speak to because the crowd had created an obstacle. He couldn't even go to the door and reach people because He it was so crowded.

Here comes an incident. Now we got an eyewitness account from Peter, as it's written by Mark, this event then happened – four men came carrying a paralytic man to Jesus. When they couldn't get to Jesus, what happened? They couldn't get near Him because of the crowd so they removed the roof above Him. When they when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay (Mark 2:4). I have tried to imagine this moment.

Do you know the hardest thing for a preacher? It's called the introduction to the sermon. In football they have this thing called a two-minute warning but it falls at the end of the game. For the preacher, the two-minute warning is at the beginning. I have two minutes to convince you not to turn on your iPhone. Do not start scrolling. Do not go to safari. I have two minutes to convince not to color the zeroes in on the bulletin. Don't play tic tac toe. We have to make contact here.

Here's Jesus with this big crowd. Look at all the distractions that people are moving around and jostling for a place and trying to hear Him and everything. He's trying to get their attention and all of a sudden, somebody's pounding on the roof. This isn't even a cell phone going off or a baby crying. Can you imagine the distraction that's taking place there? I don't know what Jesus did. I just think He kept going. That's what I would do. In fact, Luke tells us in his Gospel there were tiles. These roofs were made out of hardened clay around sticks, twigs and leaves, and many times they would work clay tiles in it to kind of give it substance because these roofs would also be walked on.

These four men get up on this roof, they get the tools to break through. They even break through the tiles. I can only imagine the stuff that's falling down but forget what's falling down because down comes a bed. They're bringing him to Jesus and what does Jesus do? When this happens here is what Jesus does as you can see the security, serenity and yet the authority of Jesus in this moment. Mark 2:5 says *[5] And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."* The word 'son' in the original is a term of endearment. Do you think these four men brought this paralytic to get his sins forgiven?

Why is the first thing out of Jesus' mouth, 'Son, your sins are forgiven?' Jesus knows that the heart of the problem is the problem with the heart, not the body. He is not insensitive to the paralytic for you will see something far beyond that. In fact, look at His sensitivity, by calling him 'son.' You remember when we come to Christmas and we have those readings in Isaiah that the Messiah is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and people think 'I thought God is the Father and Jesus is the Son?' He is but Father is not only a noun, it is a noun that has a verb impact. Have you ever heard this? He has fathered a child. Nobody becomes a Christian unless Jesus does what's necessary for them to become a Christian. He fathers us as a Redeemer into new life and you see Him now as the everlasting Father, the One whose work will secure our forgiveness, and then speaks to this one as son.

My son, who has taken the time other than these four men, to even care about a paralytic. My son, your sins are forgiven. It's clear, He is not talking about the relativistic

forgiveness that we give to each other because we are forgiving in Jesus when we sinned against each other for that's a temporal forgiveness. It's wonderful, it's glorious, and it's a display of the Gospel, but here Jesus is talking about a transcendent and eternal forgiveness. In other words, He's about to heal him as we read in the text at the beginning of this study but that body that will rise up and take up that bed will one day be on a death bed. It'll be temporary and then praise God, you can get a new body for the new heavens in the new earth. But there will never come a time beginning at that moment, throughout all eternity, that He will ever be under the dominion, shame and guilt of sins for he is forgiven. The declaration has been made.

A parallel and illustrative moment of this is found in Romans 8:1 that says *[1] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*. Here is a paralytic. What do we know about this man? We know two things from the text. One, he is a paralytic which means he is physically helpless and hopeless. Two, if Jesus forgives him of his sin, what does that tell you? He's a sinner so spiritually, he's helpless and hopeless. There is only One who can address this. There is only One who can heal him physically and there is only One who can bring the healing and restoration power of forgiveness. It is Jesus, because He is the Son of God that is come in the flesh to be One of us and among us, in order to take the place of us at the cross.

There are some people out there that are listening and they are called Scribes. The Scribes see this, and they immediately have a reaction. What do they do? Mark 2:6-9 says *[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'?*

As Jesus is doing this with the paralytic He knows what's in their (the Scribes) heart, and He answers the question that they have not verbalized, but they are thinking, which is 'why is He blaspheming?' These Scribes are right theologically, but they are wrong disastrously and eternally. They're right in that only God can forgive sins because sins are ultimately against God and you cannot be forgiven without God's intervention because God must be satisfied. The soul that sins shall surely die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). I will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3, Exodus 34:7). In other words, every sin has to be paid for. The wrath of God stands over every sin.

Here is a paralytic, helpless and hopeless, physically and as a sinner like all of us, he's helpless and hopeless spiritually, for we are dead in our sins. These Scribes are right that only God can raise up a paralytic, only God can heal and only God can forgive. Where they are wrong is they have ruled out the reality that in front of them is God in the flesh, and that is an eternally disastrous mistake. They refuse to accept the obvious. This is God who has come in the flesh. Jesus has already presented to them four evidences of His deity.

Evidence number one, He knew what was in the heart of the paralytic. Not only a faith that He alone could heal him, but He saw within that heart a faith that only Jesus could forgive him. We don't hear him say that, but Jesus knew that because we're saved by faith and repentance and Jesus knows this granular saving faith is in his heart, and that's why Jesus pronounces it. Jesus knows it's in his heart for two reasons. Number one, He knows the heart and only God knows the heart. That is an evidence of deity. Secondly, who gives saving faith? It's Jesus. Jesus is able to pronounce the blessing of saving faith because He not only knows what's in the heart of the paralytic, He also is the one that puts it in the heart. For by grace you

have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves for it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). He gives it, knows it is in the heart, and He's able to declare the blessing that he attaches to that saving faith. You're forgiven. Truly, truly, he who believes in Me has eternal life (John 5:24).

Evidence number two, He has demonstrated to His deity because He not only knows what's in the heart of the paralytic, He knows what's in the heart of the Scribes. He knows what they're thinking in themselves, and only God knows the heart (Romans 8:27).

Evidence number three, He has demonstrated His deity by doing what only God can do. He forgives the man of his sins.

Evidence number four, He has demonstrated His deity because He's about to do what only God can do – Divine direct supernatural healing. This is healing. This is not wave your hand and people fall around and now they can speak – blah, blah, blah. I'm just trying to tell you a miracle is a miracle. This is a man who's paralytic. He doesn't have to practice walking. The miracle raises him up. He picks up his bed, think of all the muscle memory atrophy that would have been there, but when the miracle comes, there doesn't have to be preparation, Jesus speaks, the man gets up, picks up a bed and he goes home as he walks out with it. This is Divine intervention. This is a miracle and only God can do that. But the Scribes have said 'no.' Their theology is right in that only God can do it but their decision is wrong when they ruled out that God has come in the flesh to them.

By the way, Jesus again shows us miracles aren't there for entertainment. Yet, that's why the crowds were there. The crowds hadn't come to hear the preaching of the Word. The crowds had come to see the entertainment show. We call it rubbernecking in our culture. This was the rubbernecking crowd. When there's an accident on Highway 280, traffic backs up for about 38 miles. Why? They need to clear it off, but they have already cleared it off. It's backed up because everybody's trying to drive slowly by to look and see what happened, wondering if anyone is hurt. It's curiosity. Here are the crowds that have come for curiosity in self-absorption for entertainment. Jesus is there to preach the Word. They're there to see the next miracle, and they've all come for it. That's why there's not only a problem of the Scribes, there's a problem of the people in Capernaum.

At the end of Jesus' ministry do you remember what He does with Capernaum? He brings a curse upon it. When I take people to Israel, I take them to three cities and they're nothing but ruins, do you know why? It is the fulfillment of the prophetic curse of Jesus when He says in Matthew 11:20-24, [20] *Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. [21] "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. [22] But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. [23] And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. [24] But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."*

Capernaum was brought under the judgment of God. The Scribes come under judgment, because they rule out that this is the Son of God who has come to save them from their sins. Capernaum is brought under a curse because when they heard and saw Jesus, they did not believe and would not repent for they wanted a designer religion for entertainment, not a Deliverer from their sins. So the judgment of God falls upon them and they have disastrous consequences of eternity.

Mark 2:10-12 says [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!”*

We recently had a mission’s conference and we said ‘Missions exist because worship does.’ At the end of missions is worship those who fall short of the glory of God are saved from their sins, and now they give glory to God. Here in Mark 2 at the end of this and people get saved and what happens? Worship, but don't forget signs, wonders, and miracles are not there to satisfy our curiosity and entertain us. Whenever God does it, it's for a purpose. He helped a man who was helpless and hopeless spiritually with the Gospel. He saved him from his sins, then the miracle – signs, wonders, miracles, just flip it. Miracles are supernatural acts of God that are inexplicable by natural consequences. Miracles are when God shows up and does something and by definition that is supernatural.

So the miracle creates wonder as a sign. Jesus said in Mark 2 ‘so that you will know that what I said is true, his sins are forgiven. I'm now going to do something only God can do not only forgive sins, but I'm going to do this miracle so that you will know that his forgiveness is assured.’ He does the miracle it creates wonder and then it's a sign that He is the One who comes to save us from our sins. He hasn't come simply to patch up bodies. He has come to redeem His people for eternity. You and I have sin. Now how are we going to deal with it? That's really the question. So let me give you the take away.

Let's answer the question from Jesus. Which is it harder to say and then do, ‘your sins are forgiven or to a paralytic rise up, pick up your bed and walk? On one hand our answer is, well, both of them are pretty easy to say, but say whenever you're talking about God isn't just verbal, it's visual. When God says something, it's done. God does three great works – creation, providence and redemption. How does God create? We call it *ex nihilo*. There's nothing then He speaks and there's everything. Everything that's invisible God made by speaking. God said ‘Let there be what light and there was light.’ He spoke it – it is.

In Providence, He speaks over His people as He secures our good and our glory as He gives us breath to live, the heartbeat. And the rain falls upon the just and the unjust for He commands and His Providence is done, but not in redemption. He speaks and your sins are forgiven. The reason those sins are forgiven is months from this incident in Mark 2 He'll go to Calvary and wear our sins and bear our judgment because sins have to be paid for. He will wear our sins on the cross, all the sins of all of His people for all of eternity. He will bear all of God's infinite wrath against those sins on the cross. Then He will say “It is finished.” It has been paid. We're forgiven, our condemnation is gone, our charges have been eviscerated, and now we're innocent because we wear His righteousness – the One who wore our sins and we have everlasting life. We're not only forgiven, we are accepted in the beloved. Our sins are great, but His mercy and grace is greater. Our sins are many. His grace is more and He wins the battle that we might be saved. Then He tenderly brings you in as His son or daughter.

I'm deeply indebted to many commentators, but Mr. Keller and Mr. Carson in particular on this. Don't you love it when He heals a leper? Does Jesus need to touch anybody to heal him? No, but He touches lepers. Why? They've never been touched since they're leprosy. He touches them. He touches you and me with terms of endearment and the sweetness and power of His presence – My son, my daughter.

Do you remember the little girl that He raised? The term He used to raise her was ‘*Talitha cumi*’ which translated means ‘sweetie, sweetheart, rise up (Mark 5:41).’ There is the

Savior who, with His strength, redeems you and with His tenderness calls you. Don't be like the Scribes and go to the emptiness of works religion. Your sins are real, your guilt is real, your shame is real and there's Someone who can really set you free. Don't be like the Capernaums and go off into the designer religion of self-entertainment. Come to Jesus, trust Him for He will set you free. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Would you take a few moments in silent prayer? If you're reading this today, I plead with you to come to Him who loves you and will loosen you from your sins. If you'd like to pray with someone about a decision to follow Him please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we'd love to talk and pray confidentially with you about this, but come. For those of you who have come to Him, somebody brought you to Him so as you go out would you begin to ask God who you could bring to Him so that they might come to Jesus? Do we have the faith to see understand our friends who don't know Christ are helpless and hopeless and bound for a judgment that is unspeakable? Would you bring them to a worship service that they might meet Jesus in the Word, bring them to a Sunday school community, bring them to your small group, bring them to your home for a meal or coffee, just bring them, and then call upon God to open their eyes, ears and from their heart believe as the paralytic. Jesus, hear Your people speak the words of endearment to them – son, daughter, you are Mine, I've set you free and I am yours for eternity. Then O God, compel us with the love of Christ to bring the helpless and the hopeless to Jesus. I pray in Your Name, Amen.