

Title: Miracle Worker, Part 3 (Mark 2:1-12)

Introduction: [Recap] So a few years back my wife and I bought our very first home. And soon after we did, I realized something really weird about our back door. That whenever you lock the knob, the outside handle would lock but the inside wouldn't. Kind of like a hotel room door. And I had never seen a door like this at a house. And at first I kind of liked it because you didn't have to unlock the door every time you went outside. **But I soon realized it had a very big downside.** Because one evening within a month or so of us moving in, my wife was taking our dog out back. So I follow her outside. And out of habit, as I stepped on the back porch, I grab the door behind me and pull it shut. And as soon as my wife saw me doing it, she was like "No, No, No! Don't close it!" Because what I didn't realize since I could turn the knob on the inside, is that the door was actually locked. So by closing it, I had just locked us out of the house. With our almost one year old son still inside. So we're like, "Okay, Okay, Okay, what do we do? What do we do?" **And I feel like whenever you lock yourself out of something you go through the same progression of thought.** So first you hope maybe you were careless and left some kind of window or door open. But when you check and you weren't, you get mad at yourself for being so responsible. Then next you try to find a way to open the door using something like a card or knife. Or in my case, a toy shovel I found on the porch. But that lasted all but ten seconds until like my dreams of getting in, it snapped in two. Then after that, you start getting desperate. And that's when you feel like your only option is vandalism. "Babe, I was really hoping you wouldn't have to see this side of me. But it's time that yellow belt I got in first grade finally went to good use." So as I'm here, willing to go all Chuck Norris on this thing, my wife was like hey, why don't you see if our neighbor is home (who's also a **friend** of ours). So I sent the guy a text like "Hey, dude. Quick question. How comfortable are you with committing felonies?" Now fortunately the guy was home. And he was actually **so happy** to come over and help. He wasn't annoyed or inconvenienced at all. And as soon as he gets there he pulls out a card and starts going at this lock. Bending and jamming that card in all sorts of ways. And about halfway through it breaks. **But the dude doesn't care.** He just keeps going at it. **I mean he really loves breaking into my home.** Maybe too much? Then eventually he wedges the card in there enough to pop the door open. So we all celebrated! And our son inside was still alive so we'll chalk that up as a win too. But in that moment I was extremely thankful for this guy. Because he stepped in and helped us when we really needed him to.

Transition: And in our passage tonight, we'll see just as that friend of mine was eager to help me that evening, there's some other friends in our story who are also eager to help someone else who finds himself in a desperate situation.

[1] A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. [2] They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. [3] Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them.

Explanation: So Jesus' popularity is booming. And because it is, this house where he's teaching is packed out with people. But there are these four guys who show up late to the party with a friend who's in a bad situation. He can't walk. And the fact he has to be carried, this could mean this dude can barely even move. And they brought him here because they've heard about Jesus. They know about the **miracles** he's done and now they're desperately hoping he can do another one to help their friend. But when they get there, there's a problem. They can't get to Jesus. So they have to get creative.

[4] Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, **they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on.**

Explanation: This is such a crazy plan, isn't it? But it's doable because houses back then usually had stairs or a ladder that led up to roof where people would often go to dry their clothes or even sleep at night. And so these guys bring their boy up there and they just start tearing this roof apart. Making a big enough hole that they can lower their friend right in front of Jesus. **And this plan shows just how relentless these guys are, doesn't it?** I mean nothing is getting in their way. And it's because they know, this is it. This is their chance if their friend is ever going to live a normal life. Because this disability has taken everything from him. And we know that because the Greek word for "mat" here refers to a poor person's bed or mattress. He has nothing. So imagine how hard it was for these four friends to watch this guy they care about suffer day after day because of his condition. And how seeing that would have crushed them. And since they have such a **deep love** for this guy, they're getting him in front Jesus. Even if they have to destroy someone else's property to do so.

Personal Connection: And we know how these guys feel, don't we? We know what it's like to watch someone we love in a bad situation. To see them suffering. And then be crushed because of how much they're hurting. **(1)** Like when we see a grandparent in pain because a disease is wearing down their body. **(2)** Or when we see a friend or family member grieving because after trying and trying, she can't get pregnant. **(3)** Or when we see a parent depressed because they got let go of their dream job and now they'll never have it back.

And when this happens, like these guys in our story, we go to Jesus, don't we? We pray to him relentlessly about it. And when we talk to him in this "too late" moment, **we always have something specific we need Jesus to do, right?** We **need** him to cure the cancer or to give that couple a baby or to somehow give them that job back. We need something specific. Just like these four friends, right? They're here because they **need Jesus to do a miracle to give this paralyzed guy the ability to walk.** They **need** their friend to be healed from this life altering condition. But when they finally get him in front of Jesus, he decides to throw them a curveball.

[5] When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, **"Son, your sins are forgiven."**

Explanation: So just think about what's happening here. The roof of this house is caved in. This man has been lowered down on a rope. And now, with all eyes are on Jesus, he turns to this man who can't walk. And as everyone in this room is on the edge of their seat watching, **expecting** Jesus to heal this dude, **he doesn't.** Instead, he says something he's never said before. Something no one saw coming. **That he's forgiven this man's sins.** A statement that is so surprising and so offensive, it sets off some important people in the room.

[6] Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves,
[7] "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Explanation: So when Jesus says this, some of the religious elite of this day, known as the scribes, can't believe what has just happened. Because instead of healing this man like they **expected** Jesus to do, he has claims to do something only God can do. And if these guys expected a miracle and didn't like what they saw, there's a good chance the four friends felt the same way. **Or at the very least they were confused or just disappointed, right? Because Jesus didn't do what they needed him to do.** I mean the reason they went to all this trouble to get their friend here is so Jesus would heal him. Not say he's personally forgiven his sins. Something like the scribes they're probably a little skeptical he can do anyways. So that means as these four guys sit here, staring at Jesus. Their friend still can't walk. The person they love still doesn't have a normal life. His pain still hasn't gone away. So even though they desperately need Jesus to heal their friend, he chooses to do something else instead. So that means what these four friends got in this "too late" moment isn't what they were looking for.

Transition: But since everyone was so focused on what Jesus was **saying** in this room, they all completely missed what he was actually **doing.**

Personal Connection: Because people were looking for something else, **they didn't realize what Jesus did in this moment *was* a miracle.** And at times, we make the same mistake. Because although we ask Jesus for a specific request in a difficult situation, he often does something else instead. **Something that's confusing or honestly just disappointing. (1)** The cancer gets worse. **(2)** The child never comes. **(3)** Someone else gets the job. So Jesus doesn't do what we **need** him to do. **But when this happens, like the people in our story, a miracle might take place and we don't even realize it.** Since we are so busy looking for something specific, Jesus might do something right in front of our eyes and we don't see it. And because of that, **Miracles are often missed.** They happen. We just don't realize they have. And the reason **we often miss miracles** is because **we confuse needs and wants.** Because when we want something really badly, we feel like we have to have it. **That we need it to happen.** So that means a lot of the time when we're asking God to do something for someone we care about, we think it's what this person **needs.** **But it's actually not.** It's just what we **really want** for them or what they **really want** for themselves. **We confuse needs and wants.** So even though these guys in our passage **really wanted** their friend to be healed. What this paralyzed guy **needed** was to be forgiven. And Jesus knew this. But like them, we can become so focused on what we want to happen, we miss the miracle Jesus is doing somewhere else. **And as they all stand there confused, appalled, and disappointed, Jesus uses this opportunity to show everyone what they just missed.**

[8] Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? [9] Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?"

Explanation: So what's easier to say? Your sins are forgiven, right? Because there's no way to prove whether or not it actually happened. It's a spiritual statement. Which is Jesus' point. And it perfectly sets up what he does next.

[10] ***But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.*** So he said to the man, [11] "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." [12] He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.

Explanation: Please don't miss what Jesus does here! See, the whole reason he chooses to do this physical miracle now and not at first is to prove the spiritual one really did happen. He purposely doesn't do what these people **expected** him to do because **he wants them to know** something about himself.

That he, like God, has the ability to forgive sins. Because that's who he is. And just imagine how powerful this moment was for every single person in the room when this man stood up and walked. Because Jesus showed both the scribes and this man's friends that he isn't just some healer. He's more than that. **He's God himself.** So Jesus does two miracles in this story. But notice which one is more important. The physical miracle is only done to prove the spiritual miracle really happened. **Being forgiven is so much better than being healed. So that means the spiritual miracle here overshadows the physical one.**

Gospel Intersection: But when we're asking for God to do miracle, we forget that, don't we? In difficult situations we focus on getting something physical. **Like a positive pregnancy test or an email for a job offer or cancer free report.** But in those moments, **God is so much more concerned about what's going on in our hearts.** Because our spiritual lives matter so much more than our physical ones. And because they do, there could be miracle in the making right now *in* the life of that person you see suffering. **You just can't see it. Because it's not physical. It's spiritual.** And honestly so many of us in this room have experienced a miracle in our life already. **But because we think miracles are only physical, we missed it.**

(1) For some of you this happened after years of physical or emotional abuse. After years of misery. And although the thought of that person use to disgust you, now it doesn't. Because somehow, even for reasons you don't fully understand, you've reached a point where you've forgiven them even after all the horrible pain they caused you. **That's a miracle. (2)** And some of you use to live a life defined by what drugs you did or which ones you sold. And when life got so bad that you felt like your only option was to end it, you found Jesus. And you went from hating everything to loving everyone. And now you've changed so much that logically it doesn't make sense. **That's a miracle. (3)** And for so many of you here tonight, when you wanted nothing to do with God. When your heart was so turned off by him and you were running as fast as you could away from him, Jesus still loved you. He still pursued you. **And when he did, a miracle happened. Jesus changed what was unchangeable. He redeemed a mess.** Because when he finally caught you, he spoke the same words over you that he spoke over the man in this story. **"Child, your sins are forgiven."** And in that moment, he did something you could never do on your own. He instantly erased all those shameful things you had done and will do. **And you went from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive.**

So right now, you might not see God doing anything in that person's life or even in your own life. But that doesn't mean there isn't a miracle in the making. So don't get stuck on that specific thing you want God to do. **Because what you want may not be what you or someone else needs.** But God knows. So look for what he's doing. Like in this story, he may do the physical miracle you're asking him to do. Or also like this story, he may do something greater spiritually. **Either way, he's wanting to teach all of us something about who he is. That he's God. And we're not.** So as you strive to be a good friend, keep praying. Keep going to Jesus. Keep asking for a miracle. But as you do, trust God knows what they need in this painful situation more than you do. So when you do come to him, be patient. Be open. Be ready. **And as you wait, don't miss it. Don't be like the people in this story. Don't put miracles in a box.**

Challenge: So that's my challenge to you. Don't get so caught up in wanting something specific that you miss what God is already doing. That you miss a miracle in the making. **God's desire is for people to know who he is.** That he cares deeply about us. That he alone fills the emptiness in our life. And that his love is better than life itself. **So often when God does something miraculous for someone to see that, it's not physical. It's spiritual. So don't put miracles in a box.** Instead, trust he doesn't confuse needs and wants like we do. And be ready for a miracle to happen. Even if you can't see it.