

15 – Jesus Healing the Paralytic

Series on Mark

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Bible Text: Mark 2:1-12
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Our Scripture reading this evening is from the second chapter of the Gospel of Mark, Mark 2:1-12. Hear the word of God.

1 And again [Jesus] entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. 2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. 3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? 10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) 11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. 12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Thus far the reading of God's sacred word.

I was asked to remind all the young people that tomorrow is the final day to get the low price for the youth camp. I'm sure you don't want to throw away any extra money and I'm sure you also don't want to miss this very very special upcoming camp. So it's a wonderful opportunity. Please, young people, if you can possibly make it, please do so and please sign up tomorrow.

Jesus Christ, I said in prayer, is the most real person in all the world. There is no thing, there is no person, nothing so important, so critical to know as to know Jesus Christ. He, himself, has said, "This is life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." If we don't know Jesus Christ and we haven't brought our sins to him, we are on the way to perdition. That's a solemn thought. There is only one way to live and one way to die and one way to meet God, it's through Jesus Christ, repenting, believing in him alone for salvation, and finding your rest and trust and your life and your all, to find joy and purpose and meaning and fulfillment in him, and for him it is easy though it's a great work to save a sinner, it's an easy work for him. He has but to speak and a sinner is saved. He has power as the Son of God, Son of man, to forgive sins, to heal diseases, to do wondrous things.

Tonight we want to look at that with you from Mark:1-12. I'll read again now only verse 5 and verse 9.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee... 9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

So with God's help we want to look tonight at the power and authority of Jesus in healing the paralytic. We'll see the paralytic on the way to Jesus, at the feet of Jesus, and going forth from Jesus. Jesus healing the paralytic. We'll see him on the way to Jesus, at the feet of Jesus and going forth from Jesus.

Surprisingly, Jesus at the beginning of Mark 2 having preached now throughout Galilee, returns to Capernaum. We had the impression in chapter 1 that Capernaum had rejected him and it would have been our feeling, our supposition, I suppose, that he would not return there but it appears he returns, perhaps even to go to Peter's house again, and verses 1 and 2 tell us he entered into Capernaum after many days and it was noised that he was in the house, and straightway many people are gathered together, too many even to receive them around the door where he stood and he preached the word to them. So you get the picture, boys and girls, Jesus comes back to Simon Peter's house in Capernaum, the rumor goes out that he's back, people bring all kinds of diseased people again, but also people that aren't diseased, and they come, the area around the door is filled, as far as you can see it's filled. This is the largest crowd yet in Jesus' ministry, it appears to be. People from the crowd, the back of the crowd simply can't make their way to the front. There's jostling, there's crowding, there's disease, there's more, combined with critical Pharisees and scribes scattered throughout the crowd. Electricity, excitement is in the air as Jesus preaches the word of God and as the scribes and Pharisees become suspicious of this young rabbi's preaching and mix with the crowd to see if they can ensnare him in his words.

Jesus just preaches calmly. He preaches to this large crowd the Gospel of his kingdom. He preaches about the seriousness of sin, about the need for every living person to repent of his sin, to believe in God alone through Christ, and the riches of God's mercy. His

words are precious balm for the convicted, for the wounded, for the needy. While he's preaching, suddenly Mark takes the camera off of Jesus and focuses on five men, one sick of the palsy, that is, a paralytic, someone who is paralyzed, probably entirely paralyzed through some disease that impacted his spinal cord, and the other four, his friends who are carrying him on a mattress, the four corners of a mattress to take him to Jesus in hopes that Jesus will heal him.

Now just like the leper we saw a week or two ago, this paralytic is a striking picture of you and me by nature. You see, this paralytic can do nothing to secure his own healing, just like we can do nothing to secure our spiritual healing. We're, spiritually speaking, completely paralyzed. Sin has impacted our lives. By nature we don't even realize it, even though the Bible says every single second of our lives that we don't love God above all, the first table of the 10 Commandments, and every single second of our lives that we don't love our neighbor as ourselves, second table of the Law, we are sinning, and yet by nature we never love God above all and we never love our neighbors as ourselves. We're always putting ourselves first. We're essentially selfish.

So every single second, by nature until we're saved, we are sinning against the very purpose of why we were put here on this earth, to love God above all, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to serve, and so every single second we're sinning against God. We're piling up millions and millions and millions of sins in the sight of God and by nature we don't even realize it. We don't even think about it hardly. We look at our neighbor and say, "I'm pretty decent. I treat you pretty well. I don't do any crimes and I try to be helpful to people." So we think we're all set in our relationship with God but such is not the case. Actually, sin impacts our entire life and we're incapable of doing any real spiritual good. By nature we cannot glorify the Triune God without being born again, nor can we excuse our powerlessness, though some of us, no doubt, try to do so. Some of us say, "Well, I really can't convert myself so there's nothing I can do. I'm spiritually paralyzed." Well, in a way that's good theology but it's a bad excuse. You see, no one is allowed to hide behind his powerlessness in God's presence because we have made ourselves powerless through our deep and tragic fall in Adam and we've made ourselves unable in Adam, who represents us, to respond to God, so ultimately it's our own fault.

Beside that, you see, how do you know, how do you really know that you're powerless to convert yourself? Have you ever earnestly tried to do so? Or are you only repeating what you've heard others say? You see, it's possible to excuse my lack of conversion upon highly orthodox reformed theology without still becoming a guilty sinner before God so that we live on undisturbed even though we don't know Jesus Christ savingly, so that our lack of faith, our lack of repentance before him do not even keep us awake at night. We can go to sleep at night, we don't know if we're going to awake in the morning, we don't know if we're going to awake in hell in the morning, and yet we just get used to it, being an unbeliever. We get used to being unsaved. We live on in relative ease despite our spiritual paralysis, having little distress, little guilt, unprepared to meet the God who is our Maker and Creator to whom we owe every gift we've ever received, even the gift to blink an eye or move our hand or speak a word. By nature, we are living as enemies of God because we refuse to bow the knee of our lives before him.

Am I describing you tonight? Can you live on in relative ease even when you are spiritually paralyzed and not ready to meet your Creator? If you were to die tonight, can you honestly say that Jesus Christ is your only Savior, your only hope, your treasure, your Lord, your nearest kinsman, your all and in all, and that you're ready to meet the Lord in his righteousness alone? Or do you have to say, "I really don't even know him"? And are you still excusing yourself somehow for not knowing him? You see, all talk of our powerlessness is mere parroting if we do not earnestly seek God's forgiveness and grace. My friend, cast yourself down before the living God in your deadly, guilty powerlessness and confess that it is all your own fault, that you weren't created in Adam like this, but you were created in Adam focused on God.

Well, you see, when God does begin to work savingly in us, spiritual movement begins to take place. We begin to feel the guilt and power and heinousness of our sin; we confess before God that our powerlessness is our own fault, that we must be born again. Conversion then becomes for us a holy necessity as well as a holy impossibility. So we fly to God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. So, please, don't ever make a pretext of your powerlessness before God for he will strike it out of your hands anyway, if not in this life, then in the life to come.

Well, this paralytic, he has, no doubt, seen many doctors but none could free him from his disease. No doubt, he often lost courage. But this man had one great privilege, you know what it is, boys and girls. He had good friends. Good friends. Very good friends. Friends who were Christ-centered. Those are good friends. They spoke to him about Jesus. They believed in Jesus. They said something like this to him, no doubt, "Dear friend, we've got good news for you. There's a prophet walking through Galilee preaching God's word, healing people. He forgives sins. He heals the sick. He will help you. Come, we'll help you go to him." His friends were creative. They were energetic. They were sacrificial. They didn't care if other people saw them carrying their friend on a mattress, holding up four corners, looking perhaps foolish to the eyes of the crowd. All they cared about was that their needy friend would get to Jesus; that their needy friend would get to Jesus.

I wonder if you're a good friend to anybody. Are you? Are there people that really burden you that they're not in Jesus Christ and you're praying for them every day and you're talking to them and you're longing to get them to Jesus? That's a good friend. Do you look out for such friends? Also for yourself? What kind of friends do you have? Friends that are a blessing for you? Friends who are a curse for you? Anyone who doesn't help you come to Jesus is not a good friend for you. Do they take you to Jesus or are they silent about Jesus? Or worse yet, do they take you to places of sin and try to stifle the convictions you have in your soul of your need for Jesus? Then they are really your enemies, not your friends.

You see, so many people have become alienated from the word of God by friends who have drawn them away from God, away from his service. You've got to make sure you're not one of those kinds of false friends to your friend. Actually, every good friend is a gift

of God, a great gift of God. A friend in need is a friend indeed, and the best friends you can have are those that speak of who and what Jesus is for needy sinners and who will act with Christ-like love toward you. That's what these four friends did. They spoke to their friend about Jesus and then they added deed to word and they put him on a mattress and they took him to Jesus, the Savior of sinners, the Physician who heals the diseased, even paralytics.

Now, notice that really all five of these men have their hope in Jesus. They have unshaken faith that Jesus is the only one who can help them. They are earnest. They are resolute. They are determined. Jesus is preaching to this large crowd. The five men draw near. They try to get through the crowd but the crowd is not cooperative, the crowd is, well, resistant. These five, however, don't just give up. They don't just simply return. That's impossible. You see, true faith can never turn its back to Jesus Christ. True faith must have a real vital relationship with Jesus Christ.

So what are they going to do? They can't get through the crowd. There is nothing to do, is there? But you see, Jesus is the object of their faith. They can't go back home. They have nothing to go back home to. There is no solution in going back home. There is no healing in going back home. They say in their hearts with Peter, "To whom else shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. If Jesus doesn't help, we will be lose. Our friend will be lost forever."

Now if they started reasoning with the human perspective, no doubt they would have returned. They would have simply said, "We've got no choice. Let's go home. We've got no options left. Everyone is standing in our way." But you see, faith is enormously inventive. Faith transcends human reason. Faith cannot live without Jesus. So when you experience spiritual distress because of your sin and you receive a glimpse of Christ and his all-sufficiency and his glory shining through the lattices of his holy word, of his holy Gospel, then you can find no spiritual rest outside of Jesus Christ. That's the hallmark of a true communicant at the Lord's Supper, no rest outside of Jesus Christ. "I must go to him. I must go to him repeatedly, every day actually, and all my days." Therefore when everything and everyone is in the way, the paralytic's four friends decide to carry their friend up the stairway outside the home where Jesus was preaching onto the flat roof, homes in those days were constructed with flat roofs, actually most people entertained their company on the flat roof, a flat roof was much like an outdoor deck today on the backs of homes, and they thought if they could just get up on the roof and they could dig through the roof and let the man down in front of Jesus, perhaps they could bring him to Jesus after all. You see, they didn't give up very easily. They couldn't make their way through the crowd but they did what they could do.

They brought him up the stairway. It must have been a bit of a struggle, four men carrying a fifth man up a stairway. They set him on the roof and then, in those days the roof was constructed of beams laid across every 2-3 feet and resting on the walls of the house, and in between the beams was interlaced various sticks and reeds woven with a kind of thatch, and on top of the thatch there was several inches of mud that was allowed to dry hard like baked clay. Luke referred to it as tile but it was really kind of a hard

baked clay that appeared like tile by the time it was hardened. But it was possible, though challenging, you see, to chip away between the beams on the roof, and that's what happened, and the noise, you see, of their chipping away and the debris that was falling down upon the people must have drawn the attention of everyone. Then when the hole was finally large enough, those four men took their friend on the mattress and the ropes that they had on the four corners, they let him down slowly until suddenly he is laying in front of Jesus Christ and looking up into his face. It's an incredible act of perseverance, of energy, creative energy on the part of these good friends who said, "My friend must come to the Lord Jesus Christ."

So our second thought is the paralytic at the feet of Jesus, he finds himself now lying on his back at Jesus' feet, looking up into Jesus' face. We don't know all his thoughts at that moment but we do know that for a needy sinner to be led through ways of impossibility and to find himself as a lost helpless sinner at Jesus' feet gazing upon him, is already a marvelous wonder of grace. Martin Luther once said, "Being saved is going lost at the feet of Jesus." There is no better place in all the world to go lost at than at his blessed feet, helpless in self but looking to Jesus to be delivered from the oceans and the mountains of our guilt. You see, saving faith is always tried but saving faith will press on to victory and ultimately it will persevere to the end. This is the victory that overcometh the world, John says, even our faith. Faith breaks through every obstacle. Faith drives us to the feet of Jesus. Faith says, "Give me Jesus else I die." Faith cannot accept anything less than union with Jesus Christ. Reverend Kirstin said this, "It belongs to the nature of faith to bring the sinner to Christ and to be incorporated into him. Many people would rather try the sincerity of their faith with all kinds of marks except this one, union with Christ, which is the main one, indeed the saving characteristic of faith."

Meanwhile, of course, Jesus' sermon is interrupted. I mean, if you can imagine, boys and girls, someone pounding on the roof right here and you saw a man being lowered on a mattress, it would be no use for me to go on preaching. Everybody would be wondering, "What in the world is happening?" And Jesus, of course, is not taken by surprise. He is a surprising Savior but he's never taken by surprise. He knows this paralytic from eternity. He knows he would come with his four friends just like he knew Zacchaeus was in that place in the tree and he knew that he had to go to Samaria for one Samaritan woman. This man, too, belonged to the mediatorial wages that the Father had promised to give the Son from eternity past in his eternal good pleasure. So when Jesus looks at the man laying at his feet and he looks up at the four faces on the roof, sweating, earnest, and he sees their faith, verse 5 says, "When Jesus saw their faith," all five of them, "he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Now these are astonishing words, astonishing for three reasons. First of all, their faith. You see, Jesus sees their faith. He had seen them and their faith long before they had seen him. He knows. He sees. He's seeking Zacchaeus's, he's seeking souls. He knows everything about them long before they come to him.

What did Jesus say to through the angel to the women seeking Jesus on resurrection morning? "Fear not ye for I know that ye seek Jesus." You see, some of you are struggling perhaps whether to come or not to the Lord's Supper, but Jesus knows your

heart already. He knows your struggles. He knows your heart today. He knows who needs him, who seeks him, and if he can say of you, "I know you seek Jesus," he invites those Jesus seekers to come with all their sin, with all their need, to lay at his feet at the table of the Lord, to look into his face, to cry out for mercy. He's willing to heal. He's willing to bless. He's willing to assure.

So when Jesus sees their faith, he knows what they want. He, himself, has put faith in their hearts. He is pleased with their restlessness to find him, to find him not only for the paralytic's desperate physical need but also for his desperate spiritual need. You see, God complained in Isaiah 64, he complained against Israel because no one arose to take hold of God. Really that's what's happening, these five men cannot live without God, they can't allow their paralytic friend to go on this way so they bring him to the feet of Jesus and yet it's the Father who brings them there, isn't it? Jesus said, John 6, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Both is happening at the same time. The Father is drawing the paralytic and the paralytic by his friends, by the means of grace, is coming.

You know, John Bunyan takes this text and he does something wonderful with it. "They shall come unto me," and he turns in his great imagination, he turns the "shall come" into a character. He calls him Mr. Shall-Come. Mr. Shall-Come, he said, he always shall come because God's on one side of the equation and God is working in the heart on the other side of the equation, so the shall is certain because a shall is rooted in God's eternal sovereign love, and all who come, all who come shall in no wise ever be cast out.

So verse 5 is really saying in Bunyan's language that Jesus sees the faith of the five Mr. Shall-Come's. He sees his Father's work. He sees his own work and what a blessing when Jesus sees his own work in our hearts. When he sees his own work in our hearts, you see, he's the one who draws us to the table of the Lord. He shows us that we are sinners in ourselves, that we need him, that we cannot live without him. So when the invitation goes out, we shall come because we cannot stay away from such a warm loving Savior who invites all those who need him to come to him just as they are.

So now the man is laying before Jesus and the four friends are looking down and it's quiet. The pounding has stopped. Silence reigns. None of the five speak. They simply wait on Jesus, trusting him, blessed, speechless faith. Sometimes faith is speechless standing in the presence of God. "My soul in silence waits for God," the Psalmist said. My soul in silence, sacred, silent, speechless waiting upon God.

Then Jesus speaks. He brings this word which for the moment had been pushed to the background because his sermon was interrupted, but he brings his word back in the foreground and he says, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Son, to the paralytic. You see, this is the second wonder. The first wonder is that he sees their faith, the second wonder is he calls him son, and the word "son" here some scholars point out it could also be translated even in a warmer way as "child, my child." It's a warm tender term, not a cold legal term. It's a word of love, of mercy, of warm adopting grace, a word of warm compassion, fatherly compassion of the Son of God whom Isaiah calls the Everlasting

Father. So Jesus, as it were, is like a father to the man at his feet and he says, "Son." He embraces and adopts this poor paralytic to himself with fatherly compassion. This man who was by nature a child of wrath like you and me is called son or child by Jesus, by the sympathetic High Priest who loves this paralytic, given to him by the Father from eternity, for this paralytic now belongs to Jesus in time, who is determined to adopt him to himself and will love him to eternity future as a precious child.

But there's also something else special about this word "son." It explains so much about the disease he had because, you see, Hebrews 12:5-6 is being confirmed experientially in this paralyzed man's life. "ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." You see, this man was not being punished, he was being chastened, and his chastisement was for his good because God used it as a means to drive and to draw him through his friends to Jesus. Isn't that true of many of you sitting here tonight? God brought you through circumstantial afflictions to first cry out for Jesus at the first seeing of the need of your own soul and the sin and the emptiness of your own life. So, you know, by nature all we want, all we want is a life where we can be happy and not many afflictions, but all God wants is a life that serves him and knows Jesus and he will chasten us in such a way in his pure love so that we will need Jesus and we will live out of Jesus. So the word "son" is a word of pure amazing love.

Could this man have been helped if the Lord had only cured his physical disease at this point? What was this man's greatest need after all? You see, this man's greatest need was not his physical infirmity, as bad as it was. His greatest need because Jesus saw their faith, was that his sins would be forgiven; that he be brought into a right relationship with Jesus. So that's how Jesus begins, he begins with the most important. "Son," and this is the third wonder, "thy sins be forgiven thee." Jesus is saying to us through a megaphone tonight, loud and clear to every one of us, "Your forgiveness of sin is the greatest need of your life."

You see, we would have done it differently, wouldn't we? We would have seen the man laying in front of us and said, "Let's try to help this man. Let's try to heal him and then we can sit him in a chair, we can talk to him later about his soul." But that's not Jesus. His soul is his greatest need. It's your greatest need, too, my friend. Your greatest need, boys and girls, children, young people, parents, seniors, your greatest need is that your sins would be forgiven and you would be reconciled with the God who made you and created you.

"Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." What a beautiful thing. The theme of our greatest need is the redemption of Christ which must be the center of our preaching, the center of our thoughts, the center of our conversation, the center of our actions, the center of our lives and this man apparently knew that. Jesus saw his faith, too, looked into his heart. Jesus knew what was living on inside of him and he removes his greatest burden. Literally in the Greek it says, "Dismiss thou your sins. Gone are your sins. Remitted are your sins." The emphasis is on the dismissal, the forgiveness, the remittance. That's the first word in

the Greek sentence. Usually Greek words that are thrown to the front of the sentence get the emphasis.

So the question is a natural question: has your sin ever become your greatest burden? Have you ever needed the forgiveness of your sin? Have you ever said with the Psalmist, "There is a heavy burden there, too heavy for me to bear. My physical needs are great, yes, but the need for forgiveness, the need of my soul is far greater." Maybe this week you'll be struggling with that question, some of you, and you'll be wondering, some of you, "Have I felt my sins enough? What is enough?" The great Puritan, John Owen, answered that question very well. He said how deeply do you need to feel your sins? Well, deeply to know you need a Savior. Deeply enough so that you fly to him and say, "Wash me, Savior, 'er I die." But do be encouraged for those who need a Savior, Jesus is there. He's there. Now he's not there anymore standing in a crowd here on earth that's hard to get to, but he's got an open throne, 24/7 he says, "Come unto me. Cry out unto me. You'll have my ear 24/7." We don't have to go through complicated ways today to get up on roofs and tear them apart. He's as close as the throne of grace and the throne is open at all times. He says, "Come just as you are." Jesus Christ knows your need. Jesus Christ loves to save sinners. He's in the business of saving sinners. Bring him your sighs, your cries, your longings, your spiritual groans. Ask him, "Wash me clean of all my sin."

"Son," he will say, "thy sins be forgiven thee." You see all the emphasis falls in the free pardoning love of Jesus Christ. "Son, I forgive you all your sins past, present, future. I've removed your entire burden of sin. I'll carry that burden for you. I will pay for it with my sufferings and my death. Your sins are forgiven you." What joy, "Thy sins forgiven thee." You see, it's personal. What an unforgettable moment for the paralytic. He's laying there, he forgets about his diseased body. His sins, his sins are washed away by the Savior. They're dismissed. They're remitted. They're thrown into the sea, into the depths of the sea. They're removed as far as the east is from the west. They're blotted out, the Bible says, and now finally this man could believe, believe in his own salvation. He could now sing, "How blessed is he whose trespass hath freely been forgiven, whose sin is wholly covered before the sight of heaven. Bless he to whom Jehovah imputeth not his sin, who hath a guileless spirit, whose heart is true within." Come to Jesus just as you are. He loves to see a right-less sinner lying at his feet with all his sins cast upon him. He says, "Come now, wretched, hell-worthy sinner. Let us reason together," saith the Lord. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The man is set free, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." What a blessing and yet the drama is not done and now this great and happy work of Jesus causes resistance. The scribes in the house are offended that divine grace is pronounced upon such an unworthy miserable man. They are offended that Jesus obviously thinks that he has divine power to forgive sins. "Who does he think he is?" Verse 6 and 7, "certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?" Of course, the theology is right, no one can forgive sins but God only, but the problem is they don't recognize the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. They're blind to it and so they're doing, really, the work of hell here. By calling the work of Christ

blasphemy, they're in league with the devils and Jesus knows it. He knows what they're thinking. He knows all things. He knows their hearts.

Verses 8 through 11, Jesus perceives in his spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves so he says, "Why do you reason this way?" Then comes this amazing statement. This is really the heart of the whole section. "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." You see, the scribes and the Pharisees were saying, "He can't forgive sins. If he could forgive sins, he could heal this man, then, because the forgiveness of sins is, of course, the bigger of the two items." So Jesus says, "Okay, then, I'll heal him. Take up your bed and walk." Jesus is giving an open display, a flash in the midst of his humanity of his amazing deity and once more, you see, we're placed before the omniscience of Christ in Mark's fascinating historical record.

Really, Jesus is confirming two important truths here. The first truth is he knows what's in us, he knows what's in man. John 2 says that as well, right? You remember that. Jesus knowing what is in man. You see, we never know. We surmise. We try to understand what other people are thinking. We can take guesses, but Jesus knows. He knows the heart. He knows every thought we've had in this service. He knows who we are and, you see, he knows these scribes. He knows our sins. He knows our needs. If you're a poor sinner and you need Jesus, this is a very comforting thought, "He knows me. He knows my need. He knows I'm terribly diseased. He knows I'm a paralytic spiritually. He can help me." But the second thing and this is the heart of the whole passage, Jesus has legitimate and validated authority from his Father to forgive people's sins and to heal incurable physical ailments and both of these facts are proofs of his divinity, that he is Lord of lords and King of kings. He has the right to give divine absolution of sin. He possesses a plenary authority to pardon sinners. His word is authoritative.

So the paralytic becomes a living testimony of the power of Christ, a means of confirmation of his deity in front of that huge crowd of hundreds and hundreds, perhaps thousands of people. So Jesus commands the paralytic now to do something he obviously cannot do, "Arise. Take up your bed and walk." And you see, when Jesus speaks with authority, he also grants all that is needed to receive his word and to obey his command. Now that's very important to understand because all of God's people experience something of this, that when he speaks to our souls through his word, he gives all that our soul needs to obey him and that's important.

You might say, "Well, wait a minute, how do paralyzed men get up, pick up a bed and go home?" If Jesus had said, "Paralysis, be gone. Strength be imparted. Now you are no longer palsied, you are no longer paralyzed, now with the strength I've commanded, I've healed you, now get up and pick up your bed and go home," we could understand it. But Jesus doesn't do that and you notice this again and again in the miracles of Jesus that he commands those who are in the process of being healed to do the things which presupposed that the healing has already come. I hope you follow what I'm saying.

But suppose this man now had lain on his mattress and said, "But Lord, I can't move. I know I can't move. You tell me to take up my bed and walk but I can't do it. You have to do it. Thou hast to do it for me, Lord. I have no power to infuse into myself the strength to get up. Are you mocking me?" No, he doesn't do that. No one had spoiled him with the erroneous emphases of hyper-Calvinism in his day because that's exactly what some people do today and that's a serious error about the method of divine grace. You see, God commands all of us today to repent and to believe the Gospel, but a hyper-Calvinist says, "But I know my Bible well enough to know that as a dead sinner I have no power to repent and to believe so God must give me the power before I can do what he commands, and until I feel that power, I will do nothing." But you see, what you're doing, you're just lying on your mattress debating with Jesus about his method of grace.

He commands you to repent and to believe hundreds of times in the Bible. Someone counted 3,000, I think that's a bit of an exaggeration but certainly hundreds. But you reason that since he commands you to do what you cannot do, you really do not need to do it, and until you are conscious of a sovereign imposition of divine power in your soul, you don't make the effort to repent and believe, in fact you think it's dangerous to make that effort because you don't want to take it yourself. But you see, that's not the biblical method of grace. The biblical method of grace is this, when he heard the word of Jesus, "Get up, take up your bed and go home," he put forth an effort in his paralyzed state and lo and behold in the very compliance of his will, divine power is imparted and he gets up, rolls up his mattress and he walks home. You see, we have no right to tell God that we will not bend to his method of grace and the problem with the hyper-Calvinist is that the word of command and promise is not enough for them. They want something more somehow.

Do you know what God wants you to do even today is to say, "O God, thou dost command me to repent. I know in and of myself I cannot but I will to repent and I will to believe by thy grace in me," and then in the willing, which of course is secretly imparted by God, the mystery will be solved. Just like, remember that unfortunate man, "Stretch out thy hand." The man said, "But Lord, I can't do that." No, he stretched out his hand. In the act of Jesus' command, Jesus gave the grace for him to do it. That is the Gospel.

Now that doesn't give anything into the hands of man. Do you think this man got up, took up his mattress and went home and said, "You know, this is amazing. I was laying there paralyzed and Jesus came along and told me to take up my bed and walk and I did it, so I deserve part of the credit for my own." Of course not. That man will say, "It's grace. It's completely grace. It's all free and sovereign grace. The Savior commanded me and with a command he gave me the grace to obey his command." That is real Calvinism. Repent and believe is no enemy of free grace. Repent and believe is a call of free grace. So if you go on thinking you can get God to bend to your method of grace, I'm afraid you'll just continue in your sins and become all the harder under the preaching of the Gospel until the day comes when it's too late to be saved. That's what happens to many hyper-Calvinists.

But happily this man obeys. He arises. He takes his mattress. He returns to his home. Verse 12, "immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all." Don't you love those words? It's amazing, before them all. What a witness, what power, what deity Jesus revealed. It was just as easy for him to heal the paralytic's body as it had been for him to forgive his sins, and by this double healing, this man becomes a living sign, a living declaration that Jesus Christ is the real, the total, the complete Savior who removes sins and who removes the consequences of sin which was evident in his diseased body.

Notice this man is now healed immediately, he is healed completely, he is totally restored, he's healed without any elaborate ceremony, he's healed without any additional spiritual experience. He just arises by grace, rolls up his mattress and goes home. Someone put it this way, 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. Some day those newly restored limbs of this man would wither but there would remain in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life for his sins were forgiven once and for all.

Then suddenly the Bible is entirely silent about this man. Why? Because the focus is on Jesus. Mark is declaring the Gospel to his reader. He wants the reader to realize this story is more about Jesus than about the paralytic. It's about his power, his divinity, his ability to heal.

Dear friend, you do not doubt the power of sin, do you, because you know it but why are you doubting the power of the Son of man who has power to forgive you of your sin? Are you unconverted? He's got power to convert you. Is your heart as hard as a rock? He's got power to break it. Do you not know how to be saved? He has power to teach you. Are you bowed down by your sins? He has power to raise you up. Are Jesus and God's grace hidden from you? He has power to open your blind eyes. Do you find it impossible to come to God? He has power to bring you there. Rely on the power and the deity of Christ to repent and believe the Gospel. You'll never be sorry.

Then finally we read at the end of verse 12, "they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." Four quick things and I close. They are surprised. They are all amazed. They're surprised. Actually this whole story is full of surprises. There are surprises everywhere, surprised that Jesus came back to Capernaum; surprised the roof is being torn open; surprised that Jesus declared forgiveness of sin; surprised that he does the other miracle of healing the man; surprised to see the man walk away perfectly normal. They're surprised. Secondly, they glorify God. Notice that. This response seems full of promise, doesn't it? Jesus' popularity has been unrivaled all throughout Mark 1. There seems to be acceptance by the masses of him as both a teacher and a miracle worker. It seems encouraging but we read in the parallel account in Luke, the third thing, they feared. They feared. They were full of fear, Luke says. It wasn't all good, you see. "What is this?" They didn't know. They were uncomfortable with it. Then, fourthly, they focus on seeing rather than on hearing. That's the bad news. Verse 12 says they never saw it on this fashion. Too bad it didn't say they never heard it on this fashion

because remember from Mark 1, Jesus said, "My word is more than my deed. My word is more than my healing."

But you see, they just saw more of the wonder of the healing and didn't really imbibe the word and that's why so many of the crowd still went away even from that location blinded as to who Jesus really is and I pray that not one of you will leave this place tonight blinded to who Jesus really is. Yes, he heals diseases but who he really is, his specialty is he's a forgiver of sin. He's a forgiver of sin and while he proffers peace and pardon, let us hear his voice today lest if we, our hearts should harden, we should perish in the way. Amen.

Great God of heaven, we thank you so much for thy Son, for his power, his deity, his amazing work of forgiveness, his double healing, healing of the body, healing of the soul, and we pray, Lord, that thou would draw to thy table next Sabbath morning all those who cannot live without him, all those who are helpless on their own mattresses of sin and look to Jesus. Draw them with cords of everlasting love. Speak to their souls even at thy table, "My son, thy sins are forgiven thee," that no one hold back, Lord, who can't live anymore without Jesus. But if we can live without him, do hold us back. The Lord's Supper is only for Jesus-lookers, not for those who can live with their own religion. So teach us that. Fence about the table thyself and be a glorious God in our midst we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING

6/11/17

Rev. David VanBrugge

Votum and Salutation

Psalter 134

Reading of the Law of God

Psalter 61:1, 2

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:36-47

Reading of the form for Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism

Psalter 187:1, 4

Prayer

Psalter 297

Sermon Text: Acts 2:41-47

Are You a True Christian?

Series on Acts (5)

Closing Prayer

Psalter 170

Doxology of Praise (pg. 415)

Benediction

SUNDAY MORNING

1. Describe the character of the early church as it relates to community interaction and worship.
2. What is the character of true Christians today? Does that describe you in any way?
3. What were the four elements of the Christian message coming from this chapter?
4. What counterfeit message seems attractive to you?
5. How does understanding the message of true Christianity help you prepare for the Lord's Supper?
6. What is the source of true Christianity? What can any false source not do?
7. How does understanding this source of true Christianity help you prepare for the Lord's Supper?