

“Seeing Their Faith”
Mark 2:1-12
(Preached at Trinity, August 26, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. After our Lord’s wilderness temptation He began His Galilean ministry. He began calling His disciples. After calling Peter, Andrew, James, and John they then went to Capernaum and on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue where He amazed all with His authority.
2. Leaving the synagogue they entered into the house of Peter and Andrew and Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law. The next day they departed to begin preaching in other cities of Galilee.
Mark 1:38-39 – “And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. ³⁹ And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.”
3. As we come to **Chapter 2** we find five narratives that go through **Chapter 3:6**. They are probably not in chronological order or even the same period of Christ’s ministry but Mark probably places them together because of their common theme – conflict with the scribes and Pharisees.
4. The theme of this first narrative is the conflict Jesus has with the scribes over Jesus’ authority to forgive sins and we’ll get to that next time. Tonight, however, I want to focus on the wonderful story for four friends carrying a helpless man to Christ.
5. As we begin **Chapter 2** we find that Jesus has again returned to Capernaum. After several days news began to spread that Jesus was back at the house, probably Peter’s house. His presence couldn’t remain secret for long and soon multitudes were coming to hear Him. It was a repeat of the last time Jesus stayed at Peter’s house.
Mark 1:33 – “And all the city was gathered together at the door.”
6. Many had crowded into the house and multitudes pressed towards the door on the outside. Some were curiosity seekers seeking to know more about this man they had heard so much about. Some were sincere converts hanging on every word that Jesus spoke concerning His Kingdom. Still others were in need of physical healing as the fame of Jesus as a healer had spread.
7. And of course, the religious leaders were there scrutinizing every word that Jesus spoke. While everyone else were squeezed together with standing room only these pompous scribes were seated in comfort.
Mark 2:6-7 – “But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,”
8. While all of this was going on four men were busy trying to bring a paralyzed friend to Jesus. As they pressed towards the door they received nothing but angry stares and words of rebuke. Refusing to give up they climbed up to the rooftop.
 - A. In the typical roof design of that day timbers were laid parallel to each other about 2-3 feet apart then across these were laid reeds or branches to form the basic roof. This was overlaid with about a foot of earth. In the spring the roofs were often covered with a thick growth of grass.

- B. These four men had to literally dig through the roof and tear through the branches. You can imagine the disbelief of those on the inside as dirt and debris began to fall upon them as these four men made a hole the size of a man. You can also imagine Peter's displeasure of this damage done to his home.
9. What love these four men must have had for their paralyzed companion. They would not be denied. They would not give up until they brought this paralyzed man to Christ. Perhaps he was a kinsman, perhaps a brother or their father. Perhaps he was a neighbor or perhaps they were good friends. Oh to have friends such as this! Whatever the relationship what an expression of love.
 10. These four men were also great in faith. **Mark 2:5** – "When Jesus saw their faith" They knew above all else that if they could get their friend to Christ He would heal him. They had no doubt. This great and persistent faith drove them to do whatever necessary to bring him to Christ.
 11. This, by the way, is the nature of true faith. It will not be denied. **Matthew 11:12** – "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."
 12. Tonight, however, I'm not going to set before you saving faith. I'm going to set before you faith of another sort. Their faith wasn't directed at trusting Christ as *their* Savior. This faith was directed at bringing their friend to Christ. Tonight I want us to look at this passage as a picture of our work of evangelism.
- I. Their zeal was fueled by love for their friend
- A. There is a common grace we should afford to all men
 1. We should seek to alleviate the suffering of those hurting
Feed the hungry, care for the sick, comfort the hurting.
This is of the essence of the Parable of the Samaritan
Luke 10:33 – "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*,"
Luke 10:37 – "Go, and do thou likewise."
 2. How much more should we show mercy and grace to those perishing in their sins? They need to be rescued. They need someone to carry them to the only one who can heal them of their iniquities.
 - B. Look at their love. It was a selfless love
 1. Nothing in this story can be seen as self-serving
 2. To the contrary, we see much risk taking
 - a. Trying to push through the crowd risked hostile reaction
 - b. Tearing through the roof risked the anger of everyone inside, especially the owners and exposed them to the liability of repair.
 3. All they could think about was getting their friend to Christ
 4. Contrast these four men with the self-righteous scribes. They offered no help, no love, no compassion - only criticism and hardheartedness.
 - C. How would one describe your work in evangelism?
 1. Do you love lost people?
 2. Does this love lead you to take chances? Does it drive you to push on?
 3. Would you live in conditions void of every creature comfort? Would you expose yourself to great personal risk?
 4. Would you take the risk of talking to your neighbor or your relative or someone at work?

5. Would you risk embarrassment? Can you imagine how embarrassing it was to start hacking through this roof? They wouldn't be deterred from bringing this man to Christ.

II. They knew his helpless estate

A. Look at the man on the stretcher

1. He was paralyzed - παραλυτικός – He was a paralytic. Perhaps it was from an injury or perhaps a stroke or some other disease like muscular atrophy.
2. Whatever the nature of his disease he could do nothing to help himself. If his friends didn't bring him to Christ he would not have been able to come.

B. This is the nature of lost humanity

1. The lost man is completely paralyzed in his sin.
John 6:65 – “And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”
2. The lost man is totally depraved. Totally depravity simply means total inability – absolute paralysis
3. He cannot even lift his finger to help himself. This paralytic may have been at the point of death which would explain the urgency that these four men showed. The lost man is in the worst possible condition. He lives in a living death.
4. Not only is he paralyzed, he is also blind.
Apart from the new birth the lost man will remain paralyzed in his sin and blind to his hopeless condition.

C. This why our work is so important

1. If we don't carry sinners before Christ they will never come
2. If we leave them they will perish
3. There are some, still paralyzed by sin, who have been awakened. They see their condition and hope to be forgiven but feel utterly without strength and powerless to believe. Reach out your hand of aid and lovingly lead them to Christ. Jesus can heal in a moment.
Mark 2:5 – “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

III. They had absolute confidence in Christ.

A. How many times were they tempted to give up

1. As they neared the house the crowd must have been overwhelming.
“Oh well, we tried”
2. As they pushed through the crowd they were probably tempted to give up.
“This is hopeless. Oh well, we tried”
3. As they finally made it to the house the door was completely blocked
“Oh well, we did the best we could.”
4. With every obstacle they looked for another way. “Look! The roof! But how will we get him up there?” We are not told. Digging through the roof must have seemed so crazy.

B. Their faith in Christ kept them pressing on

1. The obstacles seemed overwhelming, would it all be worthwhile?
Could Jesus actually bring healing to the man?

2. There was no doubt in their mind. Jesus could heal. He was able. They had to get him to Christ.
- C. What hinders your work?
1. Is it fear? Is it hardship? Is it a lack of time?
 2. Faith will overcome every hindrance
 3. It has often been said that Calvinism will hinder evangelism
 - a. No statement could be more inaccurate – God is absolutely sovereign, absolutely powerful. He is able to save His own.
2 Peter 3:9 – “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”
 - b. Is there anything God cannot do? Is there anything He wills that He cannot bring to pass?
 Remember the previous chapter
Mark 1:40-41 – “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”⁴¹
 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth *his* hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.”
 - c. We do evangelism with confidence. He is able!
- D. God blesses our faithfulness with increase
Mark 2:5 – “When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”
1. The text tells us that Jesus was moved by *their* faith.
 2. God blesses faithfulness.
Galatians 6:9 – “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”
 3. Do you have a passion to see souls converted? Are you being diligent to bring them to Christ no matter what the obstacles might be?
 4. The salvation of souls demands great effort from God’s people
1 Corinthians 3:6-8 – “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.⁷ So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.⁸ Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.”
 5. Usually it takes the work of several faithful saints to win a sinner to Christ. It took four hands to lower the man through the hole in the roof.
 - a. Perhaps your loved one has grown tired of your words. Perhaps he might hear the voice of one of your brothers or sisters in Christ
 - b. Perhaps you lack the boldness to speak to your neighbor. Bring along a brother with you.

Conclusion:

1. Are we prepared to labor together for the Gospel?
2. Spurgeon: But I am afraid that there are not many, even in a large Church, who will become sick-bearers. Many will say the plan is admirable, but they will leave it to others to carry it out. Remember that the four persons who join in such a labor of love ought, all of them, to be filled with intense affection to the persons whose salvation they seek. They must be men who will not shrink because of difficulty—who will put forth their whole strength to shoulder the beloved burden—and will persevere until they succeed. They need be strong, for the burden is heavy. They need be resolute, for the work will try their faith. They need be prayerful, for otherwise they labor in vain. They must be believing, or they will be utterly useless—Jesus saw their faith, and therefore accepted their service. But without faith it is impossible to please Him. Where shall we find quartets such as these? May the Lord find them, and may He send them to some of you poor dying sinners who lie paralyzed here today!
3. Their efforts led to the healing of their friend, but mostly it resulted in Christ receiving glory.
Mark 2:12 – “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.”
4. Our chief motive in evangelism is the glory of God. This is what drives us to press on in spite of great hardship. May we seek to carry helpless men to Christ. May we plead their case before Christ. May we expend great energy on their behalf.