

Who Are You Bringing To Jesus?

MARK 2:1-12

There are 66 books, 1189 chapters, 31,175 verses and 810,697 words in God's Word,
But only five of those words will determine if you are forever happy in Heaven, or forever horrified in Hell.

Jesus spoke those words to a desperate man nearly 2,000 years ago. Do you know them? Have you experienced them? Have these words mapped out your life and taken the Hell out of your future?

The five words, that sum up all of Christ's earthly ministry, are:

YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU!

The message of Christ for you this morning is that all your sin can be forgiven.

The theme of Christianity throughout all ages is that all who come to Christ will be forgiven.

The heart and lifeblood of the gospel is that Jesus died to free men and women, boys and girls from sin and its dreadful consequences.

God's Word is full of many truths, each of which has countless applications in the lives of believers.

But the supreme message God has delivered is that sinful people can be completely cleansed and securely kept in eternal fellowship with the Holy God of the Universe.

That is the message of Mark 2:1-12.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS IN CAPERNAUM

Our text opens as Jesus has again returned to the picturesque fishing¹ village of Capernaum, nestled on the northwestern shore of Galilee, approximately two miles from where the Jordan enters the lake. This town lay on a gentle slope rising from one of the numerous shallow coves, which lend a gracefully serpentine appearance to the shoreline. It was one of those places that artists just dream of discovering.

As soon as word spread that Jesus was back in town, the crowds gathered. In our text they were so thick that four men had to get very creative to bring a friend to Jesus. While Jesus preached God's Word the service was interrupted by loud and persistent pounding on the roof,

¹ Taken from McQuaid E. , *The Outpouring: Jesus in the Feasts of Israel*, (Bellmawr, New Jersey: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.) 1997.

then violent shaking and bulging of the ceiling, followed by clouds of dust, falling mud chunks, then a ray of light pierced the darkened interior, and slowly the sight of a body on a bed being lowered by ropes from above. Of course you remember whose lived in "the house" that was broken up? Simon and Andrews, it often costs something to serve Jesus.

BRINGING A FRIEND TO JESUS

So, Four men brought their friend to Jesus. What an incredible moment, and Jesus looks into those pleading eyes and gives the greatest gift anyone has ever received. As Mark 2:5 says When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you"!

Wow. What a blessing, to see Jesus give your dear friend that incomprehensibly costly gift. Forgiveness. Nothing could be better, greater, or more precious. We need some modern stretcher-bearers to bring their sin paralyzed and palsied friends to Jesus. As we read and reflect on this story, ask yourself today, Who are you bringing to Jesus?

Lets read the entire story and open our hearts to our Wonderful Savior!

Mark 2:1-12

The scribes and Pharisees had picked a good time to attend one of our Lord's meetings. God's power was present in a special way and Jesus would heal a man with palsy.

If leprosy we saw last time illustrates the corruption and defilement of sin, then palsy in this passage is a picture of the paralysis that sin produces in a life. But Jesus would do more than heal the man; He would also forgive his sins and teach the crowd a lesson in forgiveness. There are five simple truths that encompass our text this morning.

FIVE SIMPLE TRUTHS

The Un-Changed Message Of Jesus.

He is preaching the same message since chapter 1:14 repent and turn toward the King and His Kingdom. No matter what the setting, no matter who the audience, no matter what the needs, Jesus preached God's Word to all He encountered.

The Un-Abashed Need Of The Paralytic.

He is thrust before Jesus the only One who could help him. He is crying out for help by his very presence. Since no words were ever noted as being said, maybe even his voice was paralyzed.

The Un-Daunted Faith Of The Friends.

At great risk, at great personal sacrifice they overcome all obstacles for the one desire they have, get our friend to Jesus.

The Un-Moved Hearts Of The Pharisees.

Seeing Sins As God Sees It They should have been telling everyone to come to Jesus.

They should have stood and helped the stretcher down through the ceiling. They should have fell on their faces in worship filled awe because they saw it all, they were in the front row. The paralytic only had a paralyzed body, these religious men had paralyzed hearts.

The Un-Bridled Worship Of The Crowds.

Nothing but God was the focus of their reaction. They lifted their awe filled hearts and glorified the Lord God Almighty.

The central question of our passage asks all of us, are you pointing what is left of your life on earth toward bringing people to Jesus?

WHO ARE YOU TAKING TO HEAVEN?

Some people will do anything to bring their friends to Jesus. That would be a summary of modern missions.

In the year 1876, Alexander² MacKay in his farewell address before setting out for Uganda: “Within six months you will probably hear that one of us is dead. When the news comes, do not be cast down; but send someone else immediately to take the vacant place.” Within 3 months one of the party of 8 was dead; within a year, 5 had died; and at the end of the two years MacKay himself was the sole survivor. In the face of overwhelming odds he struggled on for 12 years until he too was felled by fever.

West Africa came to be known as the “white man’s grave.” Melville Cox arrived in Liberia in 1833 but died within 4 months of his arrival. His last words were: “Let a thousand fall before Africa be given up.” In the Congo in the 1800’s only one out of four missionaries survived the first term of service. In 1915, Mary Slessor, spent nearly 40 years in Africa. Over the years she suffered recurring bouts of malaria, and had often endured painful boils that appeared on her face and head, sometimes resulting in baldness. She died at the age of 66 in her mud hut. In the year 1900 in China, during the Boxer Rebellion, no fewer than 189 missionaries and their children lost their lives. It was the largest massacre of missionaries in the history of modern missions. Others such as Jonathan and Rosalind Goforth saw 5 of their 11 children die in childhood, escaped after a harrowing 1000-mile flight to safety. What drove these people, what fueled their willingness to pay the ultimate price, to give their lives for others? What makes them different from you and me? All they wanted is to bring others to Jesus.

GOD’S HUMBLE TEAM OF SERVANTS

These who sacrificed all, and many others of God's greatest servants were led to Christ or started into ministry by those virtually unknown to all of us but God. You never know who you might bring to Jesus. There are opportunities in your nursery class, your children's church class, your Sunday school class or Awana group. Every time you serve in Christ's church you are touching lives that you can bring to Jesus, and take with you to Heaven. To encourage you in all

² Most of this can be found in "From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya" by Ruth Tucker.

this, let's take a quiz³ from your memory of some of these great lives –

Who taught Martin Luther his theology and inspired his translation of the New Testament?

Or who visited Dwight L. Moody at a shoe store and spoke to him about Christ?

Or who was the elderly woman who prayed faithfully for Billy Graham for over twenty years?

Or who financed William Carey's ministry in India?

Jesus asks us to bring others to Him; Jesus left us with the power of His Spirit to bring others to Him. The question He will ask at the end of our days is "Who did you bring with you?" And the eternal mark each of us will display will be tied to the answer to that question. Those that turn many, bring many to righteousness, will shine as the stars forever. Are you shining? Are you planning on taking anyone with you to Heaven?

TAKING PEOPLE WITH US TO HEAVEN

Watch Jesus teach us that in Mark 2.

The houses from the 1st Century ruins of Capernaum have narrow walls⁴ that would not have supported a masonry roof, so it probably had a roof constructed with wooden rafters 2 to 3 feet apart, overlaid with branches, and then covered with a foot or so of beaten earth. This would be how a hole was dug to let down a paralytic man for Jesus to heal (Mark 2:4).

Archaeologists⁵ have found that the simple roof construction of the Middle East hasn't changed much over the many centuries since the times of Christ. Then and now simple houses have a roof constructed by laying brushwood across rough sycamore beams and binding them together by using mud. In Christ's day a heavy roller was kept on the roof to compact the material after rain.

Roofs were not watertight and therefore had two characteristics — constant leaks and a green colour. The period November to March (the rainy season) was a cold and miserable time.

Knowing this makes Proverbs 19:13 come alive as we hear Solomon refers to the continual drip of water (see also 27:15). The roofs⁶ were green because the seeds in the mud (natural and from drying out grain) sprouted. This is mentioned in 2 Kings 19:26; Psalm 129:6; and Isaiah 37:27.

QUADRIPILEGICS IN A BARRIER FILLED WORLD

Because we see through Peter's eyes that the **paralytic** (*paralutikos*) was brought to Jesus

³ Adapted from a list in Swindoll, Encourage Me.

⁴ See John C.H. Laughlin, "Capernaum: From Jesus Time and After," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 19:5 (September/October 1993): 54-63, 90.

⁵ Adapted from Gowers, Ralph, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago) 1987.

⁶ There were positive uses for these flat, mud roofs. They could be used as a vantage point (Isaiah 22:1; Matthew 10:27), as a place for cool and quietness that was conducive to worship (Zephaniah 1:5; Acts 10:9), for drying out of crops and storage (Joshua 2:6), and to sleep on a hot summer's night. So great was the use of the roofspace that the law required a parapet be built around it so that people would not fall off (Deuteronomy 22:8). When such houses were built in a city, they were literally joined house to house (Isaiah 5:8), the gaps in between forming the streets. It was therefore possible to run from roof to roof over the housetops a way of escape to which Jesus alludes in Matthew 24:17.

lying on a bed, we assume his paralysis was severe. In our culture we would describe him as a quadriplegic. There were no wheelchairs or other equipment available to those who could not walk. So friends were enlisted to carry them around.

The handicapped have suffered social stigma and neglect in all ages. But in the Jewish culture of Jesus' day had elevated the stigma by declaring that all disease and affliction came as the direct result of someone's sin. We see this as far back as in the days of Job, who may have lived early after the Flood, before the time of Abraham. Eliphaz asked Job, "Who ever perished being innocent?" (Job 4:7) and Bildad said to him, "If your sons sinned against Him, then He delivered them into the power of their transgression" (8:4).

Even Christ's disciples had taken on this attitude. We hear it as they question Jesus in John 9 as they passed a man who had been blind from birth: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" (John 9:1-2).

Jesus clarified the matter. He teaches that all affliction, pain, and hardship of every sort are just the result of the presence of sin in the world. But sickness and pain are not only brought on by a specific sin in the person who is suffering. God's Word shows us that not all sickness is chastening. But all sickness is always graphic reminder of the destructive power at work in the world because of sin.

LIVING WITH SHAME EACH DAY

So as this paralyzed man lived each day, he and those around him believed that either he or his parents or grandparents had sinned and caused his pain. What an added weight to his already burdened soul. So he was a vivid representation of his own sinfulness and of God's judgment. This explains even more how wonderful it was that crippled and diseased people came so freely to Jesus. They had every reason to shun crowds.

So down through that packed dirt and tree branched roof they dug. Now, for the vivid picture Mark paints from so many different perspectives. Look in each direction.

First, *Above*, with the light streaming past them in dusty beams, four sweaty, and determined faces can be seen, guiding that roped stretcher downward;

Then look *below*, the disgusted faces of those Pharisees and scribes shaking dirt from their flowing, ceremonially cleansed robes; and

Then look over in the *midst* of all that is the loving face of Jesus and the frozen face of the helpless paralytic.

What a moment, what a sight. All eyes lock onto these two who now look into each other's eyes.

COMING TO JESUS

The paralytic, with the aid of four friends came to Jesus.

This man wonderfully portrays the way of salvation as he willingly and silently exposed

himself to Jesus and to the whole crowd in all his physical, moral, and spiritual ugliness. We see him literally at Jesus' feet. We see him as he threw himself on Jesus' mercy. We see him approach the Lord in true humility.

This is exactly the poverty of spirit God requires of the seeking heart that Jesus would teach about in the Sermon on the Mount a few weeks later in Matthew 5:3. But before the Sermon, here was a vivid picture of true, humble, faith that throws itself at Christ's feet. Is that how you are today? If so, you have that greatest gift, forgiveness. If you haven't yet come, Jesus is waiting and offers to give you the forgiveness of sins instantly and completely today!

There is no greater gift that can be given by God than forgiveness. That is because we have no greater need than to have our sins taken away. Do we really see sin as God does?

SEEING SIN AS GOD SEES IT

For a moment listen to God's view of sin:

God calls sin the source of trouble (Job 5:7), the cause of emptiness (Rom. 8:20), and the thief of peace (Isa. 57:21).

God calls sin an ingratitude against a Giving God (Josh. 2:10-12).

God calls sin a condition incurable by man himself (Jer. 13:23).

God calls sin a deadly plague that has infected all men (Rom. 3:23).

God calls sin a paralysis that affects the total body, mind, and spirit of man (Jer. 19:9).

God calls sin a willful disobedience of a Holy God's law (1 John 3:4).

God calls sin a pollution that defiles His image in man, and stains his soul with Satan's image (John 6:70; 8:44).

God calls sin a hostile rebellion against a Sovereign God (Lev. 26:27; 1 Tim. 1:9).

God calls sin a place where mankind is under the dominion of Satan and the wrath of God (Eph. 2:2-3).

God calls sin a power so malignant that even the regenerate person needs to continually fight against it (Rom. 7:19).

God calls sin the ticket to eternal hell if a person does not repent (2 Thess. 1:9).

FORGIVENESS: THE BEST NEWS OF ALL

Isn't that a bleak picture? Wouldn't the best news anyone could ever receive be the assurance that his **sins are forgiven?** That is why friends bring friends to Jesus. We know the rest of the story. We know that every time Jesus spoke of forgiving sins, He was tasting the bitter cup of Calvary. Christ's words could be effective only because He as God's perfect lamb, took man's sins upon Himself. Thus each time Jesus forgave sin He looked to the Cross and felt its crushing load of sin.

In Mark 2:10, we have the first recorded use of the title Son of man in Mark's Gospel, where it is found fourteen times, and twelve of these references are found after Mark 8:29 when Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ of God (Mark 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45;

13:26, 34; 14:21, 41, 62).

Christ's listeners were familiar with this title. It was used of the Prophet Ezekiel over eighty times, and Daniel applied it to the Messiah (Dan. 7:13, 18). "Son of man" was our Lord's favorite name for Himself; this title is found at least eighty-two times in the Gospel record. Occasionally He used the title "Son of God" (Matt. 27:43; Luke 22:70; John 5:25; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4), but "Son of man" was used more. Certainly the Jewish people caught the messianic character of this title, but it also identified Him with the people He came to save (Luke 19:10). Like Ezekiel, the Old Testament "son of man," Jesus "sat where they sat" (Ezek. 3:15). So with this title, Jesus affirmed His deity not only by forgiving the man's sins and healing his body, but also by calling Himself the "Son of man."

JESUS WAS AMAZING

When those who filled the house that day saw what Jesus did they were all amazed. The Greek word for amazed is *existemi*, which means to move out of place or to drive out of senses.

They were out of ability to comprehend what they just saw. Then they focused upon the fact that only God could ever do such a wonderful thing, so Mark records that they glorified God. This is the word *doxadzo* from which comes our English Doxology which is a song of praise to God.

These who witnessed Christ's work were worshiping God with praise. This overwhelming awe happened often by those who witnessed what Jesus did.

When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water (Matt. 14:26) they were overwhelmed with awe.

After the raising of the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:16) they were overwhelmed with awe.

After the healing of the demoniacs at Gerasa (Luke 8:37) they were overwhelmed with awe.

When the shepherds heard the angels sing (Luke 2:9) they were overwhelmed with awe.

After the guards at the garden tomb saw the angels roll the stone away (Matt. 28:2-4) they were overwhelmed with awe.

When the women shared what they had seen at the empty tomb (Matthew 28:8) they were overwhelmed with awe.

SEEING THIS EVENT THROUGH CHRIST'S EYES

One person summarized this whole scene like this. Let me close with that summary:

Consider this scene through the eyes of the Lord Jesus. When He **looked up**, He saw the four men on the roof with their sick friend. Houses had flat roofs which were usually accessible by means of an outside stairway. It would not be difficult to remove the tiles, laths, and grass that comprised the roof and make an opening large enough to fit their friend through on his mat. We must admire several characteristics of these men, qualities that ought to mark us as "fishers of men."

For one thing, they were deeply concerned about their friend and wanted to see him helped.

They had the faith to believe that Jesus could and would meet his need.

They did not simply “pray about it,” but they put some feet to their prayers; and they did not permit the difficult circumstances to discourage them.

They worked together and dared to do something different, and Jesus rewarded their efforts.

How easy it would have been for them to say, “Well, there is no sense trying to get to Jesus today! Maybe we can come back tomorrow.”

When our Lord **looked down**, He saw the palsied man lying on his mat; and immediately Jesus went to the heart of the man’s problem—sin. Not all sickness is caused by sin (see John 9:1–3), but evidently this man’s condition was the result of his disobedience to God. Even before He healed the man’s body, Jesus spoke peace to the man’s heart and announced that his sins were forgiven!

Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. It meets the greatest need; it costs the greatest price; and it brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting results.

Then Jesus **looked around** and saw the critics who had come to spy on Him (see Luke 5:17). These religious leaders certainly had every right to investigate the ministry of this new teacher, since the religious life of the nation was under their supervision (Deut. 13). But they should have come with open minds and hearts, seeking truth, instead of with critical minds, seeking heresy. Some of the negative attitude that had been present in Judea (John 4:1–4) had now invaded Galilee, and this was the beginning of the official opposition that ultimately led to our Lord’s arrest and death. He was now so popular that the Jewish leaders dared not ignore Him. In fact, they must have arrived early for the meeting, because they were right at the scene of action! Or perhaps Jesus graciously gave them front row seats.

When the Lord **looked within**, He saw the critical spirit in their hearts and knew that they were accusing Him of blasphemy. After all, only God can forgive sins; and Jesus had just told the paralytic that his sins were forgiven. Jesus was claiming to be God!

But the next instant, He proved Himself to be God by reading their hearts and telling them what they were thinking (see John 2:25; Heb. 3:13). Since they wanted to “reason” about things, He gave them something to ponder: Which is easier, to heal the man or to tell him he is forgiven? Obviously, it is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven!” because nobody can prove whether or not the forgiveness really took place. So, to back up His words, Jesus immediately healed the man and sent him home. The healing of the man’s body was but an illustration and demonstration of the healing of his soul (Ps. 103:3). The scribes and Pharisees, of course, could neither heal the man nor forgive his sins; so they were caught in their own trap and condemned by their own thoughts.

The healing was immediate and the people glorified God. But even more than receiving healing, the man experienced forgiveness and the start of a whole new life. Our Lord's miracles not only demonstrated His deity and His compassion for needy people, but they also revealed important spiritual lessons about salvation. They were "object lessons" to teach spiritually blind people what God could do for them if only they would believe in His Son.⁷

Well, Jesus needs friends who will bring friends to Jesus. Who are you bringing to Him? Who are you and I taking with us to Heaven?

⁷ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997. [687 words/500 max.]