

Theme: Jesus has the authority not only to heal physical illness but also to forgive and heal sin, restoring people to God's favor.

I. Intro - Conflict in the Plot of A Story

- A. A good plot requires conflict to move the story forward
- B. Mark has a plot for his story of Jesus
- C. We now begin a series of conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders in Galilee (Mark 2:1-3:6)
- D. The material in this section may not be chronological - it is built around the theme of conflict
- E. These will be balanced with stories of conflict in Jerusalem just before the crucifixion (Mark 11-12)
- F. The first conflict - the Son of Man and Sin

II. Setting: Crowds In Capernaum

- A. Jesus has returned to Capernaum and crowds gather
A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.² So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Mark 2:1-2
 - 1. Jesus returns to Capernaum, His new base
 - 2. People hear He has returned and crowds gather
 - 3. This dynamic repeats multiple times in the Gospel
- B. Jesus and the crowds
 - 1. The crowds in Mark's Gospel are not viewed positively
 - 2. They are never spoken of as repenting or believing

- 3. They often impeded access to Jesus - as we will see again in a moment!
- 4. They usually have their own agenda, and they will abandon Jesus when the cost of being His follower becomes apparent.
- 5. But Jesus will minister to them by following His agenda rather than theirs - to preach the Word of God so that they might repent and believe the Good News!
- 6. Every local Church should keep this in mind, striving for faithfulness rather than crowds, and never sacrificing the proclamation of God's Word for numerical success.

III. Event: A Paralytic Brought To Jesus

- A. Four friends bring a paralytic to Jesus
Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them.⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. Mark 2:3-4
 - 1. People obviously want to have Jesus heal them
 - 2. A paralytic can not come, so four of his friends carry him on his mat
 - 3. Once again, the crowd is in the way so that they can not get the paralytic to Jesus.
- B. A display of great, resilient faith
Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:4-5

1. The four men do not give up getting to Jesus because of obstacles - they improvise!
2. They get to the roof (by stairs) and dig through the roof (made of branches and mud)
3. Jesus sees their actions as indicative of faith - they know Jesus is Who they need and they will do anything to get to Him.
4. This is the first example of faith in Mark - it is not mere mental assent but rather trust in Jesus that leads to bold action.
5. Jesus is Sovereign and can not be forced into any action - but He does love faith! This is not a formula to get a healing or other blessing from Jesus, but it is a description of how disciples are to live in full trust of Jesus.

IV. Conflict: Who Can Forgive Sins?

A. A surprising statement from Jesus

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, **“Son, your sins are forgiven.”** Mark 2:5

1. We expect Jesus to heal the man
2. Jesus compassionately refers to the man as “son”
3. Jesus then says the man’s sins are forgiven
4. Why does Jesus pronounce forgiveness of sins when the desire is clearly for physical healing?

B. Sin, sickness, forgiveness, and healing

1. Jesus begins with forgiveness of sin because this is actually the far greater need.
 - a. We think in terms of external physical needs such as healing, and these are important, yet the far greater need is the forgiveness of sin.

- b. To be physically healed and remain separated from God in our sin is not the intent of God’s heart for us.
- c. This is why Jesus gives priority to the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom over miracles such as healing and multiplying food.

2. Sin, sickness, forgiveness, and healing were linked in Scripture and Jewish culture
who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, Psalm 103:3

I said, “O Lord, have mercy on me; heal me, for I have sinned against you.” Psalm 41:4

“Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding.” Jeremiah 3:22

- a. Sickness only exists because of the fall/sin
- b. This does not mean individual sickness is related to some specific personal sin but that ultimately sickness and sin are related
- c. This led many in Jesus’ day to attribute all sickness to gross sin in the person, but Jesus refutes this in his ministry (see John 9)

3. Forgiveness and healing of sin is the heart of the new covenant

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36:25–26

- a. Jesus is announcing the arrival of the Kingdom and the ushering in of the New Covenant, so forgiveness of sin is central to all He says and does
- b. This is part of His Messianic mission

4. Sometimes sickness is directly related to a specific sin

- a. This is why James 5:16 links confession of sin and healing from sickness
- b. It may be that this illness was directly related to some sin and this Jesus pronounces forgiveness

c. This would not have been a problem for those hearing Jesus, but it is often our biggest struggle in this story!

We are no longer scandalized by Jesus' announcement of forgiveness, which we take for granted; it is the hint that our sin brings physical consequences that causes us to stumble. David Garland

C. The reaction of the scribes/teachers of the law

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?" Mark 2:6-7

1. The scribes personally appear for the first time and are outraged at Jesus proclaiming the man's sins were forgiven
2. Only God could forgive sins, which He sometimes announced through a prophet - who does Jesus think He is?
3. Jesus did not directly state that He had forgiven the sin (though He will momentarily) but even His bold statement that the sins were forgiven was blasphemy in their eyes.
4. This is actually the central issue in the story - it is not about healing but about who has the authority to forgive sin.

V. Resolution: The Authority of the Son of Man

A. Jesus' penetrating question

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 the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?" Mark 2:8-9

1. Jesus immediately displays Divine insight into their inner thoughts! This shows He is at least a true prophet of God.
2. Which is easier to say....
 - a. In one sense it is easier to SAY your sins are forgiven.
 - b. Yet in reality, forgiving sins will cost Jesus His life - it is much more difficult to forgive sin than it is to heal a paralytic!
3. Jesus is offering to prove to these teachers of the Law His authority to heal and to forgive sins!

B. Jesus' astounding claim of authority

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." He said to the paralytic, 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. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" Mark 2:10-12

1. Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man - His favorite title for Himself (14x in Mark)
2. The real issue is not that Jesus as the Son of Man has the authority to heal but that He has authority to forgive sin - the far deeper need and problem.

3. Jesus here claims authority to not just say God has forgiven but to directly forgive sin Himself - which is a claim to Deity!
4. Jesus proves His authority to personally forgive sin by displaying His authority to heal the paralytic.
5. This whole episode causes the people to praise God, admitting they have never seen anything like this - certainly not the result if Jesus was a blaspheming false prophet!

VI. Applying the Word

A. Am I getting close to Jesus no matter what?

1. The four friends exhibited great, resilient faith!
2. They knew that Jesus could do the impossible and they were going to get close to Him no matter what!
3. Their actions demonstrated that they knew they desperately needed Jesus.
4. Their faith was not merely intellectual - it produced definitive action (carrying the friend to Jesus)
5. Their faith was not fair weather - it persevered through all difficulties - carrying their friend through town, going to the roof, digging through, lowering the friend down, etc.
6. When I let other things take priority over getting close to Jesus it is a sign that I do not realize my desperate plight apart from Him!
7. Do I see my desperate situation apart from Christ?
8. Do I see that whatever my need Jesus truly is the answer?

- a. Struggles with sin
 - b. Emotional struggles
 - c. Family struggles
 - d. Healing
 - e. Guidance
9. Make getting close to Jesus via the Word, prayer, and worship the highest priority

B. Am I embracing the forgiveness of sin in Christ?

1. Have I ever truly come to Jesus to confess my sins and receive forgiveness? Do so today!
2. But even Christians can lie around under the weight of unconfessed sin!
3. This leads to all sorts of issues - physical sickness, emotional struggles, destructive behaviors, etc.
4. Jesus speaks with tender compassion - "Child, your sin is forgiven!"

C. The Table of Forgiveness and Healing

1. Is there Spirit bringing any sin to mind? Confess and receive cleansing at His Table today!
2. Psalm 32 corporate reading

The Son of Man and Sin

Mark 2:1-12
 January 8, 2023
 Communion
 Ephesians 1:7-8

Teaching keywords: Jesus; Christology; sin; forgiveness; faith; healing

In Jesus we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. You are blessed - go forth and be a blessing!
Ephesians 1:7-8

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