

introduction

Last week in our discussion of John 2, we saw Jesus confront and transform expectations about where and how God meets his people. By cleansing the temple and then identifying himself as the true dwelling place of God's presence, Jesus revealed that access to God is centered on a person rather than a building or ritual.

We continue to explore what sits at the heart of this series: *Who is this Jesus* as we turn our attention now to Mark 2. In our passage today, we see Jesus' surprising act of healing. What unfolds is more than Jesus' compassion or his ability to heal — it is a revelation. Here, we're invited to see not only what Jesus does, but what his actions tell us about who he truly is — and what kind of healing he offers to those who come to him.



Can you think of a time when someone went to extraordinary lengths to help you? How did that change you?

read **Mark 2:1-12 (NIV)**

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

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?"

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'?" 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."

Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture. Share some insights, questions, or points that strike you. Then read what follows.

the need beneath the need

In this story, we're drawn into a scene full of urgency and hope. A paralyzed man is carried by friends who are determined to get him to Jesus. When the crowd blocks the way, they refuse to be turned aside. Instead, they climb onto the roof, open it up, and lower their friend down right in front of Jesus. Everything about this moment reveals their desperate hope and expectation — physical healing. The paralyzed man's need is obvious, pressing, and undeniable. He cannot walk on his own; he is dependent, exposed, and vulnerable. And yet, when Jesus finally speaks, his words cut across everyone's assumptions. Instead of addressing what's obvious, Jesus speaks to the hidden one: "*Son, your sins are forgiven*" (v. 5). It's a surprising response — and perhaps, even a disappointing one. Clearly, the man came forward for healing, not forgiveness.

discuss

1. Does Jesus' response to forgive sins make sense to you? Why do you think he responds this way rather than addressing what's visible?

Jesus knew that while the man's paralysis is real and painful, it wasn't his greatest need. In this moment, Jesus gently but firmly reveals that the deepest need in his man's life is not the one everyone can see, even the man himself. He completely reframes the man's situation by identifying a deeper need than paralysis. However, Jesus doesn't deny the man's suffering, nor does he ignore it. He eventually heals the man's body. But first, he addresses a greater priority.

Jesus' response here challenges the assumption that our most urgent problems are always the most visible or disruptive ones. We tend to believe that what's causing us the most pain, limitation, or inconvenience must also be our deepest need. In the paralyzed man's case, everyone — including the man himself — assumes the real problem is his inability to walk. But Jesus treats that as secondary.

Like a wise and compassionate physician, Jesus treats the root issue that ails the man before any external healing and change take place. In forgiving the man's sins before healing his body,

Jesus reveals both his authority and his care. He reveals himself as the one who knows us more fully than we know ourselves — and who loves us enough to give us what we truly need, even when it is not what we initially wanted and asked for.

discuss

- 2. Where are you tempted to treat a difficult circumstance as the main thing or problem God needs to “fix,” rather than asking what God might be forming or healing in you through it?**
- 3. In a culture that increasingly values mental health, emotional well-being, and relief from distress, how can Jesus subtly become someone we turn to mainly for coping or improvement — rather than the one who addresses our deepest need and reorients our whole life?**

grace that comes before we're ready

One of the most surprising moments in this passage is not just *that* Jesus forgives the paralytic's sins — but *when* he does it. We notice that the paralytic man actually hasn't said anything. There's no recorded confession, no visible repentance, no carefully formed prayer. Jesus simply looks at him and declares forgiveness (v. 5). Now, this can feel jarring. After all, isn't repentance necessary to receive forgiveness? Doesn't forgiveness usually follow confession? And yet here, Jesus moves first. And this moment reveals something essential about the heart of Jesus: he does not withhold grace. He is eager to give it. He responds not to perfect faith or to polished confession, but even to the faintest one toward him.

Mark gives us a clue when he writes that Jesus knows what is happening in people's hearts (v. 8). Jesus sees more than what is spoken; he sees need, dependence, longing — even before they're articulated. In the paralytic man, there is likely a quiet, inarticulate desire for mercy, and as Jesus perceives this, he meets it with decisive grace.¹ This shows us that forgiveness is not something we pray from God once we've gotten ourselves together. It's something Jesus brings to us, often before we know how to ask. His grace is not passive or cautious; it is active

¹ Tim Keller, “The Healing of Forgiveness” in *The Gospel of Mark, Part 1: The Coming of the King* (March 12, 2006).

and initiating. He doesn't wait for the door to be flung wide open — he steps in through the smallest crack and enters in to meet us where we are.

“Forgiveness can...change individuals. It can...go down to the hidden roots of the personality, gently healing old, long-bruised, hurts...Often people think healing and forgiveness is impossible. They find God distant or uncaring. But true faith won't be satisfied with that. This story is a picture of prayer. Don't stay on the edge of the crowd. Dig through God's roof and find yourself in his presence.”

—N.T. Wright, *“Mark for Everyone” in New Testament for Everyone, 2001.*

discuss

4. What new insight do you have that Jesus forgives the paralytic man *before* he even asks for it? How does it challenge or comfort you?
5. When it comes to forgiveness — either receiving it from God or offering it to others — where might you be tempted to hold back because you think you need to be “ready”?
6. Are there parts of your heart or past that feel too buried or broken to bring to Jesus? How might you begin to “dig through the roof” and let him meet you there?

upcoming

- Saturday, February 7 | **Community Salsa Night (18+), 7-9:30 pm**
Sign up on your own or with some friends for an evening of rhythm, music and community. A 90-minute intro to the Chachacha will be provided to help you dance the night away!
redeemerws.com/salsa
- Monday, February 9 | **Sing, Play, Speak, 6-9 pm**
The next gathering for working artists will showcase the works of actors and various writers in our community. Evenings include a meal and time for professional networking followed by performances.
redeemerws.com/singplayspeak
- Wednesdays, starting February 11 | **CFW Vocation Lab, 7pm at RES (150 E 91st St)**
Participate in a 5 week class designed to help you discern God's will for your vocational calling and gain clarity in how your work fits into God's purposes.
faithandwork.com/vocationlab