

His Authority & Our Response

Pastor Chris Baker //05.14.23 // Centralia FBC

Kids in kindergarten through third grade, you're dismissed to go to children's church. We'll be reading Mark 2:1-12 this morning. It's on page 888 in the black bibles in the pew rack in front of you.

While you're turning there, I want to say I'm really thankful for the songs we sing. Some of them are really old, some of them are pretty new and all of them teach us something. The songs we sing when we're gathered are one of the primary ways we teach theology, did you know that? We don't pick songs because we like them or because they sound pretty. No, we pick the songs we pick because they teach our hearts something about God. They express what we believe to be true in a poetic way, so our songs are worship—yes—but they're also discipling our hearts as we declare truth.

That last song we sang asked a series of questions, and our text answers some of them today. What other power can raise the dead? Who else could rescue me from my failing? What other majesty rules with justice? Only a holy God and Mark wants to tell you in chapter 2:1-12 that this Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee we met in chapter 1 *is* the Holy God who has the authority to forgive sins. And, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, He illustrates that truth with the remarkable true story of a paralyzed man. Verse 1:

Read

Pray

Stephen Hawking wrote that **the human memory is a notoriously unreliable thing**. And it's funny how true that can be with the goofiest of information.

How many of you vividly remember in *The Empire Strikes Back* when Darth Vader says, "Luke, I am your father." I do too! But he doesn't. He says, "No, I am your father." When I was first told that I went and watched the whole movie again. And sure enough, he never says Luke, I am your father despite how clearly I remember it.

In the Disney version of Snow White, did you know the Queen never says 'mirror, mirror on the wall'? It's magic mirror.

Our memories are weird. You know the guy from Monopoly? Rich Uncle Pennybags is his name and I swear I remember him with a monocle—that little one-eyed reading glass thing. Nope. Never had one.

I tell you all my broken memories, one, because I figure some of you may be weird like me and share them. But, two, because our text is so familiar and our memories so fickle that we may think we know a couple of things about this text and those things could lead us to miss the point.

The contextually broken memory I had about this passage for a long time was that this is a story about four friends. That's simply not true. We have no idea how many people were involved in carrying this

paralyzed man to Jesus. We know there were at least four, because that's how many carried him when they arrived at the house. There were probably more, after all this journey could have covered many miles. No matter how strong these guys were and no matter how skinny this paralyzed man was, they would have needed a break.

Second, this story isn't about the friends at all—at least not primarily.

And this is the thing that studying Mark expositionally helps illustrate.

Remember, in chapter 1 Mark showed us this Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee taught with authority like none other. And not just teaching authority, He had authority over demons, and over diseases.

But Mark was just getting started. Here in the beginning of chapter 2, Mark shows us that Jesus Christ is God Himself and He does so by revealing more to us about His authority.

This passage isn't about the friends at all, it's about the Jesus to whom they delivered this lost paralyzed soul.

So that's how we'll look at this text. First, about Jesus. There are 3 bold statements about the authority of Jesus Mark wants to make. And from those bold statements, we'll see 3 responses they demand.

3 bold statements and 3 responses.

Mark's first bold statement is this:

Jesus is God

5 Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

6 But some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts: 7 "Why does he speak like this? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 Right away Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were thinking like this within themselves and said to them, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat, and walk'? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he told the paralytic— 11 "I tell you: get up, take your mat, and go home."

We need to take just a minute to set the stage here. Remember, when we meet Jesus in Mark He's already an adult. He's baptized by John in the Jordan river, He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, then He begins His public ministry. He's teaching and He's healing and He begins drawing a crowd.

The crowds became so cumbersome that He spent some time in the wilderness, according to chapter 1, that means he wasn't in the towns of Galilee. He was on the outskirts. But in chapter 2, He comes to Capernaum. This became His home base. He spent time in Capernaum so regularly that in the beginning of the chapter Mark says when He's in Capernaum, He's at home.

He was teaching in a house, probably the house of Peter, and he drew such a massive crowd that no one else would fit. Now, realize that this wasn't a church service. Many of these people would have been skeptics. We know the scribes were. They were Jewish Bible teachers and they will oppose Jesus for His entire ministry.

Some of the folks gathered there would have been genuine believers, but most weren't. We know that because most of them don't end up following Jesus. We also know that because they're not a very hospitable crowd.

A group of people arrived with a paralyzed man. We know nothing about the paralyzed man or the people who brought them except that he was paralyzed and that there were at least four men involved in the carrying. They must have heard that Jesus could heal, because they went to a ton of trouble to get this man to Jesus.

Houses in the region were typically one-story with a large room in the center and a flat roof. Many had external staircases to access the roof. The roof was used almost like a front porch.

Structurally, it would have been something like a layer of heavy lumber, beams, and then smaller lumber (pieces of wood, sticks, and whatnot) between the beams. Then smaller sticks and even grains or longer grasses formed a thatch to cover those. On top of the thatch would have been a layer of really thick mud. That's why Mark tells us they had to dig through the roof.

These men went to the roof, figured out where Jesus was in the room below them, and started digging. We'll talk more about the men shortly, but Jesus's response in verse 5 is astounding.

Seeing their faith, He said Son, your sins are forgiven. That would have rocked the scribes. They knew their Bible. They knew only God could forgive sin. And they were right.

Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man here. That's an incredibly important title. Jesus employs it about a dozen times over the course of Mark's gospel. We may just set aside a sermon for that title sometime down the road. What it means here is that Jesus is affirming Himself to be God. 'No one can forgive sins but God alone', the scribes say. And Jesus says Amen.

Jesus is God. He's not just a good teacher, a miracle worker, a religious leader. He's not one of the ways to get to heaven. He is God. The Bible is clear about that and it needs to be said.

According to a study by the Barna Research Group, only 56% of adults believe Jesus is God. About 25 percent believe He's just a religious leader like Mohammed or the Buddha. It's very possible, if not probable, that someone within the sound of my voice today isn't quite convinced.

(<https://www.barna.com/research/what-do-americans-believe-about-jesus-5-popular-beliefs/>)

You might think Jesus is important, but you're not sure if He's God. Listen, I'm pumped that you're here. Because the Bible isn't afraid of your objections.

Scripture hammers home Jesus's divinity over-and-over again. He affirms it right here. Over in Colossians 2, Paul writes:

9 For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ,

And from John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And verse 14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Mark and the other New Testament authors make crystal clear that this Jesus they write about is fully God, while also living as fully man.

And as God, Jesus demonstrates here His authority to forgive sin.

Jesus Has Authority to Forgive Sin

We saw His authority on display in chapter 1—authority over sickness and over demons. But here, He shows authority over the biggest disease to ever face humanity: our own sin.

Verse 5 tells us Jesus saw their faith and said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' That was absolutely not what anyone expected, but it was the most urgent need in this man's life.

The folks who brought Him to Jesus demonstrated faith, sure. But their faith was that Jesus could heal this man's body. We know, though, that because of what Jesus said here that this paralyzed man had faith that Jesus could save His soul.

This was different! Jesus healed all sorts of things in chapter 1, but He didn't forgive anybody's sin that we're aware of.

Jesus saw past this man's broken body and into His heart. We see in the passage here that Jesus can read the hearts of people, don't we? Just like He read the heart of the scribes, He read the heart of this man. He saw true faith. And faith is what saves us. This man doesn't pray a sinner's prayer, he doesn't walk an aisle, he doesn't confess anything outwardly that we see here. But we know He had faith.

Ephesians 2: 8 ***For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— 9 not from works, so that no one can boast.***

We need to drill down on this one a little bit because sometimes we think it's the confession that does the saving. We can functionally believe we speak our salvation into existence when we repent of our sins. That's not it. Our repentance is an outgrowth of the faith God gifts to us through the Holy Spirit. In that sense, in salvation God moves first. Faith is God's gift, that Ephesians 2 says.

Faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior is the only "step" to salvation. The message of the Bible is abundantly clear. We have all sinned against God (Romans 3:23). Because of our sin, we deserve to be eternally separated from God (Romans 6:23). Because of His love for us (John 3:16), God took on human form and died in our place, taking the punishment that we deserve (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21). God promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven to all who receive, by grace through faith, Jesus Christ as Savior (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; Acts 16:31).

Salvation is not about certain steps we must follow to earn salvation. Yes, Christians should be baptized. Yes, Christians should publicly confess Christ as Savior. Yes, Christians should turn from sin. Yes, Christians should commit their lives to obeying God. However, these are not steps to salvation. They are results of salvation. Because of our sin, we cannot in any sense earn salvation.

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/steps-to-salvation.html>)

We know this man had faith, so Jesus saved Him. This man, who could do nothing for Himself, was laid at the feet of Jesus and He was saved by grace through faith. But hear me, church. You have an even

greater privilege. You know the whole story. You might not be at the feet of Jesus, but you know more about Jesus than this man did.

God has revealed for you the substance of saving faith in a way that this man may never have known. This Jesus who is God made Himself a substitute sacrifice. We, just like this man, have sin. And the Bible tells us the penalty for that sin is death. Not just once, but eternally. Eternal death and separation from everyone and everything you ever cared about in a place called Hell.

Jesus, though, died the death His people deserved. He didn't deserved death, yet He died and you don't deserve eternal joy, yet that's what His death secured.

If you walked through those doors unconvinced for whatever reason that you can be saved, pray that God would gift you the faith to believe, repent of your sins, and God is just as faithful to save you today as He was to save this paralyzed man in Capernaum nearly 2000 years ago.

And Mark, in telling us this great story, doesn't just tell us that it happened. He tells us why. Why does Jesus not just save this man but restore His body?

It's for the Father's glory. Verse 12:

The Son's Authority is for the Father's Glory

12 Immediately he got up, took the mat, and went out in front of everyone. As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

The point of every miracle Jesus performs is the glory of the Father. You see, what Jesus is doing is rolling back the effect of sin. God created the universe so that His glory might be displayed and humanity is the pinnacle of that creation. We're made in the very image of God and we glorify Him when we reflect that image. Sin breaks that reflection and so when Jesus heals the leper, He makes him a more perfect reflection of God.

Everything Jesus does is to glorify the Father. Listen to His own words in John 17:

John 17:1 Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you"

Jesus both forgave the paralyzed man's sin and healed His body for the glory of God. Isaiah 43 tells us we were created for God's glory, and if that's true then we should look to this remarkable story and realize that it's more than a story. It's a call to action.

There are at least three responses required by Mark's three bold statements about Jesus's authority. First:

3 responses these truths demand

You have sin that needs to be forgiven (you're the paralyzed man)

We tend to want to insert ourselves in Bible stories, don't we? And I think our tendency when it comes to applying this one is to put ourselves in the sandals of the friends. There's a degree to which that fits and it's healthy and we'll get there in a minute.

But don't forget that first-and-foremost you're the paralyzed man. You're helpless and in need of salvation.

That's our default mode. And as the one who is helpless, what should our response be?

Ask God to save you or tell someone He did! Do you think this man ever told this story again? Do you think he left excited? Do you think he worked this into conversation? This probably came up in every conversation this man had from this day forward.

Our responsibility as the helpless one is to ask God to save you or tell someone He did!

This important for us to remember because:

You know people who need their sins forgiven

Let's consider these friends. Look back to verse 2:

2 So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and he was speaking the word to them. 3 They came to him bringing a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after digging through it, they lowered the mat on which the paralytic was lying.

This is one of the places where I really love Mark's writing style. We know nothing about these friends or the paralyzed man, really. We don't know if he asked for their help, we don't know if they saw a need and decided to meet it. We don't know if they were family. They might have picked him up against his will for all we know. That's unlikely.

Here's where the rubber met the road for these friends and for you sitting right here today, church. They knew someone with a need and they knew a Man who could fix it.

Church, you know people who need their sins forgiven. As best we can tell, there are over 2,000 people in Centralia who don't know Jesus.

Do you believe Jesus can save them? If so:

If you really believe Jesus has authority, you will do whatever it takes to get people to Him.

These people committed themselves to getting the paralyzed man to Jesus. This would have been incredibly hard work. That's why I'd suggest there were far more than four people involved. And however many of them there were, they did a whole lot more than just invite this guy to go see Jesus. They committed themselves to get their friend to the Savior.

Church, hear me. If we are going to see Centralia changed we must become a people who will do whatever it takes to get our friends, neighbors, and co-workers to Jesus.

No, we can't hogtie them and lay them at Jesus's feet. But we believe Jesus is God, we believe He has authority, and He has commanded us to make disciples, amen? Maybe we doubt we're able. But remember that the Great Commission itself, Jesus's marching orders for disciples, was born out of their doubt.

Matthew 28:

16 The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted. 18 Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Go, make disciples. That's the essence of what we call the Great Commission. That begins with getting people to Jesus. Today, we call that evangelism. Evangelism is telling someone the gospel with the aim to persuade.

As we think about applying the things we learn in Mark 2, I want to leave you with five characteristics of evangelists who believe Jesus can save, these five things are true of the friends in our passage and they'll be true of us if we're taking the Great Commission seriously.

First, **see the need.**

They had a friend who needed healing and they heard about a Jesus who heals. Church, you don't have to look very far to find someone in need of a Savior. God has deployed our people so broadly across this community that a huge percentage of those 2,000 lost people have some kind of relationship with the people in this room. They're your co-workers, classmates, neighbors, cousins, teammates, and all manner of other relationships. The person you need to tell about Jesus the most probably isn't a stranger on the street, it's likely someone you already know. See the need and take steps to meet it.

Second, **work together.**

One person couldn't have gotten this man to Jesus. It took a team. We summarize our mission by saying that we gather together, grow together, and go together. The people you grow with should be the people you go with. How is your Sunday school class or life group or bible study or your own family working together to get people to Jesus? Are you regularly praying for lost people? Are you intentionally setting time to spend with lost people and then holding one another accountable? In a lot of situations, the people closest to you will also know the person you're burdened to share the gospel with. And you know what, they can do the same thing! Work together to get people to Jesus.

And when we commit to doing this, we'll have to make sacrifices.

Make sacrifice (time, money, convenience)

These friends in Mark 2 gave up their time and their comfort. They committed to a grueling physical task to get this paralyzed man to Jesus. It was inconvenient. It was embarrassing, do you realize that? They committed some light vandalism. They'd be financially liable for repairing someone's house. They might have been the subject of an All-State commercial. Mayhem, like the friends who ripped the roof off someone's house. They made real, painful sacrifices to get this man to Jesus. When is the last time you've sacrificed your time or your money or just convenience to share the gospel? Their sacrifices allowed them to overcome whatever obstacles were in their path.

Overcome obstacles

Listen. These friends weren't going to stop until this man was laid at the feet of Jesus. Whatever distance they had to carry him, they did it. They got to the house and it was full. They adapted and overcame. Think about the reasons we don't share the gospel. It'll be awkward, you've messed up before, you doubt your knowledge of Scripture, whatever your excuse. . . it's much easier to overcome than what these friends went through.

The primary reason we don't share the gospel, though, at least in my opinion is fear.

Don't fear

Proverbs 29:25 says The fear of mankind is a snare, but the one who trusts in the Lord is protected. Do we really believe that? The friends didn't fear the crowd—and the crowd was hostile to some degree. They wouldn't even make room for them in the house. We fear we'll lose a friend, or that the relationship will get weird, or they'll stop inviting our kids to birthday parties, or we'll lose our job, or a slew of other excuses. But, Church, what do we have to fear, truly, if we're doing what Jesus told us to do?

And that's where we'll end today. We do what we can do to get people to Jesus. And we trust Him to do the rest.

Trust Jesus to do the rest.

We learned in the text that only Jesus has the authority to forgive sin. For us, success isn't in the result. Success is in the obedience. We can't save people. We can't make them respond to the gospel no matter how badly we want them to. We just share the good news and trust Jesus to do the rest.

Jesus is God. Jesus has the authority to forgive sin. And as His people, we have a mandate to share that good news with those who are lost. Just like Jesus glorifies the Father by forgiving sin, we glorify the Father by declaring the good news of the gospel. Let's commit to being a people who will do whatever it takes to get our friends and neighbors laid at the feet of Jesus. Let's pray.