

"Our Greatest Need"
(Mark 2:1-12)
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⁶Now 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?"

⁸Immediately 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? ⁹Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰But 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." ¹²He 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!"

INTRODUCTION:

Good afternoon everyone. Today we will be taking a break from the Gospel of John and looking at the Gospel of Mark. So if you can open up your bibles to Mark 2:1-12 and just bookmark it. As you're doing that,

The point is, we all have needs. We wake up every morning. And live each day, each moment, trying to find solutions to our needs. In today's passage, there is a man who had a great need, but when He came to Jesus, Jesus revealed what he thought was his greatest need, actually wasn't. Let's take a look. Follow along as I read Mark 2:1-12.

Mark 2:1-12 (NIV)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

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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." **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!"

There are three main points that I want to address from the text. First, is that our greatest need is for our sins to be forgiven. Second, Jesus is the only One who can forgive our sins. And thirdly, the means to taking care of our greatest need is through faith. So, three points:

- 1. Our greatest need is for our sins to be forgiven.**
- 2. Jesus is the only One who can forgive our sins.**
- 3. The means to taking care of this need is through faith.**

Let's look into the text and see where our greatest need is revealed.

Right from the get-go, we see that word is spreading about Jesus. In the first chapter of Mark, Jesus is moving from village to village teaching and preaching and His message was "the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (1:15). As Jesus is teaching, He is also healing many people. And news of what people have heard and seen from Jesus is spreading like a wild fire. Jesus is becoming a superstar in the region of Galilee. People are coming from all over to see Him. Jesus and His disciples began their ministry in Capernaum but move out of the city for some time. When they returned to Capernaum, news spread that Jesus had returned. And they went to meet Him.

Now, verse 2 says that, "They [the people] gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door..." Try to picture with me what that would look like. I remember when I first became the Poiema (college-aged) Pastor here, I hosted our first fellowship in my apartment. It was packed! Picture half this stage as the size of my living room. We packed close to 45 people in it. Students were sitting back to back. We moved the dining table to the corner of the room. There were guys spilling over the couches. We even had people sitting in the hallway by the rooms. There was absolutely no room to move. And just thinking about the heat... we had no A/C at the time. And the smell... All that wonderful sweat and body odor. It was some scene.

I could imagine the crowd in today's passage in similar circumstances, but why would they be willing to endure all of that to see Jesus? They were drawn by what Jesus was able to do. He was a spectacle! Enter a paralyzed man and his four friends.

We don't know much about this man and his friends, but I picture the paralyzed man, helplessly lying down on a mat, each of the four friends holding him up by grabbing a corner of the mat. They approach the house Jesus is teaching in, but the crowd is too large. No matter what they did, they could not maneuver their way towards Jesus, but you could see it in their eyes. They were determined. The four men looked down at their friend who has been in this paralyzed state for as long as they could remember. And the paralyzed man looks up at his friends. They weren't going to be denied. They've come all this way and they were going to see Jesus.

And, for what reason? Why Jesus? He wanted to be healed. The paralyzed man's hope was to be healed; to be able to walk. I'm sure he was thinking, "All I want is to be able to walk". Do you sense the desperation? Here is where things get interesting. The paralyzed man is lowered in front of Jesus. Could you imagine what the man would have been feeling? Think of all the years he couldn't walk. Think of the hardship he must've went through. He's so desperate to be healed. The crowd is watching and waiting. They're anticipating to see a miracle. Everyone's eyes are on Jesus. Jesus looks up at the four men on the roof. The men were probably a bit scared but also looking intently to see what Jesus will do. Jesus looks down at the paralyzed man. And He says, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Huh??? I'm trying to put myself in the paralyzed man's position. Here I'm thinking, "If I go to Jesus, He can heal me and I can walk", but instead of performing the miracle that I'd be longing for, Jesus' response is, "Your sins are forgiven." What would you be thinking if you were this man?

Let me pause here for a moment. I think there's an important difference we must consider here. We must distinguish between needs and wants. When I think of needs, I think of necessities and essentials for survival such as oxygen to breathe, water and food. When a need is not met or fulfilled, it can lead to fatal outcomes. All individuals have the same basic needs. In terms of wants I think of desires, and things that are not essential for survival. When a want is not met or fulfilled, it could lead to distress. And wants differ according to different individuals. When I try to put myself in the paralyzed man's shoes, I keep repeating the phrase, "All I WANT is to be healed". It's strange for me to say, "All I NEED is to be healed". Although that can be what he's thinking. No matter how desperate I am, it's more of a desire than a need. I could survive if I am not healed even though I would desire healing. Think of the people around us: in our families, community, and life where people are ill or sick. We would absolutely desire and hope that they would be healed. And that's very important. We must keep praying! But Jesus is addressing something even greater.

Jesus understands the paralyzed man's situation and want. **And even though the people would have thought his need was healing, Jesus knew his GREATEST need was to have his sins forgiven.**

WHY is having our sins forgiven the greatest need? Well, sin is the greatest problem we need to deal with, but in order to understand why our sins must be forgiven, we must understand what sin is. Sin, translated means "missing the mark". The mark is the standard of perfection established by God. Romans 3:10 says, "There is no one righteous, not even one..." Paul, the writer of Romans continues later on saying, "For ALL have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). The Bible teaches us that there is no one immune to sin. We are all sinners.

We are guilty sinners not because we are victims of the darkness but because we are lovers of the darkness. John 3:19 writes, "Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light." We are prone to sin and we enjoy it. The danger of sin, then, is when we don't see the true nature, depth, power, and extent of sin.

There are many consequences of sin, but I want to spend some time addressing 5 of them. **The first consequence of sin is separation between us and God.** Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities (sin) have separated you from Your God." This is by far the biggest consequence. Every sin is an offense to God, and God hates sin. He cannot be in the presence of sin. That is why when we choose to keep committing the same sins without repentance, you will stop feeling His presence in your life. How many of us struggle with this? We all have those habitual sins that we constantly struggle with. Sexual sins, anger, pride, greed. The more we give into these sins, the more distant God feels. Why does it feel mundane to obey God? Why do we not feel alive when we read His Word or when we pray to Him. Could it be that we have not dealt with our sins? Sin separates us from God.

The second consequence of sin is that it is harmful to us; to me and you. Do you remember the story of Sodom and Gomorrah? I always thought that this story was extreme, but it shows how far sin can take you. Sodom and Gomorrah were two cities that were filled with sin. So much so that God could not hold His wrath any longer. And because sin was rampant, God destroyed the cities. Now, some of us here may be thinking, "Oh, but I'm not as bad as them. I don't sin as much." Sin is sin. And unrepentant sin will lead to punishment, even death. I think what sin does, also, is it distorts our self-worth. The greatest harm sin causes me is questioning my identity and value. Everytime I give into sin, Satan uses that to lie to me that I'm not good enough or that I don't deserve to be a child of God. It's crazy how many times I would listen to those lies. There are deep-rooted issues that stem from these lies. Are you struggling with knowing your self-worth and value?

The third consequence of sin is that it is harmful to others. I can't put a number to how many times my sin has caused harm to others. Whether it be with thoughts that led to how I treat others, with my words, my actions. The thing about sin is that it's so selfish. It's all about me. It's not about God. It's definitely not about others. I do things thinking about how I would benefit. And what I find is that the pleasure of sin is so temporary. And what are you left with? Guilt, broken relationships, being alone. We do not know the extent of how our sins affect others. Think of how simply by clicking a button and watching pornography perpetuates more people, people we don't know, to live a lifestyle of sin. Everyday our sin is impacting others. There is a practice I started doing recently. I would try to remember as many times as I can to pause and ask myself, "Why did I just do that?" The results? I couldn't believe how selfish I was. I encourage you to try it out. It's a simple application, but powerful. In my mind, I think I'm such a selfless, kind person. Now, I'm not saying I'm pure evil, but I think we need to be honest with ourselves and really search our hearts. Our sins cause hurt to others. What sins are you struggling with that affects others?

The fourth consequence of sin is that it leads to more sin. A simple thought can seep into words or actions. How does adultery happen? How does one murder someone? These sins don't just happen. It's a process of sin. It could start with a look, a thought like, "Wow that person is very attractive." It could start from anger, and that anger fuels hatred. Sin perpetuates and deepens. That is the tactic of the enemy! Satan knows how to reel you in! He's got you on a fishing hook. We must get unhooked. If we don't take sin seriously, we will end up committing a multitude of sins. It only takes a split second for a thought to manifest into deeper sins.

Lastly, **the fifth consequence of sin is hell.** Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death.” I know many of us heard this verse before, but I hope that it causes us to pause and really think about it. A Christian will repent of their sins, but what about those who don’t believe? The first consequence was separation from God. Well, this last consequence is being separated from God FOREVER. Does this not move your hearts? Have we grown numb to this reality? Think of all the people who are destined for hell because someone didn’t tell them about their sin and the consequences of sin. Think of all the people, the millions, no, billions, who are living their lives to die and spend the rest of eternity in hell because no one has shared the Gospel to them.

This is sin. This is the power and destructiveness of sin. Could you imagine what life would be like if there was no sin? Imagine everything that was mentioned was not present. There’d be no weeping, no sickness. I don’t know. It’s so hard to picture because the reality is we are sinful by nature. Sin is our greatest problem. We need to realize that first and foremost. When we do, we would realize that our greatest need is for our sins to be forgiven.

Here’s the problem. Many times, we don’t see it as a problem. Rather, we willingly live in sin. We even enjoy it. Sometimes, when we feel a little guilty, we try to defer our sin problem by being moral (doing good deeds). We care about social issues such as poverty and injustices. And all of that is great and important, but why are we not convicted when we disregard, disobey, and dishonour God? What sin are you trying to hide right now, today? **Our greatest need is for our sins to be forgiven. That’s the first point. This is the second point: Jesus is the only One who can forgive our sins.** Let’s go back to the text.

So far in the narrative (vv.1-5), we have Jesus, of course, the crowd, and the paralyzed man and his friends. Enter the teachers of the law, or Pharisees. This marks a shift. It is now no longer about the crowd or even the paralyzed man. The interaction between Jesus and the teachers of the law draw out what Jesus wants to teach.

POINT #2: JESUS IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS

The Jewish leaders knew and believed that only God could forgive sins. That’s why they asks, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (2:7). And they’re absolutely right! Only God can forgive sins. The reason why only God can forgive sins is because any and every sin we commit, whether it is against someone else, ultimately, it is an offense against God. That is why when King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then murdered her husband, Uriah, he confesses to God, “...against you, you only, have I sinned” (Psalm 51:4).

For the Pharisees present in the house, they would have heard Jesus’ words as arrogant at the very least. They would have heard it as if Jesus was declaring for Himself to be God. Therefore, they think to themselves, “He’s blaspheming!” And the punishment for blaspheming was death.

As the Pharisees were thinking to themselves, Jesus knew “in His spirit” what they were thinking in their hearts. So, Jesus responds by asking this question, “Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’” (2:9). What do you think? Which is easier? To say, “Your sins are forgiven” or “Get up, take your mat and walk”? [PAUSE].

When Jesus asks, “Which is easier...”, He’s not asking which is easier to do, since both are beyond human ability, but rather, Jesus is asking which is easier to proclaim or say? John MacArthur writes, “He is asking which is easier to claim as a convincing reality.” It would be easier to say to someone that their sins are forgiven because there is no way of proving, confirming, or even denying that this is a reality.” If I went to you and said your sins are forgiven, I wouldn’t know if that was true or not, but to tell a paralyzed man to get up and walk, that is something that can be tested immediately. He’d either get up or stay paralyzed.

Jesus purposely waited to heal the paralyzed man until AFTER He declared the forgiveness of the man’s sins. He wanted to make it clear that He is not just a Miracle Worker or Healer, but that He is the Saviour. Jesus could’ve simply said, “Get up, take your mat and walk,” but only the Saviour of the world can say to us, “Your sins are forgiven.” Disease and disability are consequences of living in a fallen world, meaning that the effect of sin is the root cause of all sickness and suffering. If there was no sin, they’re would be no sickness! Therefore, Jesus performed this miracle of healing so that everyone watching would know that the Son of Man had authority on earth to forgive sins.

Jesus uses the title “Son of Man” to describe Himself fourteen times in the Gospel of Mark. In Daniel 7:13, it writes, “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence”. When Jesus calls Himself the “Son of Man”, he is referring to the fact that He is God and we can also anticipate the future return of Jesus at the end times when He will defeat the forces of evil and sin permanently. Jesus is the only One who can forgive sins because He is God. We see that in the authority He has to forgive sins, the fact that He healed the paralyzed man, and that He is declaring that He is the Son of Man.

So, the first point is that our greatest need is for our sins to be forgiven. And the second point is that Jesus is the only One who can forgive sins. Then that leads to our last point: It is faith in Jesus that provides the means of our sins being forgiven.

POINT #3: FAITH

Let’s go back to the paralyzed man and his four friends. They tried everything to get through the crowd without any success. So what do they do? They climb up to the roof of the house and start digging through it. Now, back then, houses were square or rectangular-shaped. You had four walls and the roof would have been built by laying planks of wood across the walls and adding clay or mud to solidify it. There would have been a staircase on the side of the house to access the roof. They carried their friend up the stairs and began to dig through the mud. Now remember, Jesus and a large group of people are inside this house. Imagine how distracting it would have been as these men dug through the mud. It would have been noisy and dust would have fallen from the ceiling. Jesus probably paused while teaching to look up to see what was going on. Even the people who were fascinated by Jesus would’ve looked up and lost focus. What would you do if all of a sudden some people were trying to drill a hole in the roof so that they could lower someone here? I’m pretty sure I’d stop preaching and stare in confusion. And you’d stop listening because you’d be distracted by what’s going on up there.

But, the four men were on a mission. They dug all the mud out, removed the wood planks, and began to lower their friend on a mat right in front of Jesus, but here's a question that I have: Why do these five men (including the paralyzed man) go through so much effort to place this man in front of Jesus? What drove them to do this? Why was it so important that they bring their friend to Jesus? Well, they believed that Jesus could heal the paralyzed man.

In verse 5, it says, "When Jesus saw their faith..." It was faith that caused the men to act. Note that faith is an action. Jesus saw their faith when they took action; when He saw how determined they were to bring their paralyzed friend to Him. Notice also that when Jesus says "their faith" He's including the faith of the paralyzed man. I'm sure the four men did not bring their friend to Jesus without his permission. It was because the man also had faith that Jesus could heal him that they approached Jesus.

This really challenges me. Do I have faith like these men? Does my faith cause me to take action. Would I have been discouraged by the barriers and roadblocks preventing me from seeing Jesus and give up? Or would I have taken these great lengths to make sure that I see Him? We need faith like these men. Sure, they went to Jesus without thinking of asking for forgiveness of their sins. Maybe they didn't understand fully the greatest need, but because of their faith, whatever big or small it was, Jesus used it. Their faith was strong enough to believe that God can meet their need of healing. What Jesus did was address something that's more important but also show compassion and heal the man. That is Jesus. We go to Him for many different reasons. He wants us to remember the greatest need, but He also knows our hearts and shows His mercy and grace. We don't have to know everything. Our faith doesn't have to be perfect, but our faith should cause us to act and draw near to Jesus. And He will teach and show His way and His will.

Last week, we celebrated Easter. Easter commemorates the death and resurrection of Jesus, but it's not just on Easter we are to remember Him. This is something we must remind ourselves of each and every day! Jesus is the solution to our sin problem. Jesus Christ died so that my sins, your sins, our sins might be forgiven. Christ died that we might be justified or counted righteous in the presence of the Holy God. Christ died in order that God's wrath might be removed from us. Christ died so that we might not go to hell! Praise Jesus! Christ suffered once for sins so that He would bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18) so that we would be in relationship with God for all eternity! That is why Jesus came to earth. That is what He is hinting at in today's text. Our greatest need is for our sins to be forgiven. And Jesus did that by dying on that cross. What we cannot do by our own works, Jesus did for us. He paid it all! Jesus is the only One who can forgive sins.

From the moment you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, your sins have been forgiven: past, present, and future. God has declared you righteous, but that doesn't mean we are sinless. We still sin. Every day it's a battle to fight against sin and pursue holiness. So God commands us to confess our sins to Him and He will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). As we live our lives, we will fall into sin. We need to return to God in repentance and faith and seek forgiveness. Why? We repent and seek forgiveness not to be RE-JUSTIFIED... we do not add to Christ's perfect work on the cross. When I come to Jesus by faith, believing that His shed blood for me has saved me, I am deemed righteous and I am saved. However, we ask God to forgive us so that we walk before Him with confidence and joy knowing that He paid it all! **Illustration: When did I truly feel like my sins were forgiven?**

Let me close with this. Imagine how the paralyzed man felt when Jesus declared his sins forgiven and told him to get up and walk. He probably started feeling his muscles pulsing and when he got the strength to get up, he stood right up. How do you think he felt? Joy and excitement! As the crowd witnessed all of this, their response was amazement and praise to and for God. The life that is forgiven is a life filled with awe and praise for God. we must respond with hearts of gratitude and praise.

Let's pray.