

Mark 2:1-12 “The Authority to Forgive Sins”

Josiah Haas

Introduction

Good morning everyone! My name is Josiah Haas and I am a Pastoral Apprentice here at First Free. It's great to be with you all virtually and to be worshipping at the same time. Though we are physically apart we are united as brothers and sisters in Christ through the Holy Spirit. And I can't wait till the day when Lord-willing we can be back together in person.

I don't know if you all know the amount of work it takes to pull off these virtual services, but the more services I've been a part of the more I realize the incredible amount of effort it takes behind the scenes. So, I just wanted to begin by thanking all the people who have made these services possible, including Scott, Doug, Jonathan, Del, Jason, and more.

Thank you all for your sacrifice so that our congregation can continue to worship the Lord together. We appreciate you all so much.

Well if you know anything about me you know that I'm not a huge TV watcher, but one of the only shows that I really love is The Office. The Office is about a small paper company branch in Scranton, Pennsylvania led by Michael Scott, who is played by Steve Carrell. The comedy shows the everyday hilarities that take place in a workplace and is full of over-the-top characters that magnify people's quirks.

In one episode, the company is going downhill. They need to make some cuts and so they make the hard decision to close the Scranton branch. In a classic scene, Michael's boss Jan comes to him and gives him the bad news.

She says, “Michael, the board voted last night to close your branch.”

Michael responds, “On whom's authority?”

Jan replies, “Uhm... the board.”

Michael says back, “What?”

The irony in the scene is that Michael doesn't get it. He didn't think it was possible for his branch to close because he didn't understand the authority that the board has.

Segue: Michael Scott has a lot in common with the religious leaders of Jesus' day. Today we're going to be looking at Mark 2:1-12. We're in a sermon series called “The Stuff Jesus Said,” and in this story Jesus makes the provocative claim that He has been given the authority to forgive sins. The authorities question him in their minds and basically say, like Michael Scott, “On whom's authority?” They didn't think it was possible b/c they didn't understand the authority Jesus had.

As we venture into this text we will see three ways that Jesus impacts our lives right here and now as he did for these people 2,000 years ago.

I hope you'll have your own Bible out to follow along

And I want to encourage you to take notes if possible so it's easier to stay focused and not distracted

Let's read the first two verses of this chapter: Mark 2:1-2

¹A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ²They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.

Since we're just jumping into this text out of the blue, we need some context.
It says he is returning to Capernaum. What happened the first time?

Let me catch us up to speed on what happened in Mark chapter 1:21-45
 Jesus teaches in the synagogue at Capernaum on the Sabbath
 He taught as one with authority, unlike teachers of the law
 People are amazed
 Jesus drives out an impure spirit
 People are amazed
 Jesus is healing many but people don't know who he is
 Disciples tell him while He's praying that "everyone is looking for him"
 But he's getting so popular that they go to other villages
 Jesus heals a man with leprosy
 Tells him not to tell anyone, but he does
 As a result, Jesus can't enter a town but has to stay outside
 NOW he comes back to Capernaum...

He's back! And everyone in town has come to see him!
 And what is he doing? Preaching the Word!!! They wanna hear what he's gonna say next

Jesus is in His prime! He's the talk of the town! He's captivating! He is must-see TV:
 That next episode of your favorite show that you can't wait to see
 For the youth that next Tiktok video you can't wait for

Have you ever had that feeling of expectation before?
 Ex: Tim Keller coming to Wheaton
 Cubs game 7 of the World Series
 Endgame coming out- there's an excitement, a desperation, an anticipation

Here's a question for you: is that the expectation you have when you come to Jesus? Is that the expectation you have when you come to this text today?

Here's our first point from today & it comes right off the bat: Jesus' Word Brings Expectancy

Jesus is the most captivating person that has ever walked this earth!
 These crowds will give anything for a minute with him!
 Is that how you feel about Jesus? Are you captivated by Jesus? Do you yearn for him?
 Do you desire to spend time with him? Just OHHHHH man I just need time with Jesus!!
 Are you desperate to see what he's gonna say next?
 There's no greater joy in life than being in relationship with Jesus.
 When we come to Jesus, we can expect that we're going to be transformed.
 We're never going to be the same again

Let's come to this text with some expectancy that Jesus is going to speak into our lives.
 Let's come to the Word everyday with that expectancy

Jesus' Word Brings Expectancy... but here's the caveat:
Jesus doesn't always say what you expect He will say

This is what this entire series is about: Jesus says things that are very provocative in his ministry
 We think we know what He's gonna say, and he says something different
 And isn't this true of how God speaks into our lives?

So often in my life I hear God telling me something I had not expected Him to say
 He tells me what I need to hear, not just what I want to hear
 That's what God does in our lives, and that's certainly what Jesus is about to do in this story

Let's continue along and see what happens...

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."

Sometimes I think many of us have heard this story so many times that we lost the emotion of it
 Put yourself in the shoes of these men:

One of your best friends has COVID-19.
 A member of your family, a neighbor, a member of this church...
 Someone you love dearly

You're devastated. Your heart is broken. They are experiencing intense pain and suffering.
 There's no cure. Medicine in the 1st century was nonexistent compared to what we have today.

But you've heard of this man Jesus. He was in Chicago before and now he's come back!
 He could heal your friend! Yes, He could do it!
 And you're gonna do everything in your power to get him there.

Or think about it from the perspective of the paralyzed man.
 Your brain tells your feet to move but your body won't listen
 You experience pain daily, and you watch everyone walk by on their own two feet
 You cry out to God every day, asking "Why God? Why did this have to happen to me?"
 Your life is without hope. You're deeply depressed.

But you've heard of this man with the power to heal. Crowds are gathering because He's back!
 If only you could just get to him you know He would heal you.
 If you could just get to him, your life could be changed forever.

This is where these men are in this story. They're desperate. They'll do anything to get this paralyzed man to Jesus

So, they pick him up on his mat, and they carry him all the way to the house Jesus is at
 But it's packed!!! The whole town is there!
 How could they ever get through to Jesus?

But these men are determined!! So, they devise a plan
 They go up the side of the house and get onto the roof.
 And they start digging. They dig through the mud and straw to get to the roof
 beams.
 And they make a big hole in the roof. It's causing a ruckus and people are
 confused at what is happening.
 They take the man and start lowering him down from the roof to be
 by Jesus

And all the sudden, he's there. He's right next to Jesus. This is the moment they've all been
 waiting for.

And what happens? The next few words are very important and could be very easy to blow by.
 Verse 5 says, "Jesus saw their faith"

Jesus... SAW... THEIR...FAITH

Here's our second point from our text: Jesus' Presence Inspires Faith

These men have believed that Jesus could heal their friend
 They just knew they needed to get their friend to His presence
 But they didn't just believe it in their heads, they did something about it!
 They did everything they could to get him to Jesus
 Jesus' presence inspired them to walk in faith

Friends this text teaches us something about faith in Jesus, and this is something you can write
 down too...

True Faith is Always Visible

Faith is not just an attitude. It's a visible expression.

It has movement! It has works!

It's active and goes to great lengths to seek Jesus' presence

This is the type of faith that touches God's heart

Jesus sees their faith because of the actions they took

The amount of their faith became radically visible to all through their action

True Faith is always Visible

This is a theme throughout the entire Bible

Noah: built an ark to save his family even though it seemed absolutely crazy

Abraham: went where God sent him and was willing to sacrifice his son

Moses: led the Israelites out of Egypt and crossed through the Red Sea

Rahab: hid the spies in her house and saved them from the enemy

Joshua: walked around Jericho for seven days and watched the walls fall

This is what James is talking about in James 2, when he says,
 “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is DEAD.”

Faith without action, is dead

True Faith in Jesus is always shown through how you live your life

True faith is always visible

There once was a man named Charles Blondin. He was one of the greatest tightrope walkers in the world. Many times, he accomplished the feat of tightrope walking over Niagara Falls

11,000 feet long

160 feet above the water

He walked it with a blindfold... on stilts...

One time he even pushed a wheelbarrow

He pushed it across and he came back, and he asked

“How many of you believe I could put a person in and walk across?”

Everyone screams and believes “YES YES DO IT CHARLES”

Charles continues and says, “So, who would like to volunteer?”

Everyone was dead silent

Nobody moved a muscle

Finally, one man walked forward and got in the wheelbarrow

There’s a difference between the man and the crowd

The man had true faith because it was visible

Friends, does Jesus’ presence in your life inspire visible faith?

Are you willing to get into the wheelbarrow?

Maybe you’ve been watching our online services and feel God tugging your heart to put your faith in him and commit your life to Him. Put your faith in Jesus and start living by faith.

Commit to reading a chapter of the Bible every day and seeking God’s presence.

Maybe you’ve been trying to tell a neighbor about Jesus but haven’t had the courage. Take a step of faith and invite them to our online services or neighborhood care groups!

Maybe you want to help those in need but don’t know how. Take a step and join in with our church members who are volunteering at Care for Real!

Maybe you’re looking into the future and you just don’t know what is gonna happen with your job. Ask God to show you how you can visibly walk by faith and not by sight in this time

These men could have played it safe, and this paralytic would have never reached Jesus

But they knew who Jesus was, and they chose to walk in visible faith

Which will you choose?

First Free, which will WE choose?

Theirs was a group collective faith effort, and Jesus saw THEIR faith

Jesus' presence in our lives should inspire our faith as well
What will we choose?

The men in this story had faith, and let's look back to see how Jesus responds...

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." 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!"

Now you've gotta understand something: when Jesus says this man's sins are forgiven, this should be accompanied with a giant GASP

For everyone listening knows the passages in the Psalms and Isaiah saying that only the Lord is the forgiver of sins.

When the religious leaders hear this, they hear him basically saying loud and clear, "I AM GOD"
And to say this would be blasphemy, with the punishment of death according to Leviticus

This is why they're thinking these things. They're thinking, "This guy is blaspheming! He thinks he can forgive sins and only God can do that!"

They're thinking, like Michael Scott in The Office, "On whom's authority?"

They think it, they don't even say it

But Jesus knows exactly what they're thinking

So how much more shocked must they be when he calls them out and tell them exactly what they are thinking?!

They're like, "Who is this guy?"

And Jesus says:

⁹ Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?

It is much easier to say that his sins are forgiven

It just requires words; you can't tell if it's actually happened

To actually heal someone of paralysis would be a miracle

So, what does he do? Jesus says...

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...

This is a sacred moment. This is powerful!

I don't want us to miss what's happening here, so I have a video clip for us.
 There's a new TV series called The Chosen that depicts the life of Jesus
 It's free and you can watch it on YouTube if you'd like
 It takes some creative liberties but overall is very accurate
 And in one of the episodes it depicts this very scene
 The first time I saw it I started crying because it is just so powerful
 It brings this text a visual aspect and brings it to life
 Let's take a look to see a visual of what is happening here...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIBOmQ1PaMY>

till the 5-minute mark

How powerful is that? That is what's happening in this story.

It's much easier to just say that someone's sins are forgiven.

So, what does Jesus do?

Don't miss this: to show that he has the authority to forgive sins, he heals the man of his sickness.

The word authority here is the Greek word *exousia*

It means "the right to control or command, the warrant to do something"

Jesus is making the claim that though he is fully man, He has the absolute right to forgive people of their sins. He has a warrant for forgiveness.

The only way that he could have that right is if he was also fully Divine. God-in-the-flesh. Incarnate deity. Emmanuel. God with us.

Jesus' miraculous act confirms that He indeed has the authority to forgive sins

Just as only through God's power could someone be healed, only through God's power can someone be forgiven.

In this act, Jesus shows that He has the right to forgive because He Is God
 And the paralyzed man walking is a testimony to the fact that Jesus
 can not only heal but forgive sins

Friends, our last and final point from this text is bright and clear: Jesus' Authority Releases Forgiveness

Jesus' Authority Releases Forgiveness.

Jesus is saying, "Yes only the Lord can forgive you of your sins. And I am He!"

He's saying, "Yes I know you used to have the sacrificial system and the temple and the tabernacle and the Day of Atonement and all these ways to obtain forgiveness for sins.

But Now God is making a way through me for the forgiveness of your sins!"

And that's what the rest of the book of Mark is about: God making a way through Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Friends, only God through Jesus Christ can forgive your sins.

Jesus is the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him!

And isn't it interesting how exactly Jesus makes this point?

Here's another thing you can write down...

Jesus meets a physical need to address the more important spiritual need

Jesus meets a physical need to address the more important spiritual need

This man comes to him paralyzed, sick, hopeless.

Jesus heals him and shows him that the real healing he needs is forgiveness of his sins

Friends, we are in a time where there is so much sickness in the world through the Coronavirus pandemic.

And God is using doctors, nurses, churches, organizations and so many people to help bring physical healing to people all over the world.

To all those people on the front lines, thank you so much! We are so thankful for you!

But do you hear Jesus' message to us today? Do you hear it?

He's saying that the most important need we have is a spiritual need

There's something with not just temporary but eternal implications.

That's the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ.

Don't miss that message today. Here's the Big Idea of our sermon:

Jesus has the authority to meet our ultimate need of forgiveness.

Jesus has the authority to meet our ultimate need of forgiveness.

How did the religious leaders of the day respond?

The rest of the Book of Mark shows that most of them are skeptical.

They denied Jesus' authority and rejected Him as the Messiah

Their hearts were hardened to what Jesus was doing.

They were too stuck on how things used to be that they didn't see that Jesus had a better way forward.

Is that you this morning?

Or will you choose to respond like the crowd?

Because do you know how the crowd responded to Jesus' authority?

They were amazed!!! They praised God!! They rejoiced and said, "We have never seen anything like this!!"

That's how we should be responding too.

We should be amazed at Jesus' miraculous act of healing this man.

And we should praise God for the authority He has given to Jesus to forgive our sins!

Through this time of communion and worship let's respond and praise God that Jesus has the authority to meet our ultimate need of the forgiveness of sins.

Benediction:

Colossians 1:13-14

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.