

Sermon and Text Notes

Sermon

Mark 2:1-12 Are we willing to let God give us what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?
Almighty God, grant us thy Holy Spirit to be our interpreter, leading us through the written word to him who is the incarnate Word, such that we may know thee more fully, love thee more truly, and to serve thee more faithfully to the honor and glory of thy Name. Amen

In China a man names Li Fuyan suffered with unimaginable headaches and had tried everything to soothe the pain. Nothing helped.

- An X-ray finally revealed the culprit.
- 4 years prior / Robbers / Wounded / No Xray
- If they had >>> 4 inch knife blade lodged in his skull
- No wonder he had terrible headaches!

Here's the problem... we're all walking wounded. Scripture says we're the walking dead... dead in our trespasses and sins!

- Buried deep in our souls >>> regrets, remorse, shame, guilt that lies hidden, festering, irritating.
- Sometimes so deep we don't know the cause.

The problem is that we get comfortable with the brokenness around us. It becomes the "new normal".

- In essence, we walk, with a knife pain of brokenness in our head -- and if someone mentions it... fear, conflict, and trouble is unleashed.
- This is what had happened before Jesus came. People had become used to
 - Silence... 450 years
 - Powerlessness - They had been conquered (and re-conquered) and were an occupied outpost of Rome
 - Brokenness - The lame didn't walk; hearts weren't mended; life was painful

Chapter 1 Jesus directly confronts the spiritual battle and begins to rescue his people in the wilderness

- It's the beginning of Good News... God is on the move
- Jesus is healing and casting Satan out with power
- And they're no longer powerless... but have purpose!
 - 1:17 Follow me, and I will make you become, fishers of men

Chapter 2 immediately begins another battle

- Before = wilderness and demons
- Now close to home... polite society...
 - Problems? "bless your heart" / gossipy whispers.
- Jesus will challenge & question // Are they searching for His Kingdom or temporary comfort.

We all are broken and need healing 1) Our friends see it 2) Jesus sees how deep it goes 3) The question: Are we willing to let God give us what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?

1) Our Friends See it... and true friends will bring us to Jesus! PEW Bible 837

2:1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.

1. Scene...

- Probably Peter's house (c. 1 v. 29) ... very simple
- Just four walls... an outside stairway to the roof.
- The roof = timber and adobe like material... Enough to hold the weight but also easy to dig through...
- And there are crowds pushing in... lots of people are there for Jesus great party tricks...
- And there are religious leaders...
 - sitting comfortably on the couch.

2. Good Friends see our need... sometimes better than we do!

- They had been with this man for a long time... and they knew his need
- And they're committed to action... if an opening can't be found to Jesus... they'll make one
- Even if it meant dirt on the seated on the guests...
 - it didn't matter. Their friend needed help!
- 3. Good Friends bring us to Jesus who can actually heal!
 - Jesus was preaching the word... the truest and best healing for the soul
 - Mark >> phrase in v. 2 "preaching the word to them"
 - "the word" = essence of Jesus ministry
 - fuses the truth he proclaims with truth he embodies
 - Jesus came to present the Kingdom as near (with him as the Lord of that Kingdom)
 - Jesus came to bring health and wholeness to all who desired it (paralyzed inside or out)
 - Jesus came to confront spiritual forces that distracted and dissuaded people from His Kingdom (demonic, human, or otherwise)
 - This is important, because we're broken in all those spheres... total depravity means broken:
 - Broken in relationship with God
 - Broken in relationship with Each other
 - Broken in relationship with the world around us
 - Every sphere of brokenness is what Jesus came to heal and make whole.
 - These friends knew that their paralyzed buddy needed someone who could actually heal!

Oh, that we would have that kind of urgency... Our mission says that we exist to share the Gospel, make disciples and equip ambassadors.... Oh how I wish that we all saw the need of those around us for Good News the way these good friends do!

We all are broken and need healing 1) Our friends see it 2) Jesus sees how deep it goes 3) The question: Are we willing to let God give us what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?

2) Jesus sees how deep our wounds go and he heals the heart

5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

1. Saw their faith
 - Faith is not about the head... not knowledge alone... but an active trust that Jesus is sufficient for all our deepest and most heartfelt needs (PNCT)
 - Sola Fide means faith alone... deep trust alone... was all that they had. Trust that Jesus could actually heal!
 - And who had the trust?? The friends!!
 - Interesting... he saw their PLURAL faith... certainly this is the faith of the friends not the paralytic!
 - They had great faith
 - A wavering faith would have turned back
 - They would not be put off by the crowd.
 - They vandalized another person's roof
 - They ignored the certain protests of those who were getting dirt falling on their heads
 - God was working in his life because his friends loved him (PtW)
 - They trusted that God was going to work!
 - the four truly believed! This kind of faith invites the Lord's miraculous power. (PtW)
 - Which is great encouragement... The cure is not because of the paralytic's action... it's not coming from inside him at all... it's coming from the grace of God and faith of his friends.
 - As we see at the end... all he had to do was accept the healing... take up his mat and go home!
 - If you've been praying for your 1:1:1... and seen no action... keep having faith. They may be completely clueless... but God sees your faith!
2. Response to that faith? "Son your sins are forgiven"
 - Here comes the conflict! ***Jesus isn't offended*** by the roof removers... instead he's encouraged.
 - ***But he is offending***... with an outrageous and calculated statement.
 - Jesus is claiming to forgive sins... something no one anticipated
 - Someone can speak on God's behalf... a priest can say "your sins are forgiven"
 - But, Jesus wasn't a priest / no offered sacrifice

He was claiming the authority to forgive sins as if he was the one who had been offended!

- It's like if Frank hit Joe... Joe didn't do anything wrong (not even a wrong note)... and Mark says to Frank... It's okay! I forgive you!

- Joe would be looking at him like, “WHAT??? He hit me!! Not you!!”
3. What is Jesus doing?
- He’s claiming to be God... the one who is universally offended by the brokenness in the world
 - And, he’s pointing to the most important need any person has... a broken heart
 - At first glance, Jesus is healing the wrong thing. Look at it again... He’s paralyzed.
 - He can’t feed himself.
 - He can’t bath himself.
 - He can’t scratch his nose, comb his hair, turn a book’s page... he can’t do anything.
 - And... Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Don’t turn past that. Let it be outrageous to you! Jesus offers an intangible help to a physically helpless man.

- Why?

To teach us that we all have deeper needs that our surface desires can ever show us.

- We all, according to the Bible, are building our identity on something or someone other than Jesus.
 - Parents build their identity on their kids
 - Church goers build identity on being good and moral citizens
 - Businessmen build identity on success and prosperity

We all have something in our lives that we believe, “When I have that... oh, then I’ll be good”

- We believe that our deepest wish can deliver healing for our deepest needs.

There’s a great story in C.S. Lewis’ “Voyage of the Dawn Treader”

- There’s this boy named Eustace, and everybody hates him... and he hates everybody.
- He’s selfish. He’s mean. He can’t get along.
- But he finds himself magically on the boat.
- At one point the boat lands on an island and Eustace wanders off... finds a cave... filled with gold treasure
- He’s rich... and now he’s got power. All the slights... disrespect... it will all be dealt with.
- He slips on one of the gold armbands in the hoard of treasure and falls asleep.
- But, when he wakes... he’s become a dragon. He has all this gold... but now he’s all alone. He can’t go on the boat, he can’t communicate with his friends... he’s paralyzed by what seemed like his greatest success... his biggest wish come true.

One night, in the midst of his pain and frustration, Eustace encounters a huge lion (Aslan... who is God in the story). Aslan tells the boy to follow it to a high mountain well. Eustace longs to bathe his aching foot in the cool water, but the lion tells him he must undress first. It seems silly to Eustace because dragons don’t wear clothes, but then he remembers that dragons, like snakes, cast their skins. So Eustace scratches his skin, and the scales begin falling off—and soon his whole skin peels away. But when he puts his foot in the water, he sees that it is just as rough and scaly as before. He continues scratching at the second dragon skin and realizes there is yet another underneath. Finally the lion says, “You will have to let me undress you.” Eustace is afraid of the lion’s claws but desperate to get in the water. The first tear is painfully deep as the lion begins to peel away the skin. Surely death will follow, Eustace believes. With the gnarled mess of dragon skin now cut away, the lion holds Eustace and throws him into the water. Initially, the water stings, but soon it is perfectly delicious. Eustace swims without pain, for he’s a boy again.

- Our deepest wish won’t heal us... it’s Dragon Gold... and turns us into a snarling beast even after we’ve gotten it. (Protect, defend, acquire more)

Keller: You see, it wasn’t our deepest wish that itself that was the problem, just as it wasn’t wrong for the paralytic to want to walk or a businessman to want to succeed or for Eustace to want to be loved and respected. The fact that we THOUGHT getting our deepest wish would heal us, would save us -- THAT WAS THE PROBLEM. We had to let Jesus be our Savior.

- Jesus wants to heal deeper...
- J.C. Ryle says it this way:

Jesus is the very Priest that we need, mighty to forgive and pardon, tender-hearted and willing to save. And now let us ask ourselves whether we have yet known the Lord Jesus as our High Priest? Have we applied to Him? Have we sought absolution? If not, we are yet in our sins. May we never rest till the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we have sat at the feet of Jesus and heard his voice, saying, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” (Ryle)

We all are broken and need healing 1) Our friends see it 2) Jesus sees how deep it goes 3) The question: Are we willing to let God give us what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?

3) Do we really want true help or just temporary comfort

6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” 8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— 11 “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”

- There are two groups of people who are just watching... Crowds and Religious Leaders
- 1. Crowds - just looking and not asking for help
 - Crowds
 - Crowds are passive, amazed and astonished... but they don't measure success.
 - In fact... despite Jesus compassion on them... the crowds never turn to Jesus in repentance and belief. They only leave when the going gets tough...
 - J.C. Ryle, “

They crowded. They were amazed. They were astonished. They were filled with wonder at His mighty works. But they were not converted. They lived in the full noon-tide blaze of the Sun of Righteousness, and yet their hearts remained hard ...Let us beware of walking in their steps. We ought often to use the prayer of the Litany, “From, hardness of heart, Good Lord, deliver us.”
(Ryle)

- 2. Scribes and Pharisees are just sitting there
 - Sure, they're right to question initially.
 - The Chief Priest couldn't forgive sins... (Just like what we will do at confession) He can only pronounce what God has done...
 - The Messiah wasn't invested with power to forgive sins in the Old Testament... What they didn't see was that Jesus was not just a Messiah... but THE SON OF MAN... God in flesh
 - They are right that only God can forgive sins... but their action tells us that they're more interested in polite theological conversation than the healing of peoples brokenness
 - If they were invested in God's Kingdom Healing the broken... they wouldn't have been sitting down
 - The real paralytics were the Pharisees and scribes! In marked contrast to the four stretcher-bearers, they were just “sitting there” (cf. v. 6 and Luke 5:17).
 - As religious leaders, they should have been directing the traffic to Jesus and his free clinic. When the roof opened, they should have reached up to receive the poor cripple. But instead of love, there was indifference. Instead of faith, there was only criticism*
- 3. And Jesus answers the question of their hearts... Who has the authority?
 - The Son of Man has the authority
 - It's a title he uses 14 times in Mark to draw attention to a shared authority...
 - It's a title from Daniel of the promised coming of God back into the world...
 - He's not saying, “Here's how I do things”... but here's how God does things
 - God uses his authority to heal on every level of our need. Body, soul and spirit!
 - Jesus can heal a man of physical paralysis; the larger question is whether he can heal the scribes of spiritual paralysis. (PNCT)

12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

- Spurgeon wrote: “I think I see him! He sets one foot down to God's glory, he plants the other to the same note, he walks to God's glory ... he carries his bed to God's glory, he moves his whole body to the glory of God, he speaks, he shouts, he sings, he leaps to the glory of God.”
- The question for all of us... is what makes our hearts leap? Are we leaping with the man who now picks up his mat?
- Leaders/Crowds - just sitting and not engaged in helping others

Collect for the 3rd Sunday of Epiphany... *Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works;*

- ... answer readily the call to proclaim the Good News... that the world may perceive his marvelous works...
- Ready for a call NOT= sitting on a couch!

We all are broken and need healing 1) Our friends see it 2) Jesus sees how deep it goes 3) The question: Are we willing to let God give us what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?

So, how do we apply this... live this text out? The best way to apply this text is with a group of friends in a life group. They can carry you to Jesus and help you find the deep healing you really need. As you get ready for your group... consider these questions

1. If you're new to Jesus and his Good News... Ask yourself, "Where am I tempted to find healing/comfort that is only temporary?"
2. If you're a Follower of Jesus ... Is there a place that still needs healing? What would it look like let Jesus forgive your sins and restore a paralyzed place in your life?
3. Maybe you've been following Jesus for a while... What would it look like have your roof torn apart so that people can meet with Jesus?

Pray: *Jesus, give us the courage to admit our brokenness and seeking healing from you alone. Help us not to be satisfied with temporary comfort... but to instead be ready for you to tear off the scales and heal our deepest needs. Amen.*

Text Notes

Theme of the entire book

- Unveiling Jesus so all can see that he is the Son of God

Context of Passage (before and after)

- What is it that makes a compelling story? Almost invariably, it is conflict. This is one of the major factors in literature produced in every age and clime. (FOBC)
- This element emerges very early in the Word of God. Genesis 3 shows us the wiles of the serpent and Genesis 4 the murderous hatred of a man for his brother. There is conflict between the Lord and false gods, as in the story of the Exodus (Exod. 12:12), in the clash of Baal-worshipping Jezebel and God's prophet Elijah (1 Kings 16:29–21:29) and in the overthrow of the gods of Babylon when God sent Cyrus the Persian against the Babylonians (Isa. 46:1–2). (FOBC)
- Here was the supreme work of God and it was bitterly resisted at every step by Satan and his agents. Who did these agents turn out to be? Deeply immoral men? Servants of false gods? No, they were worshippers of the one true God. They were, in fact, the religious leaders of the nation. We are so used to this that we no longer feel how utterly astounding it is (FOBC)
- In the previous chapter Jesus violated "his culture's religious sensibilities by touching a leper (1:41) and claims more authority than a normal rabbi would dare accept (cf. 1:17, 27)" (IVPBBC).
- 2:1-3:6 starts a new section of conflict. Previously the conflict was with the wilderness and demonic forces. Now the conflict is directly focused on the religious authorities, traditions, and norms
- Mark is conflating multiple stories bringing the action back to Capernaum in a series of five narratives. The first is another healing, but it unexpectedly turns into a question of Jesus identity (2:1-12) (PNCT). The second is the calling of a tax collectors and his followers (2:13-17), the third and fourth pronouncements about fasting (2:18-22) and the Sabbath (2:23-28). Mark completes the sequence back in the synagogue of Capernaum where a Sabbath healing brings a dire judgment against Jesus (3:1–6)
- Jesus challenges the Pharisees, scribes and Herodians in each episode to understand the fullness of the Torah while exploding the old traditions and customs.
- It is important to notice that, far from avoiding conflict with the religious leaders, Jesus, in saying this, actually provoked it. As a result, conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders was initiated on his own terms, and this raised the vitally important question of his identity. (FOBC)
- The identity of Jesus must always be given a central place in Christian witness, and this means that the church can never avoid controversy. In our multi-cultural and multi-religious society we might be tempted to soft-peddle it, but we cannot do so and be true to our Lord himself. (FOBC)

Textual Outline Lotz (Facts, Lessons, Voice) Structure and Commentary

2:1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.

Home

- The home was probably that of Peter and Andrew (1:29) (EBC)
- Jesus was not working miracles inside the house. He was preaching the gospel to the people. (EBC)

Crowds

- Crowds are not a measure of success. They are outsiders who attest to Jesus' popularity and form audiences for his teaching. They are often the object of his compassion, but Mark never describes the crowds turning to Jesus in repentance and belief in the Gospel (PNCT)
- They are passive and drawn to popularity not suffering ... and their single most common attribute is that they obstruct access to Jesus (PNCT)
- They crowded. They were amazed. They were astonished. They were filled with wonder at His mighty works. But they were not converted. They lived in the full noon-tide blaze of the Sun of Righteousness, and yet their hearts remained hard (Ryle)
- Never was there a people so highly favoured as the people of Capernaum, and never was there a people who appear to have become so hard. Let us beware of walking in their steps. We ought often to use the prayer of the Litany, "From, hardness of heart, Good Lord, deliver us." (Ryle)

Preaching the word

- Mark occasionally describes Jesus' message simply as "the word" (2:2; 4:33; 8:32), by which he means the message of the "gospel of God" (1:14–15). (PNCT)
- More than any other expression in early Christianity, "the word" defines the essence of Jesus' ministry. Mark seldom records the content of Jesus' teaching, but instead fuses the truth he proclaims with the same truth he embodies, before which his hearers cannot remain passive. (PNCT)
- Jesus came to present the Kingdom as near (with him as the Lord of that Kingdom)
- Jesus came to bring health and wholeness to all who desired it (paralyzed inside or out)
- Jesus came to confront spiritual forces that distracted and dissuaded people from His Kingdom (demonic, human, or otherwise)

3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.

a paralytic carried by four men

- Being part of the crowd around Jesus is not the same as being a disciple of Jesus. The crowd stands and observes; disciples must commit themselves to action, as illustrated by the plucky squad of four. If an opening to Jesus cannot be found, one must be made. That is a description of faith: it will remove any obstacle—even a roof, if necessary—to get to Jesus. The removal of the roof may have showered disrespect as well as dirt on the guests below. (PNCT)

removing the roof

- it was impossible to enter by the door. So they carried the paralytic up the outside stairway to the roof (v. 4).
- roof of single-story homes was sturdy enough for walking but was normally made of branches and rushes laid over the roof's beams and covered with dried mud; thus one could dig through it. (IVPBBC)
- There they dug up the compacted thatch and earth (no doubt dirt showered down on those inside the house below), removed the tiles, and lowered the man through the now-exposed beams to the floor below. (EBC)

Matt/bed

- Many "beds" were mats; thus the paralytics' friends may have carried him on the bed on which he lay all the time (IVPBBC)

5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Saw their faith

- Faith is first and foremost not knowledge about Jesus but active trust that Jesus is sufficient for one's deepest and most heartfelt needs. (PNCT)
- "their faith" includes the faith of the porters,
 - The Gospels preserve several instances of Jesus fulfilling the petition of one party on behalf of another.

- The power of Jesus is actually enhanced in intercessory healings, for the cure cannot be attributed to auto-suggestion or to the victim's inner preparedness.⁹ Jesus thus reveals himself to the paralytic through faith; and the Gospels seem more concerned with the fact of faith than with the specific agents of faith. (PNCT)
- They had great faith
 - A wavering faith would have turned back at the crowd outside
 - A wavering faith would have demurred at the protest of the crowd inside with dirt in their eyes
 - They would not be put off by the crowd.
 - They vandalized another person's roof
 - They ignored the certain protests of those who were getting dirt falling on their heads
 - God was working in his life because his friends loved him (PtW)
 - They trusted that God was going to work!
 - the four truly believed! This kind of faith invites the Lord's miraculous power. (PtW)

Said, "Son your sins are forgiven"

- Jesus is not offended by the roof removers, however, but encouraged. When he sees "their faith, he says to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven' " (2:5). The address "son" (Gk. teknon; also 10:24; Luke 16:25; John 13:33; 1 John passim) likely reflects Heb. beni, "my son." It is more than a term of endearment or affection, although it is that. It is primarily a term of a superior who acts with authority and benevolence. (PNCT)
- instead of healing the man of his lameness, Jesus forgave his sins. This hardly seemed to be what the man needed—at least on the surface (EBC)
 - Verse 5 tells us, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'" This was a calculatedly outrageous statement. From our perspective it seems cruel. Here is a wretched paralytic, barely able to raise his head, hoping for a cure, and Christ says, "Your sins are forgiven." From the Pharisees' perspective, this was blasphemy, for only God could forgive sins. (PtW)
 - It is not as if this sick man were unusually sinful, but his case makes the universal separation of man from God more conspicuous and illustrates the truth which is proclaimed over and over in the Old Testament, that all suffering is rooted in man's separation from God. For this reason, Jesus must call attention here to man's deepest need; otherwise the testimony of this healing would remain nothing more than the story of a remarkable miracle. (Schweizer, p. 61)
- Jews allowed that some of God's representatives could speak on God's behalf. The passive form, "are forgiven," could be interpreted in this way (Jewish teachers often used the passive form to describe God's activity); but Jesus was not a priest, no one had offered sacrifice, and the scribes had heard no basis for the pronouncement of forgiveness, not even clear indication of repentance. (IVPBBC)

your sins

- appears to speak to specific sins rather than to the general condition of sin. It appears possible that Jesus' address to the paralytic reflects knowledge of his particular sins, and their relationship to his paralysis. There is nothing more distinctive of a person than his or her sins. Jesus thus addresses the paralytic at the deepest level of his sins, which may be particularly appropriate lest the paralytic think the faith of his friends is an acceptable substitute for his own response to Jesus. (PNCT)
- Let us think for a moment how great a blessing it is, that Jesus is our great High Priest, and that we know where to go for absolution! We must have a Priest and a sacrifice between ourselves and God. Conscience demands an atonement for our many sins. God's holiness makes it absolutely needful. Without an atoning Priest there can be no peace of soul. Jesus Christ is the very Priest that we need, mighty to forgive and pardon, tender-hearted and willing to save. And now let us ask ourselves whether we have yet known the Lord Jesus as our High Priest? Have we applied to Him? Have we sought absolution? If not, we are yet in our sins. May we never rest till the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we have sat at the feet of Jesus and heard his voice, saying, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." (Ryle)

6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Scribes sitting there

- The real paralytics were the Pharisees and scribes! In marked contrast to the four stretcher-bearers, they were just "sitting there" (cf. v. 6 and Luke 5:17). As religious leaders, they should have been

directing the traffic to Jesus and his free clinic. When the roof opened, they should have reached up to receive the poor cripple. But instead of love, there was indifference. Instead of faith, there was only criticism (PtW)

- The paralytic has not been brought because he believed his sins needed forgiving but because he wanted his paralysis healed. On hearing the forgiveness of sins, the story abruptly shifts from the paralytic to the scribes. (PNCT)
- What began as a heart-warming healing has suddenly become a perilous confrontation over religious authority. (PNCT)

questioning in their hearts

He is blaspheming

Who can forgive sins but God alone

- They, quite correctly, observed to themselves that only God can forgive sins and so Jesus was committing blasphemy by assuming this right for himself. It never entered their heads to ask whether Jesus was more than mere man (NBC)
- The Messiah couldn't forgive sins
 - In Jewish teaching even the Messiah could not forgive sins. That was the prerogative of God alone. Their fatal error was in not recognizing who Jesus really was—the Son of God who has authority to forgive sins. (EBC)
- The Chief Priest couldn't forgive sins
 - Apart from the act of absolution on the Day of Atonement, not even the chief priest could forgive sins, or give promise of such, whether individually or corporately. “ ‘Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ ” respond the scribes. They are right. (PNCT)
- Only God can forgive sins!
 - The reason is that in every sin, even in sins committed ostensibly only against one's neighbor, God is the party most offended. (PNCT)
 - AMBROSE: In their ministry of the forgiveness of sin, pastors do not exercise the right of some independent power. For not in their own name but in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit do they forgive sins. They ask, the Godhead forgives. The service is enabled by humans, but the gift comes from the Power on high. THE HOLY SPIRIT 3.18.137.

8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’?

perceiving in his spirit that they questioned, Jesus said, “Why do you question”

- Because supernatural knowledge was especially attributed to prophets (e.g., 2 Kings 6:12), Jesus' hearers would probably view him here as a prophet; (IVPBBC)
- Josephus shows us that many false prophets in Jesus' day claimed to work miracles but actually failed to work them; some of Jesus' critics may have placed him in this category. His act in front of these witnesses, however, should have challenged them to rethink their case. (IVPBBC)
- CHRYSOSTOM: The scribes asserted that only God could forgive sins, yet Jesus not only forgave sins, but showed that he had also another power that belongs to God alone: the power to disclose the secrets of the heart

Which is easier... sins for given or ... walk?

- neither of the two was easier. Both were alike impossible to men and equally easy for God. To the teachers of the law, it was easier to make the statement about forgiveness because who could verify its fulfillment? But to say, “Get up ... and walk”—that could indeed be verified by an actual healing that could be seen. (EBC)

10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— 11 “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”

- Jesus can heal a man of physical paralysis; the larger question is whether he can heal the scribes of spiritual paralysis. (PNCT)

Son of Man has authority

- “Son of Man” (PNCT) occurs fourteen times in Mark,
- “Son of Man,” which occurs in v. 10 for the first time in Mark, is an ambiguous title, largely free of the political and military connotations associated with Messiah. In itself the title does not appear to have made any special claim in the ears of Jesus' contemporaries. Nowhere are people amazed that Jesus

calls himself the “Son of Man,” for example, nor do they take exception to his doing so. “Son of Man” thus offers the advantage of a title unencumbered by unwelcome associations, (PNCT)

- three categories
 - in apocalyptic contexts, as in its usage in Daniel 7 and 1 Enoch 37–69, where it refers to the Son of Man coming in judgment.
 - Jesus’ earthly authority to forgive sins (2:10) and supersede the Sabbath (2:28).
 - most predominant usage, however, is with regard to Jesus’ suffering (nine times: 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21 [twice], 41)
 - Each of the three categories refers to a divine attribute, or, as in the case with the third, fulfilling a divinely ordained purpose. It is thus apparent that “Son of Man” is not, as is often supposed today, merely a circumlocution for “the human one.”
- He does not speak of his vocation in the first person, that is, “That is the way I do things,” but in the third person, which thereby designates his humiliation, suffering, and exaltation as God’s ordained way.
- CHRYSOSTOM you will not characteristically find him praying or calling on his Father for assistance. All these things, as you discover in the text, he did on his own authority.

to forgive sins

- From a human perspective it is safe to pronounce the forgiveness of sins, since that statement cannot be falsified. Jesus, however, will provide evidence of the former by healing the paralytic, which can be verified by all. (PNCT)

paralytic, “rise, pick up, go home”

- the words “he said to the paralytic” constitute a parenthesis to explain that the following words are addressed not to the teachers of the law but to the paralytic. The change of addressee seems awkward; but, if this is the correct interpretation, presumably Jesus indicated his change by some sort of gesture (EBC)
- Hunter (p. 38) says, “He did the miracle which they could see that they might know that he had done the other one that they could not see.” (EBC)

12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

- AUGUSTINE: You have been a paralytic inwardly. You did not take charge of your bed. Your bed took charge of you.
- Spurgeon wrote: “I think I see him! He sets one foot down to God’s glory, he plants the other to the same note, he walks to God’s glory ... he carries his bed to God’s glory, he moves his whole body to the glory of God, he speaks, he shouts, he sings, he leaps to the glory of God.”
- the man who had been carried from his house that morning weak, dependent, and bowed down both in body and soul, returned to his own house rejoicing. Who can doubt that to the end of his days this man would thank God for this palsy? Without it he might probably have lived and died in ignorance, and never seen Christ at all. Without it, he might have kept his sheep on the green hills of Galilee all his life long, and never been brought to Christ, and never heard these blessed words “thy sins be forgiven thee.” That palsy was indeed a blessing. Who can tell but it was the beginning of eternal life to his soul? (Ryle)

Fallen Condition Focus (Issues and Idols) state what sin or consequence of sin the passage and exposes and Gospel solves

- Regenerated >> New life / New Identity >> Nowhere else to look! No need to look elsewhere!
- Jesus heals us on all three levels... physical, emotional, spiritual...
- Are we asking God for what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?

Interpretational Issues that need to be explored

Gospel Trajectory (In one or two sentences, briefly explain how you will preach the Gospel from this)

- the mechanism for forgiveness of sins is not found in ourselves or in our actions... it is found only in the person of Jesus
- How often do I try to find forgiveness in myself?

Propositional Statement (In one statement what is your sermon about)

Gospel... repent and replace

- "Where are we tempted to find life where there is no life?"

Disciple... know and do remember

- What would it look like to let Jesus forgive your sins and restore a paralyzed place in your life?

Ambassador... share rejoice

- Am I willing for my home to be filled, refashioned, and torn asunder so that people can meet with Jesus?
- thegospelcoalition.org/article/open-roof-hospitality/

Mark 2:1-12 Are we willing to let God give us what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?
Almighty God, grant us thy Holy Spirit to be our interpreter, leading us through the written word to him who is the incarnate Word, such that we may know thee more fully, love thee more truly, and to serve thee more faithfully to the honor and glory of thy Name. Amen

In China a man names Li Fuyan suffered with unimaginable headaches and had tried everything to soothe the pain. Nothing helped.

- An X-ray finally revealed the culprit.
- 4 years prior / Robbers / Wounded / No Xray
- If they had >>> 4 inch knife blade lodged in his skull
- No wonder he had terrible headaches!

Here's the problem... we're all walking wounded. Scripture says we're the walking dead... dead in our trespasses and sins!

- Buried deep in our souls >>> regrets, remorse, shame, guilt that lies hidden, festering, irritating.
- Sometimes so deep we don't know the cause.

The problem is that we get comfortable with the brokenness around us. It becomes the "new normal".

- In essence, we walk, with a knife pain of brokenness in our head -- and if someone mentions it... fear, conflict, and trouble is unleashed.
- This is what had happened before Jesus came. People had become used to
 - Silence... 450 years
 - Powerlessness - They had been conquered (and re-conquered) and were an occupied outpost of Rome
 - Brokenness - The lame didn't walk; hearts weren't mended; life was painful

Chapter 1 Jesus directly confronts the spiritual battle and begins to rescue his people in the wilderness

- It's the beginning of Good News... God is on the move
- Jesus is healing and casting Satan out with power
- And they're no longer powerless... but have purpose!
 - 1:17 Follow me, and I will make you become, fishers of men

Chapter 2 immediately begins another battle

- Before = wilderness and demons
- Now close to home... polite society...
 - Problems? "bless your heart" / gossipy whispers.
- Jesus will challenge & question // Are they searching for His Kingdom or temporary comfort.

We all are broken and need healing 1) Our friends see it 2) Jesus sees how deep it goes 3) The question: Are we willing to let God give us what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?

1) Our Friends See it... and true friends will bring us to Jesus! PEW Bible 837

2:1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.

4. Scene...

- Probably Peter's house (c. 1 v. 29) ... very simple

- Just four walls... an outside stairway to the roof.
- The roof = timber and adobe like material... Enough to hold the weight but also easy to dig through...
- And there are crowds pushing in... lots of people are there for Jesus great party tricks...
- And there are religious leaders...
 - sitting comfortably on the couch.
- 5. Good Friends see our need... sometimes better than we do!
 - They had been with this man for a long time... and they knew his need
 - And they're committed to action... if an opening can't be found to Jesus... they'll make one
 - Even if it meant dirt on the seated on the guests...
 - it didn't matter. Their friend needed help!
- 6. Good Friends bring us to Jesus who can actually heal!
 - Jesus was preaching the word... the truest and best healing for the soul
 - Mark >> phrase in v. 2 "preaching the word to them"
 - "the word" = essence of Jesus ministry
 - fuses the truth he proclaims with truth he embodies
 - Jesus came to present the Kingdom as near (with him as the Lord of that Kingdom)
 - Jesus came to bring health and wholeness to all who desired it (paralyzed inside or out)
 - Jesus came to confront spiritual forces that distracted and dissuaded people from His Kingdom (demonic, human, or otherwise)
 - This is important, because we're broken in all those spheres... total depravity means broken:
 - Broken in relationship with God
 - Broken in relationship with Each other
 - Broken in relationship with the world around us
 - Every sphere of brokenness is what Jesus came to heal and make whole.
 - These friends knew that their paralyzed buddy needed someone who could actually heal!
Oh, that we would have that kind of urgency... Our mission says that we exist to share the Gospel, make disciples and equip ambassadors.... Oh how I wish that we all saw the need of those around us for Good News the way these good friends do!

We all are broken and need healing 1) Our friends see it 2) Jesus sees how deep it goes 3) The question: Are we willing to let God give us what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?

2) Jesus sees how deep our wounds go and he heals the heart

5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

- 4. Saw their faith
 - Faith is not about the head... not knowledge alone... but an active trust that Jesus is sufficient for all our deepest and most heartfelt needs (PNCT)
 - Sola Fide means faith alone... deep trust alone... was all that they had. Trust that Jesus could actually heal!
 - And who had the trust?? The friends!!
 - Interesting... he saw their PLURAL faith... certainly this is the faith of the friends not the paralytic!
 - They had great faith
 - A wavering faith would have turned back
 - They would not be put off by the crowd.
 - They vandalized another person's roof
 - They ignored the certain protests of those who were getting dirt falling on their heads
 - God was working in his life because his friends loved him (PtW)
 - They trusted that God was going to work!
 - the four truly believed! This kind of faith invites the Lord's miraculous power. (PtW)
 - Which is great encouragement... The cure is not because of the paralytic's action... it's not coming from inside him at all... it's coming from the grace of God and faith of his friends.
 - As we see at the end... all he had to do was accept the healing... take up his mat and go home!
 - If you've been praying for your 1:1:1... and seen no action... keep having faith. They may be completely clueless... but God sees your faith!
- 5. Response to that faith? "Son your sins are forgiven"
 - Here comes the conflict! ***Jesus isn't offended*** by the roof removers... instead he's encouraged.
 - ***But he is offending***... with an outrageous and calculated statement.

- Jesus is claiming to forgive sins... something no one anticipated
 - Someone can speak on God's behalf... a priest can say "your sins are forgiven"
 - But, Jesus wasn't a priest / no offered sacrifice

He was claiming the authority to forgive sins as if he was the one who had been offended!

- It's like if Frank hit Joe... Joe didn't do anything wrong (not even a wrong note)... and Mark says to Frank... It's okay! I forgive you!
 - Joe would be looking at him like, "WHAT??? He hit me!! Not you!!"
6. What is Jesus doing?
- He's claiming to be God... the one who is universally offended by the brokenness in the world
 - And, he's pointing to the most important need any person has... a broken heart
 - At first glance, Jesus is healing the wrong thing. Look at it again... He's paralyzed.
 - He can't feed himself.
 - He can't bath himself.
 - He can't scratch his nose, comb his hair, turn a book's page... he can't do anything.
 - And... Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven."

Don't turn past that. Let it be outrageous to you! Jesus offers an intangible help to a physically helpless man.

- Why?

To teach us that we all have deeper needs that our surface desires can ever show us.

- We all, according to the Bible, are building our identity on something or someone other than Jesus.
 - Parents build their identity on their kids
 - Church goes build identity on being good and moral citizens
 - Businessmen build identity on success and prosperity

We all have something in our lives that we believe, "When I have that... oh, then I'll be good"

- We believe that our deepest wish can deliver healing for our deepest needs.

There's a great story in C.S. Lewis' "Voyage of the Dawn Treader"

- There's this boy named Eustace, and everybody hates him... and he hates everybody.
- He's selfish. He's mean. He can't get along.
- But he finds himself magically on the boat.
- At one point the boat lands on an island and Eustace wanders off... finds a cave... filled with gold treasure
- He's rich... and now he's got power. All the slights... disrespect... it will all be dealt with.
- He slips on one of the gold armbands in the hoard of treasure and falls asleep.
- But, when he wakes... he's become a dragon. He has all this gold... but now he's all alone. He can't go on the boat, he can't communicate with his friends... he's paralyzed by what seemed like his greatest success... his biggest wish come true.

One night, in the midst of his pain and frustration, Eustace encounters a huge lion (Aslan... who is God in the story). Aslan tells the boy to follow it to a high mountain well. Eustace longs to bathe his aching foot in the cool water, but the lion tells him he must undress first. It seems silly to Eustace because dragons don't wear clothes, but then he remembers that dragons, like snakes, cast their skins. So Eustace scratches his skin, and the scales begin falling off—and soon his whole skin peels away. But when he puts his foot in the water, he sees that it is just as rough and scaly as before. He continues scratching at the second dragon skin and realizes there is yet another underneath. Finally the lion says, "You will have to let me undress you." Eustace is afraid of the lion's claws but desperate to get in the water. The first tear is painfully deep as the lion begins to peel away the skin. Surely death will follow, Eustace believes. With the gnarled mess of dragon skin now cut away, the lion holds Eustace and throws him into the water. Initially, the water stings, but soon it is perfectly delicious. Eustace swims without pain, for he's a boy again.

- Our deepest wish won't heal us... it's Dragon Gold... and turns us into a snarling beast even after we've gotten it. (Protect, defend, acquire more)

Keller: You see, it wasn't our deepest wish that itself that was the problem, just as it wasn't wrong for the paralytic to want to walk or a businessman to want to succeed or for Eustace to want to be loved and respected. The fact that we THOUGHT getting our deepest wish would heal us, would save us -- THAT WAS THE PROBLEM. We had to let Jesus be our Savior.

- Jesus wants to heal deeper...
- J.C. Ryle says it this way:

Jesus is the very Priest that we need, mighty to forgive and pardon, tender-hearted and willing to save. And now let us ask ourselves whether we have yet known the Lord Jesus as our High Priest? Have we applied to Him? Have we sought absolution? If not, we are yet in our sins. May we never rest till the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we have sat at the feet of Jesus and heard his voice, saying, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." (Ryle)

We all are broken and need healing 1) Our friends see it 2) Jesus sees how deep it goes 3) The question: Are we willing to let God give us what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?

3) Do we really want true help or just temporary comfort

6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— 11 "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."

- There are two groups of people who are just watching... Crowds and Religious Leaders
- 4. Crowds - just looking and not asking for help
 - Crowds
 - Crowds are passive, amazed and astonished... but they don't measure success.
 - In fact... despite Jesus compassion on them... the crowds never turn to Jesus in repentance and belief. They only leave when the going gets tough...
 - J.C. Ryle, "

They crowded. They were amazed. They were astonished. They were filled with wonder at His mighty works. But they were not converted. They lived in the full noon-tide blaze of the Sun of Righteousness, and yet their hearts remained hard ...Let us beware of walking in their steps. We ought often to use the prayer of the Litany, "From, hardness of heart, Good Lord, deliver us." (Ryle)

- 5. Scribes and Pharisees are just sitting there
 - Sure, they're right to question initially.
 - The Chief Priest couldn't forgive sins... (Just like what we will do at confession) He can only pronounce what God has done...
 - The Messiah wasn't invested with power to forgive sins in the Old Testament... What they didn't see was that Jesus was not just a Messiah... but THE SON OF MAN... God in flesh
 - They are right that only God can forgive sins... but their action tells us that they're more interested in polite theological conversation than the healing of peoples brokenness
 - If they were invested in God's Kingdom Healing the broken... they wouldn't have been sitting down
 - The real paralytics were the Pharisees and scribes! In marked contrast to the four stretcher-bearers, they were just "sitting there" (cf. v. 6 and Luke 5:17).
 - As religious leaders, they should have been directing the traffic to Jesus and his free clinic. When the roof opened, they should have reached up to receive the poor cripple. But instead of love, there was indifference. Instead of faith, there was only criticism*
- 6. And Jesus answers the question of their hearts... Who has the authority?
 - The Son of Man has the authority
 - It's a title he uses 14 times in Mark to draw attention to a shared authority...
 - It's a title from Daniel of the promised coming of God back into the world...
 - He's not saying, "Here's how I do things"... but here's how God does things
 - God uses his authority to heal on every level of our need. Body, soul and spirit!
 - Jesus can heal a man of physical paralysis; the larger question is whether he can heal the scribes of spiritual paralysis. (PNCT)

12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

- Spurgeon wrote: "I think I see him! He sets one foot down to God's glory, he plants the other to the same note, he walks to God's glory ... he carries his bed to God's glory, he moves his whole body to the glory of God, he speaks, he shouts, he sings, he leaps to the glory of God."

- The question for all of us... is what makes our hearts leap? Are we leaping with the man who now picks up his mat?
- Leaders/Crowds - just sitting and not engaged in helping others

Collect for the 3rd Sunday of Epiphany... *Give us grace, O Lord, to answer readily the call of our Savior Jesus Christ and proclaim to all people the Good News of his salvation, that we and the whole world may perceive the glory of his marvelous works;*

- ... answer readily the call to proclaim the Good News... that the world may perceive his marvelous works...
- Ready for a call NOT= sitting on a couch!

We all are broken and need healing 1) Our friends see it 2) Jesus sees how deep it goes 3) The question: Are we willing to let God give us what we really need... or just for a temporary fix?

So, how do we apply this... live this text out? The best way to apply this text is with a group of friends in a life group. They can carry you to Jesus and help you find the deep healing you really need. As you get ready for your group... consider these questions

4. If you're new to Jesus and his Good News... Ask yourself, "Where am I tempted to find healing/comfort that is only temporary?"
5. If you're a Follower of Jesus ... Is there a place that still needs healing? What would it look like let Jesus forgive your sins and restore a paralyzed place in your life?
6. Maybe you've been following Jesus for a while... What would it look like have your roof torn apart so that people can meet with Jesus?

Pray: Jesus, give us the courage to admit our brokenness and seeking healing from you alone. Help us not to be satisfied with temporary comfort... but to instead be ready for you to tear off the scales and heal our deepest needs. Amen.