

Mark 2:1-12
"Jesus: The God Who Has All Authority"

Scripture Focus

Mark 2:1-12

Key Verse

Mark 2:10

TDM Competency

Think Biblically: Gain the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue a vital Christian life that glorifies God.

Mark presents a passage that has often been interpreted with man as the central person rather than the God-man, Jesus. Many people in your class may have heard this passage, even seen it portrayed in a drama. It is a tendency to place the healing miracle as the main point of the text, but Jesus does not do so. Jesus reveals that the purpose of the miracle was not primarily a man being healed, but rather it was to demonstrate that He has authority to forgive sins. His argument goes from lesser to greater. Since He has authority to tell a lame man to walk, and the man walks, then He also has authority to forgive sins.

This text has been placed under the TDM Competency of Think Biblically since it calls us to think correctly about all the works of God. Although we benefit from His work, ultimately He works in order to make Himself known and reveal His glory so that He may be worshipped. A man was healed in this text, but it was for the purpose of revealing that Jesus had authority to forgive sins.

Overview

Jesus returned to Capernaum, the home base of much of His Galilean ministry. Just prior to His return He healed a man who went and spread the word that Jesus was a miracle worker. Jesus' popularity quickly increased so that it was difficult for Him to go into any public place without a mob scene occurring. He answered the doubts of the scribes gathered among this crowd by demonstrating that He not only performed miracles, but that the miracles also demonstrated that He was indeed God and that He, being God, could forgive sins.

Theme

Jesus is the God who has all authority on earth to forgive sins. His miracles demonstrate this truth.

Desired Learner Response [Aiming at the Heart for Life Transformation]

To understand the significance of Jesus' miracles were that they demonstrated Him to be the God who has authority to forgive sins. To begin moving away from a man-centered approach to studying the Bible (an approach that looks into the text to find something about self or something to help self rather than the revelation of Jesus Christ so that He may be believed and worshipped). To first ask of every text, "What does this text say about God?"

Outline

- I. The Authority of Christ Captivates Attention (vv. 1-2)
- II. The Authority of Christ Reveals True Needs (vv. 3-9)
- III. The Authority of Christ Changes Lives (vv. 10-12)

Lesson

Ask: Why are people so resistant to authority? **Note** that the sinful nature of all men is to resist all authority and worship himself by making himself his own authority.

Ask: Why is Christ's authority a central message of the gospel? **Note** that it is by His authority as God that He forgives sin.

Ask: What have you heard is the main idea of Mark 2:1-12; in other words, if someone asked, "What is this text about?" what would you answer? **Note:** We are going to examine this text in light of Jesus' statement in verse 10. Jesus is the central person of the gospel, and it is His authority that is the central theme of this text.

I. The Authority of Christ Captivates Attention (vv. 1-2)

vv. 1- 2 – Capernaum was a town on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. It served as a primary trade and economic center in the North Galilean region as well as the home base of Jesus' Galilean ministry.

"It was heard" – In 1:45 we see the man Jesus healed of leprosy going against Jesus' command and freely sharing that Jesus had healed him. Throughout Mark's Gospel there is what some have called "The Messianic Secret." On several occasions, like that of the man in 1:45, Jesus instructed people not to tell anyone of His work or power. The purpose of such a prohibition was that Jesus was on a divine time plan. The time for Him to be revealed to the world as the Messiah had not yet come. He still had ministry to conduct, miracles to perform and doctrine to teach. The Messianic Secret was Jesus' guarding His true identity until the time came for Him to go to the cross.

Just as people disobey Jesus today by not sharing the gospel, the former leper disobeyed Jesus by sharing the news of his healing. As a result of his disobedience, word of Jesus' miracle spread quickly so that when Jesus entered Capernaum, massive crowds came to see this miracle worker. The crowd was so anxious to be near Jesus that they filled a house to the point that the door could not even be opened.

Jesus preached "the word," a reference to His explaining some portion of the Old Testament. The crowd's greatest need was not to see a miracle or be physically healed but to hear the Word of God preached. Notice that Jesus did not allow what the crowd perceived their need to be to determine His actions, but rather knew their spiritual need and acted in accordance. Most were there to see Jesus do a miracle. We should learn from this constant pattern of Jesus' ministry. Lost people believe they have determined their greatest need, but without the preaching and hearing of the gospel they will never realize their greatest need is to be saved from the wrath that is to come. It is solely through the proclamation of the Word of God that the Spirit convicts people of their sin against God and convinces them of their need for Christ as Savior.

Note: Lead your class to see that many people may “come to Jesus,” but it is often for reasons that are contrary to the gospel. Many come to Jesus for physical healing, emotional support, direction in life or release from addiction. While Jesus is fully capable of accomplishing all of this, the only legitimate reason for a lost person to come to Jesus is to come for salvation from the wrath of God that is to come. Just as the miracle of physical healing was not ultimately for the man’s benefit but for the glory of Christ to be revealed, so too our very salvation is ultimately not for our benefit but for the glory of Christ to be displayed through His work of redemption in our lives.

Ask: What are some false reasons we, as believers, may give to lost people to get them to “come to Jesus”? **Ask:** Why is offering such reasons dangerous? **Note** that people will often “pray a sinner’s prayer” if the central message is their self-improvement. Romans 1 say that man’s chief sin is that he worships himself. A person worshipping himself will do anything to make His life better, but he will not die to himself by repenting and submitting to a Holy God. Therefore, we must guard against placing man’s betterment as the central message of the gospel and ensure we place the emphasis on the sinfulness of man, the worthiness of God and His great power to do what we are incapable of doing, namely to free us from sin’s bondage and deliver us from His wrath through Jesus alone.

II. The Authority of Christ Reveals True Needs (vv. 3-9)

v. 3 – The men that carried the paralytic were not identified by Mark; therefore, no further explanation of these men should be given in your lesson. Since the text is silent regarding their concern, compassion, willingness to help, etc., so should we be regarding those ideas. Their faith is mentioned in verse 5 but should not be taught as a primary theme in the text.

As the crowd continues to grow, four men carrying a man who is paralyzed also come. It is no surprise that such an act occurred since word was spreading that Jesus could heal people. Encourage your class to never mistake a crowd with a church. The majority of the crowd gathered that day was present to see a miracle, not to be confronted with their sinful condition or to worship God.

v. 4 – Mark wanted his readers to know the increasing size of the crowd gathered, so he repeated this point. Houses in this region had flat roofs accessible by stairs or a ladder. This access was often from the outside of the house, much like many fire escapes on buildings constructed in the 20th century in America. Roofs in this day were commonly constructed from materials like mud and straw. They “uncovered,” then “broke through” the roof, which indicates that the roof was made of dried mud covered with a woven straw material. They removed the woven material, then dug through the mud to create a hole large enough for a man reclined on a pallet to pass through. Certainly lowering a man on a pallet through the roof was no easy task. The very breaking through of the roof would have distracted the crowd from Jesus’ teaching, but now all eyes were on the pallet descending into the house.

v. 5 – The plural pronoun “their” clarifies that Jesus was responding to the faith of all the men, including the paralyzed man. No indication exists in the text that the man was healed because of the faith of his friends, but rather they had the same faith that Jesus could heal as the man lying

on the pallet. It is noteworthy that Jesus saw all the men's faith, but the text records that He only forgave the sins of the paralytic. Perhaps the four men had believed that Jesus could physically heal the man, but the paralytic's faith went past the physical to a belief that Jesus could heal him spiritually.

Regardless of why Mark only indicates that the paralytic's sins were forgiven and not the men who brought him, it is important for your class to grasp that salvation does not come to groups but rather to individuals who come to Jesus in faith. Again, all in the room were expecting to see Jesus physically heal the man, but Jesus knew that the man's greatest need was forgiveness of sin. Had Jesus only healed the man of his sickness, the man would have remained dead in his sin. Our humanitarian aid efforts are worthy, needed and biblical but should never exclude the proclamation of the gospel. To be truly like Jesus we must minister to the physical needs of those unable to help themselves, but also and always address their greatest need of salvation from the wrath that is to come.

vv. 6-7 – In the midst of this great crowd were scribes, men who were experts in the religious law. "Reasoning" indicates that they were applying that which they knew about the law to the statement of Jesus. They knew that it was blasphemous (to act in a way that only God could act or to speak in a way that only God could speak) for a man to imply he could forgive sins. Further, they had a right view of God in affirming that He alone had authority and power to forgive sins. The scribes had a wrong view of Christ in assuming that He was only a man. **Note** that Mark records they were "reasoning in their hearts." The scribes were not speaking at this point, but rather were thinking the statements recorded in verse 7.

vv. 8-9 – No words had to be spoken by the scribes for Jesus to know exactly what was in their minds. He presented them with a logical challenge. After all, they were "reasoning" or trying to logically discern how a mere man could claim to forgive sins. Neither choices Jesus gave in verse 9 were any easier than the other. The scribes had no power, authority or ability to forgive sins. Further, they had no power, authority or ability to make the man walk. Both were acts that only God could perform. Being experts in religious matters, the scribes would have been bound to affirm that no one but God could forgive the man and no one but God could heal the man. So to demonstrate His authority and thus His deity, Jesus does both.

Ask: What might some people without Christ believe they most need? **Ask:** Why is it necessary to always give the gospel when helping those who cannot help themselves. **Note** that humanitarian aid ministry accompanied by the clear proclamation of the gospel, including confrontation of sin, is very much like Jesus. People will often say something like, "These people have endured so much suffering, how could I confront them with their sin in a time of physical need?" First, we must realize that regardless of their physical needs, God has already declared their greatest need of salvation. Second, if we are going to witness like Jesus, we will use every opportunity to meet a physical need to share the gospel.

III. The Authority of Christ Changes Lives (vv. 10-12)

vv. 10-11 – Now we get to the verse that summarizes the entire passage. Without this verse it would be very tempting to place man at the center of this text. We could say that the love and compassion of the men, the faith of the men, the hunger of the crowd to hear the Word, the

paralytic's physical need, and a host of other man-centered views were the central teaching of this text if verse 10 were missing. But, we were given verse 10 as was the audience in the house on that day. The only reason given for this man going from being bound to a pallet to carrying his pallet, from being unable to walk to walking away, and from being dependent on others to transport him to walking where he wished is so that the crowd that day and all who would read Mark's Gospel after would know that Jesus had "authority on earth to forgive sins." Jesus refers to Himself as "the Son of Man." This title is the one Jesus most often used when referring to Himself in Mark's Gospel. It carries imagery from Daniel 7:13 in which the Son of Man is seen riding a cloud, thus uniting the one that is man and God into one image. He had the authority of God because He was and He is God.

Three primary truths are included in the assertion that Jesus has authority to forgive sins: 1. Jesus is God for only God has authority to forgive sins. 2. Jesus is the God-man for "on earth" certainly highlights the incarnation of Christ and the purpose for which Christ came, namely to bear the wrath of God in the place of man. 3. Miracles were for a far greater purpose than physical healing. Although many were beneficiaries of Jesus' miracles, the foundational purpose for healing was to demonstrate the deity and authority of Christ to forgive sins.

v. 12 – This verse is filled with at least five truths regarding the authority of Christ. First, the man was fully healed "in the presence of them all," which solidifies that Jesus did not perform miracles in front of isolated groups which could scarcely be found to verify the event, but rather in front of the entire crowd, including doubting scribes. Second, the man was healed by the word of Jesus, which revealed that He alone was indeed God for only God could heal. Third, that the man was healed revealed that Jesus also had authority to forgive the man's sins, which only God could do. Fourth, the people glorified God. Those that were in the house and witnessed that which Jesus did attributed the work to God. Fifth, other magicians and false teachers had come through this region, but the work that this crowd saw was of the nature that had never been seen by them before this day.

Ask: How do these verses reveal that the central person in salvation is not man but God? **Ask:** What would you say to a person, based on this text, who presents a gospel that communicates a man-centered purpose for salvation? **Ask:** What are specific ways you can minister to lost people's physical needs and by doing so share a clear gospel message with them?