

Bringing People to Jesus

Mark 2:1-12

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

I want to encourage you to be back next week because we are going to start a new series from the book of James. In the Spring, we went doctrinal and talked about what we believe and why we believe it. James is the most practical book in the Bible, and so were going to walk through it all the way up to Thanksgiving.

For this week though, I want to look at one of my favorite stories in the New Testament. This is a story that has always captivated me...intrigued me...always inspired me. It's found in:

Mark 2:1-12 – “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. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic,

“Son, your sins are forgiven.” 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.” 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!”

Now, I thought about a number of titles for this message. I thought I would call it:

- “Total Commitment” or...
- “All In” or...
- “Whatever It Takes”...

I settled on: **Bringing People To Jesus**

I suppose I could have combined all of these together and made the title “Having a total commitment to be all in and do whatever it take to bring people to Jesus”, but it just seemed a little long and cumbersome.

So, I'm just going to stick with: Bringing People To Jesus. If you want to know why we exist as a church, it's this right here. We exist to bring people to Jesus!

In January, we introduced to you what we call our “Focus Priorities” and the very first one involves “making disciples”. It’s based off what is called the Great Commission in scripture.

Matt. 28:18-20a – “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority (Key word: saw this in our story in Mark) in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

The final commission...command Jesus gave us before ascending back to God the Father was to “Go” – and make disciples. This is active! We go!

And as we go in our neighborhoods and to our schools and in our work places, we are to be about this mission – making disciples. And making disciples BEGINS with bringing people to Jesus.

Like the four friends we see in this passage we are looking at today, we are to be about bringing people who are broken and in need to Jesus!

Now, whenever I approach any text that I’m studying for or preparing to preach, here’s the question I generally ask...and this is a good question to ask in your personal study of the Bible: “What’s the BIG idea?”

Whenever you are reading a text, there are a number of lessons we can glean...principles we can learn, but usually there is one main idea...one BIG truth.

And in the passage we are looking at today, here’s the main idea. This is what needs to be highlighted, asterisked and put in bold font: **Jesus forgives sin.**

This is THE point of this story. I mean, everything in this narrative is awesome. You’ve got:

- (v. 1-2) – Jesus teaching the word (explain)...
- (v. 3-4) – These four friends opening a hole in the roof to get their buddy to Jesus...
- (v. 11-12) – Jesus heals the paralyzed man and the people that see it glorify God saying, “we’ve never seen anything like this!”

All these little details are amazing, but the whole of the text is centered on what happens in (v. 5-10). We can’t miss this!

Mark 2:5-7 – “And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”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?”

Now, they are exactly right about this! Only God can forgive sin. And this was what was throwing them off. It's interesting. The word "forgive" here is a word that means to "send away" or to "let go".

In the Old Testament, this "sending away" was vividly demonstrated on the Day of Atonement. Read Lev. 16 in your own time away with the Lord sometime. The High Priest once a year would take two goats and one goat he would sacrifice and put the blood of that goat on the mercy seat behind the holy of holies where the presence of God dwelled.

It was a blood sacrifice that atoned for sin. This is what forgiveness cost – blood!

Heb. 9:22b – "...and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."

It was an act of propitiation. The blood of that sacrifice appeased the wrath of God that sin incurred. On that second goat however, the priest would lay his hands on that goat and confess all the sins of the people (no idea how long it took, but he would be there for a while if it was just confessing mine!)

He confesses the sins of the people and then he sends away – we're talking about the word "forgive" here – "sending away" or "letting go" – that goat is sent away...let go into the wilderness far away never to return.

It's where we get the term "scapegoat". This is an act of expiation. A sending away of sin.

The religious scribes KNEW only God can "forgive"...send away...let go of sin.

And this is exactly why they accuse Jesus of blasphemy – BECAUSE in this moment, Jesus is claiming he has the authority to do something that only God can do!

Saying you can forgive sin is tantamount to saying you are God! And if you are claiming to be God, you are either crazy – some kind of a nutjob...you've lost your mind! OR in the minds of some people demonic – who would claim to be god?! That's blasphemy a crime that is punishable in the Jewish law by death.

Bottom line is if you claim to be God (as Jesus is right here) you better be able to back it up! You better be able to show some proof! And Jesus is about to give for ALL to see MORE than enough proof that he is who he says he is!

**Mark 2:8-9 – "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'?"**

Now, this is an interesting little exchange here. In one sense, they are both easy to say IF you are God. One is not harder than the other for God – although...Jesus knows to forgive this man's sin, he is committing to the cross.

So, I guess in one sense, it could be “easier” to heal a man of paralysis than to go to the cross and take on the sin of mankind and wrath of God.

From a human perspective I guess the easier...the safer one would be to say “your sins are forgiven” because you could just say it and it’s not like it could be proven or not (outside of what was already declared – this belief that only God can forgive sin). It’d be much harder to say “get up and walk” because that could be demonstrated.

So, what does Jesus do? Essentially, he says, “Look, I’m going to do what seems harder to you (heal a man physically and let him walk) in order to prove to you that I have the authority and ability to do what you readily admit only God can do (forgive this man’s sin).

Mark 2:10-12a – “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.” ¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all...”

The main point...the BIG idea of this passage of scripture is NOT the physical miracle that occurs - Jesus makes a man walk that was paralyzed – that’s amazing! That’s something that doesn’t just happen every day.

My bet is if you were to read this story for the first time that’s what you would be most impressed with! It’s the physical healing that occurs! Who has ever seen this happen – the paralyzed walk?

But the main point of this passage...the BIG idea in this passage...is that Jesus forgives sin.

It’s NOT the physical healing alone that should wow us, it’s the spiritual healing that Jesus gives this man – he forgives his sin! He has this authority and ability to do what only God can do because he is God.

And listen: If Jesus can forgive sin (AND HE CAN...AND HE DOES!) then we like these four guys in this story need to do whatever it takes to bring people to him.

Again, this is why we exist as a church! It’s to bring people to Jesus because only Jesus can forgive their sin.

Illus. 3 Circles Wall – I don’t know if you noticed in our great hallway, we put up over the summer our brand new “3 Circles” wall (**SHOW PIC**)

We did this for a number of reasons. One, we wanted to keep before you the importance of sharing your faith, bringing people to Jesus and 3 Circles is a simple tool to do it.

Second, we want when you bring a friend to church, and walk by the wall – and they say, “Now what does that mean?” or you can say, “Have you ever seen this before?” You can right then and there take them through the gospel – and I’m just believing that a lot of people are going to be brought to Jesus through us simply having this on our wall! (talk through/explain 3 Circles).

If Jesus can forgive sin and change a life, then we need to be all in, totally committed and do whatever it takes to bring people to him...that's what I love about these four guys.

They were going to get their friend to Jesus – and NOTHING was going to stop them!

Now, if we are going to bring people to Jesus, it starts by knowing people who need him! And so, let me ask as application two questions and we'll work each of these out as we come to the end of the message.

Question number one: **Do I know people who need Jesus?**

Most of us do, but I want you to really think about this and if you do, I want you if you are taking notes to write their name down right now.

- Maybe you can write them in the margin of your bible next to this passage of scripture so whenever you read this story, it's a reminder to pray for them.
- Maybe it's the people's names you wrote on the floor of the lobby before we put the carpet down last year – remember that?

A follow up: how well do you know them? I imagine it's different for all of us.

For some, it's a family member and you know them very well. For others, it's a friend at school or a co-worker at the office. For others it may be a neighbor...it may be the name of the person you wrote down underneath the carpet in our lobby area.

I want you to think about the people in your life who need Jesus and how well you know them because isn't it true - the longer we are Christians, typically the less non-Christian friends we have?

And the non-Christian friends we do have, I'm asking, do we know them well enough that if there was an issue in their life – a “paralysis” if you will...

- A break in their marriage...
- A job loss...
- The passing of a loved one...
- A doctor's diagnosis...
- Their child being bullied or pressured in some way...
- Just a general lack of fulfillment or joy in their life...

Do we know them well enough that they would trust us if we went to them and said, I know someone that can help you. Let me take you to him?

I want to remind us this morning that those who are lost and separated from God in their sins...those that are broken by sin and living opposed to God are not the enemy! They are the ones who should be the object of our love, and prayers and service unto God.

We exist to bring lost and broken people to Jesus!

So, question number one: Do I know people who need Jesus? The second question of application I have for you is this: **Am I willing to bring people who need Jesus to him?**

I love the picture that is given to us in this passage. (v. 3) tells us it was four men that brought their friend to Jesus...they were carrying him on the bed he was laying on.

Notice how they were working together...it's a picture of the Church! We work together to bring people to Jesus. This took a team (salt!).

Illus. Summit – TEAM, learn and get equipped to work together to bring people to Jesus! We all have different gifts and abilities but working for the same purpose. Summit gets our volunteer leaders all on the same page working together!

One commentator I read this week gave each of these guys names...kind of cheesy but gives you all the feelz.

1. Frank Faith – “I believe”
2. Harry Hope – “YES! We can do this!” (optimist!)
3. Larry Love – “Had such compassion in his heart for his friend.”
4. Dan Determination – “Crowd won't stop us, we'll just put a hole in the roof!”

Look at how different these guys were from the religious scribes! The scribes were cynics...they were grumblers...complainers. It's interesting – Mark uses the word “crowd” 40+ times in his gospel and they are usually an impediment to keeping people from coming to Jesus (Mark 10 Blind Bartimaeus)!

I don't know about you, but I don't want to be someone in the crowd keeping someone from Jesus...or a religious person always complaining and bemoaning about something and missing what God is doing right in front of me.

Instead, I want to be like these four men who are actually exercising faith...believing Jesus can do the impossible!

(v. 5) – “when Jesus saw their faith!”

Notice faith is expressed in action! We can say we believe...but when does God see it and take note? When it's walked out in action!

This is one of the major points of the book of James I'm so excited to talk with you about in the weeks ahead What does James say? Faith without works is dead!

And look, we have to think that these guys were not only working to get their friend to Jesus, but believing and praying the whole time. How else do you interpret the chances they took...the risks that were involved...

- They climbed on top of someone's house (moving in)!
- They tore open the roof of a house that was not theirs!

I'm trying to highlight here something that is not explicitly seen in this text, but I believe is here, and that is the role of prayer in this miracle that we read about.

In NO WAY do I want to over-emphasize our work in bringing someone to Jesus while under-emphasizing the power that comes from praying to Jesus for the person we are bringing to him!

Charles Spurgeon – “Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscle of omnipotence.”

It is NOT one or the other (do we work or pray?) It is BOTH/AND. We pray – knowing God can do more in two seconds than we can in a lifetime, but we also work and do our part.

Think of it this way – our action...our work IS faith-based prayer.

Prayer is NOT simply me and God in a closed off room (it's not less than that!) but true prayer...prayer that's “nuclear” so to speak is bringing our requests to God and then walking what we are praying out!

Meaning – those people I know who need Jesus:

- I pray for them to come to know him.
- I ask God in my quiet times to move in their life and soften their heart.
- I ask God to make me sensitive to them and to give me opportunities to share God's love with them...

And then I go about my day ready to act, when God opens the door! I'm trusting that God may use me to be the answer to my own prayers.

Illus. Eric

If we want to see the greatest miracle over and over again, which is spiritual healing (i.e. forgiveness of sin), it happens when we combine praying and working!

Illus. Midweek (Show Slide) – And speaking of prayer - Prayer Class – Wed. Aug. 16 – text “Midweek” to 77069

Ask yourself these questions:

1. “Do I know people who need Jesus?”
2. “Am I willing to bring people who need Jesus to him?”

We can't let ANYTHING get in the way! Jesus is the ONLY one who can forgive sin and make us right with God!

These friends...they didn't let any obstacles prevent them from bringing their friend who needed Jesus to him.

- They didn't let the crowds stop them...
- They didn't let the fact that it was hard to move their friend around stop them...
- They didn't let a roof stop them...

They were all in, totally committed and going to do whatever it took to get their friend to Jesus, and Champion Forest this is how I want our church and ministry to be described – this is how I want God see us – “that’s a church that is all about bringing people to Jesus.”

In all our ministries...this is what we need to be about! All our life groups...all our programs...all our events...are we bringing people to Jesus?

Illus. King of the Beach – (show video b-roll)

I love everything about this story in Mark 2. It begins with Jesus being in the house – may it always be said, “Jesus is in the house.” If he is, our place will be full to capacity, just like this house was in Mark 2.

It ends with a group of people “amazed and glorified” at what God is doing – may that be the case here! That people come and say, “Jesus is in the house”...that people leave amazed and glorified at what Jesus has done!

And they will do that if we model the actions of these friends and work together to bring people who need Jesus to him BECAUSE he is the only one that can forgive sin and change people’s lives.

Let’s pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.