

Whatever It Takes

Mark 2:1-12

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We're getting back into our routines and with that we'll have a couple of stand-alone sermons this week and next, and then we're going to get into our Fall series, we're calling *MORE*, and I'll share a little about that later on in the message.

This week though, I want us to look at one of my favorite passages of scripture in the entire Bible. I really think if I had one passage to preach to our church – that gets to the heart of God...that points to the importance of our church's mission, this would be this passage of scripture.

I'm calling the message: **Whatever It Takes**

Now, this story that we are looking at today is told in all three of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). And as we look in detail at Mark's account – most believe that the stories Mark writes about are told through the lens of Peter – he is sharing his eyewitness account of all that he saw as he walked and traveled with Jesus, and John Mark is writing it all down.

And it's fascinating. We see in these first twelve verses of Mark 2, the uniqueness of Jesus. This story kind of encapsulates what his life and ministry all about.

It has Jesus' teaching...it has Jesus healing...it has Jesus in a back and forth with the religious leaders. In it, we can see:

- what Jesus values...
- we get all sorts of insight into his character and his nature...
- we get a glimpse of his heart...
- we see what was really important and what matters most to him...

Let's read it in its entirety and we'll come back and kind of talk through it.

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!’”

This is such a great story. I've been to Capernaum on a number of occasions. When we take our trips to the Holy Land this is one the places we go when we are traveling around the Galilee area.

Known as the “hometown of Jesus”, there are remains from the local synagogue. A church sits over the house where tradition tells us Peter’s mother-in-law lived. It might have been the house that Jesus was teaching at that day – no way to really know.

The Bible does tell us though that there were so many gathered that day listening to Jesus that there was no more room...not even at the door! The place is packed!

Mark 2:2a – “And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door...”

That’s a good problem to have isn’t it?! The place is packed!

What a great problem to have! And you can see why they are coming, right? Because Jesus is in the house. The scripture says, “he was teaching the word to them.”

You know, as a pastor – this is just a principle of ministry that I have learned over the years. I’ve never thought it was my job to get people to come to church.

My job is to preach the Word...to create an environment where people are looking to God...worshipping God – if we’ll make sure as leadership that we are lifting high the name of Christ and teaching Christ FROM his word, then Jesus will be here AND as a result people will be here too– LOTS of people.

There is ZERO reason to chase a crowd...let’s chase Christ and there will be a crowd...there just will! Why? Because Jesus changes lives.

That’s what he does in this story and that’s what he does wherever he goes...wherever he is welcomed. We have a Savior that changes lives.

Now, this story tells us that there is a man that was paralyzed. Matthew and Luke tell us that he was laying on a bed and was brought by four people to this home where Jesus was teaching.

The thought was, “if we can get this man to Jesus, and lay him before Jesus, then Jesus will heal him”. But they get there and there is no room – they could not get near him (v. 4) because of the crowd. They were packed in their like sardines (you know, just in saying that I can’t say that I’ve ever had a sardine or opened up a sardine can – who eats sardines anyway!)

I digress! It was jam-packed...and these guys – we assume they are friends all they want is to get their friend that can’t walk to Jesus – they are desperate!

? – Have you ever been in a desperate situation?

Illus. Paris Story – We were desperate!!! It seemed hopeless...helpless...what are we going to do?! And yet God came through! In my story he provided an IMB missionary to usher us back to London.

Here in this story – on the outside it seemed hopeless and helpless...and this man, while he didn’t have IMB missionaries he had some missionary friends that thought, “where there is a will, there is a way”...and these friends said, “desperate times call for desperate measures. We might not can get him through the door, but we can lower him through the roof!”

And that’s what they do!

Mark 2:4 – “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.”

Now, can you imagine this going on? You're there listening to Jesus teach and all of the sudden the roof starts moving...dust starts falling...and all of the sudden, a hole opens up in and these friends lower their paralyzed buddy down and lay him before Jesus.

Now, in NONE of the gospel accounts that tell this story is it recorded that these men said ANYTHING to Jesus...they just laid their friend before him and the insinuation through silence is that they just kind let it sit.

It's like, "here we go...let's see what happens! What is Jesus going to do?!"

And the scripture says: **Mark 2:5 – “And when Jesus saw their faith (we'll come back to that!), he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”**

Now, if you're this paralyzed man...or his friends...they have to be thinking, "Great, I guess...Sins forgiven? We came so he could walk" – that's what I suppose they are thinking. We really don't know what the paralyzed man or his friends are thinking...scripture doesn't say!

It DOES tell us what the religious leaders...the scribes were thinking!

Mark 2:6-8 – “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?”

Just a point of interest...you do know that Jesus can read your thoughts! The Bible says (Ps. 90:8) that our secret sins are in the light of his presence.”

In other words, what you do in the dark...what you think no one sees, God sees. He knows your thoughts. According to (Psalm 139:4) – he knows the words on your tongue before you say them!

God reads our minds...and he KNOWS when we're skeptical...when we're negative...he knows when there is unbelief present. He knows!

He knows these scribes are questioning him and his authority. And here is the deal, the questions they are raising in light of what they have been taught and know as truth is legit. That whole, “who can forgive sins but God alone” is true!

No one can forgive sin, but the one sinned against...and in the eyes of this culture, this paralyzed man – they actually believed that he was paralyzed because of some sin that he had committed in his past...or a sin his parents committed.

Now, they were off in this belief and Jesus had a conversation and teaching about this in John 9 concerning a blind man – Jesus said, it's not sin that caused his blindness but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Praise God the scripture teaches that the Lord does not treat us as our sins deserve!

The point being made here is – these people were right – no one can forgive sin, but God alone – Jesus IS committing blasphemy – UNLESS he IS God! And so, in order to prove he is God look at what he says AND does! It's an incredible exchange that takes place here!

Mark 2:9 – “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk?’”

Now, on one hand it’s a lot easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven, right?” Like how do you know? You can’t see it...you can’t demonstrate that sins have been forgiven.

So, on one hand, it’s easier to say, “your sins are forgiven” than “take up your bed and walk” – THAT would be a major miracle.

On the other hand, if you are God and the whole world came into existence simply by the power of your spoken voice – telling a paralyzed man to walk isn’t that big of deal! He created the man and his legs!

BOTH these things are easy for God, but one is going to cost his life. Because for God to forgive sin, Jesus has to go to the cross! His blood has to be poured out.

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

So, what does Jesus do? He does what seems harder on the surface (heal a man physically and makes him walk) in order to prove that he has the authority and ability to do what these scribes 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 physical healing this man experienced served as visible proof that Jesus has authority on earth to forgive sins.

NOTICE what gets priority here! It’s NOT the physical healing. Jesus said FIRST, “Son, your sins are forgiven!” Spiritual healing came before the physical healing...and hear me on this – we need the spiritual healing OVER physical healing.

Sometimes...and I don’t claim to get it OR understand it OR even agree with it, but sometimes it may not be God’s will that our physical infirmities are healed this side of eternity – that’s just a fact.

Paul asked the Lord on three separate occasions that his thorn be removed and on three separate occasions, the Lord said, “my grace is sufficient for you”. Just as Jesus taught in John 9, what may be ailing you physically may just be in your life so that God’s power and glory is demonstrated in your life according to his divine purpose and plan.

We ask for healing...we seek healing...we pray for healing (First Sat. Prayer we anoint with oil and pray for people who need healing) but the PRIORITY of God in our life and in the life of those we love is spiritual healing – sins forgiven.

In the words of my buddy, Connor Bales who is the father of two special needs girls (one of which is my goddaughter) – “Jesus does care about our suffering, but Jesus died for our salvation.”

Just play this out...what if Jesus would have healed this man physically, but not forgiven his sin and healed him spiritually?

He gets up...walks...runs everywhere, but ultimately dies and runs straight into an eternity where he is separated from God forever and ever. No...Jesus cares way too much to allow that! He forgives this man’s sin first and then validates his Deity by telling him to get up and take the bed he was laying on with him!

And do you see the result of this man's changed life?

Mark 2:12 – “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!”

You think word got around about Jesus?! Ha! I think so...I love it...these four friends said, “Whatever it takes!”

And they got their friend to Jesus...witnessed a miracle...a life was changed forever and the fame of Christ spread. People saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

WHATEVER IT TAKES.

Champion Forest, would that we be a church that is filled with people that are like the four friends in this story that brought their friend in need to Jesus. THIS is the kind of church we MUST be.

That we will do WHATEVER it takes – we'll tear the roof off, if it means getting ONE MORE person to Jesus.

The four men took up four corners of the bed, and brought their friend to Jesus. I want to look at those four friends...those four corners and give some application to this message today.

If we are going to be a “WHATEVER IT TAKES” kind of church, there are FOUR pillars to this mindset...four corners we have to grab hold of!

1. We must have a burden for the broken and the lost

What compelled these four friends to get their broken friend to Jesus? It was love! They had a buddy that was hurting and the only one that could possibly do anything for him was Jesus!

See, to the crowd this guy was a disruption...a distraction...he was in the way, but to this guy's friends...he was loved and needed help.

? – Do you have a burden for the lost? For those that don't know Jesus? OR has your love grown cold for those that are far from God?

Some have been in the church so long; we don't even know anyone far from God – how could you have a burden for the lost if you don't know any lost people?!

I'm asking the Lord today to give us a burden for souls...listen to me: as long as there is ONE MORE person who is:

- lost...
- far away from God...
- walking in darkness...
- broken...
- hopeless...

Then we have work to do...and if we as believers in Jesus don't get a burden for their soul, who will? This is why God put us here!

How many times do we see Jesus saying things like, “I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” That's just a little further down the page (Mark 2:17). He was known as a drunkard...a glutton...a “friend of sinners” – why? Because that's who he came to reach!

Jesus is the one who leaves the 99 to go after the ONE that is lost? Who's the ONE MORE in your life that you are willing to do **WHATVER IT TAKES** to get them to Jesus.

It starts with a burden...ask God to give you a burden for the lost and the broken. This is what David Brainerd did. He had a passion...a burden for Native Americans in the early to mid 1700's. He felt a strong desire to share Jesus with them and went and lived amongst them.

He died at 29 from tuberculosis. You know what he wrote in one of his journals? This was a man that was ministering in the north – crazy cold winters...he seemed to always be sick and felt the intensity of spiritual battles going on as he sought to share the gospel with a people who had never heard the name of Jesus.

David Brainerd – “I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ.”

What about William Booth? He was a Methodist preacher and the founder of The Salvation Army. You know what the Salvation Army was known for when it first started?

It started as a Christian Mission and it was known for its aggressive evangelism combined with meeting social needs: i.e. giving food shelter and clothing to the homeless. That's a powerful combination btw – sharing Jesus and showing Jesus – **THAT** will lead to A LOT of life change!

It's first motto was: “Soup, soap, salvation.” Hear the words of Booth and may they burn in our heart.

William Booth – “Go for souls and go for the worst! (Listen to this passion...listen to this burden) While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight; while children go hungry, as they do now, I'll fight; while men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight; while there is a drunkard left, while there is a poor lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, I'll fight—I'll fight to the very end!”

That's a **WHATEVER IT TAKES** to bring ONE MORE to Jesus mindset right there...and it starts with a burden for those far from God.

Illus. Healing Place (burden for the up and out and down and out)

This kind of burden can only be birthed in us by God...and it happens in prayer! We will NOT get a burden apart from prayer...this is where the Holy Spirit lights a fire!

Illus. From Northwest Houston to the World (digital ministry. 3rd Campus, etc)

Jesus had this kind of burden! (Mark 1:40 – leper – “moved with compassion” Matt. 9:36 – crowds – “compassion like sheep without a shepherd”)

We've got to have a burden for the broke, the lost, the least! The second corner of the mat:

2. We must have a faith that believes the impossible

These friends really believed that if they could just get their friend to Jesus, Jesus would do what only he could do!

I want that kind of faith! I want the kind of faith that believes the impossible. That person that I don't think will ever change, I want to believe God **CAN/WILL** change him!

And where I don't believe this, I want to be like the father in Mark 9, whose child is controlled by the demonic and he asks Jesus to help him. Jesus says to him who believes ALL things are possible, and do you remember what the father said, "Jesus help my unbelief."

You read about the ministry of Jesus – you know why he couldn't do many miracles in his hometown of Nazareth? The Bible says it was because of the people's unbelief (look it up! Matt. 13:58)

I don't want Jesus to wander at my unbelief...I want him to wander at my belief! I want a faith that gets God's attention!

I want the faith of these friends – "when Jesus saw their faith!", that's when he moved into action (v. 5). This is the kind of faith I want...the kind of faith that gets God's attention!

And look...this was a collective faith – when he saw their faith? What kind of faith does Jesus see when he looks at Champion Forest?

Illus. Fall series – MORE – based out of Hebrews 11 – build faith...strengthen faith...grow our faith!

? – Do you believe that God can change a city?

? – Do you believe that God can use us as a church to take his gospel to the world?

? – Do you believe that God – if we stretch by faith would honor us as a church and give us MORE of his presence and MORE of his blessing.

I do! And it's what I want. If we are going to be a people that has a WHATEVER IT TAKES for ONE MORE attitude, we must have a burden...we must believe the impossible. Thirdly:

3. We must be determined to remove any barriers and make any sacrifice

That's what these friends did! They said, full house...okay, roof is coming off! They weren't making excuses. They were going to do whatever it took to get their friend to Jesus.

Illus. FOX Elementary – in a very real way this is what you are doing. You are removing barriers...you are making sacrifices.

I believe the Lord is birthing what's NEXT for Champion Forest. But in order for us to bring ONE MORE to Jesus, we're going to have to make sacrifices. ...going to have to get out of our comfort zones...it's going to cost!

You ever think about that in this story...somebody had to pay for that roof to get fixed!

Champion Forest, let's be a church that is committed to removing any barrier that keeps people from Jesus. Let's be a church that is committed to making ANY sacrifice if it means ONE MORE person can get to Jesus.

Illus. Paris – desperate...I would have done anything I needed to do to get back home. I want us to be desperate enough to remove a barriers, overcome any obstacles, make any sacrifice if it means bringing someone home to Jesus.

4. We must have a bias toward action

You know, out of the four friends, there was one that originated this idea...ALL of them had to jump into action – bringing this ONE MORE to Jesus was a team effort.

And what I've found is that faith is contagious...it spreads from one person to the next – fear does too! Negativity and cynicism does too.

I want to be the kind of person whose faith propels him to action and in so doing it inspires others.

David Brainerd – his journal and writings inspired the great missionaries William Carey (India) and Adoniram Judson (Burma) who in turn have inspired many more missionaries.

What if these men would not have jumped into action? Would the gospel have gone forth?

If we're going to have a WHATEVER IT TAKES to bring ONE MORE to Jesus mindset, we can't just think about it, we have to do it. We're all in this together. It's a bias toward action!

Illus. Summit - Football season upon us – TEAM.

Illus. Brooklyn Tabernacle trip

Jim Cymbala – “I despaired at the thought that my life might slip by without seeing God show himself mightily on our behalf.”

I feel the same way. I want MORE than anything to experience the second part of (v. 12).

Mark 2:12b – “...so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

God, let us see it, and I think we can and we will as long as we call on God in prayer and commit to doing whatever it takes to bring one more person to Jesus.

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.