

Encounters with Jesus

Week 5 - Jesus and the Paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)

Context:

While Mark's gospel is the shortest, this gospel focuses a great deal more upon various miracles, healings, exorcisms, and other extraordinary signs performed by Jesus than any other. For Mark, the miraculous signs that Jesus perform function very well as signs—they point quite clearly to Jesus' identity. In our passage today, the word of Jesus had already begun to spread. Hearing about Jesus, four companions do all they can to bring their friend to Jesus in the hope that Jesus could make him well.

1. The Means of Reconciliation

- a. Genuine Faith is a Public Faith
 - Jesus saw “*their* faith” and said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”
 - While each of us are called to have faith individually, it is **our faith**. The faith of *one body*, which we confess to be the *one, holy catholic and apostolic church*.
 - We need one another and cannot be isolated from the community of faith, otherwise we rob ourselves of the gifts that Christ has given to the church.
- b. Genuine Faith is a Faith that Acts
 - True faith is observable and sacrificial.
 - They stopped at nothing to bring their friend to Jesus.
- c. Genuine Faith Points to Another
 - These men knew that they were not the Savior and did not pretend to be the Savior, but simply delivered their friend
 - We must not think of ourselves “more highly” than we should (Rom. 12:3)
 - If we spend all of our time pretending to be someone we are not, living up to expectations that the world has pushed upon us, we will not thrive individually, nor will we be as capable of leading others to Jesus

Two Questions:

1. How determined are you to bring the lost the Jesus?

— It is easy to take a “when it happens, it’ll happen” approach to engaging friends and family in conversations about faith, or even simply inviting them to church with us. Instead, we should be praying for specific opportunities and then seeking them intentionally.

2. Do you have friends that will drag you to Jesus when you are in a dark place?

— Whether you are in times of doubt and confusion, moments of depression and anxiety, loss and heartbreak, every part of your life is meant to be lived **within community** where we are able to be the hands of Jesus, even as we experience healing from the hands of Jesus.

2. The Priority of Reconciliation

- a. All Healing Begins with Relationship
 - They came for physical healing, but Jesus is concerned first and foremost with reconciliation between God and man
 - We were made to live with God, for God, and in relationship with God: apart from that, we remain desperately lost
 - Jesus will be making all things new (including the physical world), but everything is made new **by first being set in right relationship with God**

— We often focus on temporary, rather than eternal concerns, but we need to hear the words “your sins are forgiven” far more than we need to hear any other word of healing, blessing, or achievement

3. The Cost of Reconciliation

- a. The Pharisees recognize what Jesus is claiming
 - only God can forgive sin, which means that Jesus was claiming divine authority when he said, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”
 - Skeptics often say, “Jesus never claimed to be God,” but every single page claims his deity

- b. Jesus’ Trick Question
 - Jesus recognizes the Pharisees anger, but he only pushes them further towards the truth with his question: which is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven” or “take up your mat and walk”?
 - It is very easy **to say** your sins are forgiven or to give a comforting word about forgiveness, but only **God** has the authority to actually forgive sins
 - On the other hand, it would actually be quite difficult to say to a paralyzed man that he should get up and walk

- c. Jesus has the Authority for Both
 - As God Jesus has the authority both to forgive and to heal, but forgiveness would be achieved through his sacrifice for us and in our place.
 - Jesus gives them a visible sign (physical healing) in order to make clear that he possessed the authority for their greater, spiritual needs too

This passage is a remarkable picture of the Church’s mission in the world: as those who have faith in Jesus and have experienced his redeeming work, we seek to bring everyone we can to Jesus. And, like Jesus, we do everything we can so that God’s will would be done on earth as it is in heaven—in every area of life!

(Discussion questions on next page)

Discussion Questions

1. What struck you most about this passage? Is there anything in particular you may have missed before, or something you thought about in a new way?
2. In what way are these friends a good example for us? How were you challenged by their example?
3. Pastor Rob spoke about how Jesus gives to us what we need, rather than what we want. How does what we *want* sometimes get in the way of what we need or actually rob us of what we truly need?

Is there a time when you have gotten what you wanted only to discover it left you feeling hollow?

4. Discuss Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees. How does Jesus trick them with his question? How do Jesus' signs demonstrate that he is, in fact, divine?

If Jesus is truly who he claimed to be, what should that mean for our personal "needs" and "wants"?

5. Discuss the two questions pastor Rob asked: How determined are you to bring the lost to Jesus? Do you have friends that will drag you to Jesus when you are in a dark place?

What might be getting in the way of these things? How can your group (if you're in a small group) take steps to be more intentional about bringing one another to Jesus?