

# With Christ, the Forgiveness of God Is Here

Mark 2:1-12

Halifax: 13 January 2019, 10:30 AM

## Introduction

Today, after a long break, we are returning to our sermon series in the gospel of Mark.

- Our scripture reading will be from Mark 2:1-12.

But first let me remind you what we have been looking at.

- We have been looking at the blessings that Jesus Christ, our Saviour, the Son of God and the only Mediator between God and man brought to us from Heaven.
  - He is the One who came here to connect us to these blessings by reconciling us to God and so to His favour and goodness and blessing.
- So far, we have seen that with Christ coming here,
  - the authority of God to speak into our lives and to cast out Satan is here,
  - with Him also the compassion of God is here to deliver us from sickness,
  - with Him the agenda of God to carry the gospel to the nations is here—He brought it to us,
  - with Him the willingness of God to cleanse us from leprosy is here...
- And today, with chapter 2:1-12, we shall see that with Christ, the forgiveness of God is here with us—pardon for sin to gain acceptance with God.

Please listen as I read this passage to you from God's Word... again, Mark 2:1-12.

- Here is the word of God.

**Mark 2:1-12:** And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house. <sup>2</sup> Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. <sup>3</sup> Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. <sup>4</sup> And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. <sup>5</sup> When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." <sup>6</sup> And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup> "Why does this

*Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" <sup>8</sup> But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? <sup>10</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" —He said to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup> "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." <sup>12</sup> Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw *anything* like this!"

May the LORD bless the reading and now the preaching of His holy Word.

So you see what is going on here.

- Verses 1 and 2 tell us that Jesus is in the house at Capernaum—likely Peter’s house where He was before—and that a great crowd has gathered to Him.
  - Sadly, the crowds, according to Mark, are not a sign of success in His ministry.
  - These crowds are mostly looking for a show—to see miracles and such.
    - Mark shows them being more of an impediment than anything else.
    - They are, as they are in our passage today, often astonished and amazed, but they never obey the call of Jesus to repent and believe the gospel of the kingdom.
- At the end of chapter 1, Jesus had cleansed a leper.
  - Although Jesus had strictly charged him not to broadcast his cleansing, he did it in such an extensive way that Jesus had to avoid the cities and villages for a while.
  - Mark tells us in verse 1 that He had entered Capernaum *after some days...* so some time has passed and He has slipped back in.
- But now word has gotten around that Jesus is there and the crowds have filled the house where He is staying so that there is no more room.
  - Nevertheless, Jesus is doing what He most wants to do: He is preaching the word to them. It says that at the end of verse 2: **“And He preached the word to them.”**
  - Now of course we saw in chapter 1, verse 14 & 15 what the message was that He preached.
    - Mark 1:14-15 says: **Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”**
  - With His coming, the kingdom of God has come because Jesus is the king and He has now come.
    - As Mediator between God and man, He connects us with God and with all the blessings of God’s kingdom.
    - He is calling people to repent and believe the good news about Him and about the kingdom of God that He brings to them and has brought to us also.
- But while Jesus is preaching, five men approach the house, one of them a paralytic on a stretcher-like bed, and the other four carrying him.
  - Listen again to what Mark says in Mark 2:3-4: **Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. <sup>4</sup> And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.**
    - Though it does not show in the translation, Mark actually uses the present tense as if this is happening right now—he wants it to be like we are there.
  - The houses in Palestine at this time had flat roofs with stairs going up to them.
    - These roofs were put to much use... for storing things, drying grain or nets, cooling off at the end of the day...
    - They were often constructed with beams—tree trunks spaced about three feet apart, spanning from wall to wall—often with smaller branches crisscrossing the beams and then covered with mud that was hardened to keep out the rain, or with stone or clay tiles that then were covered with mud to seal them.

- Luke tells us that this house had tiles, so these men dug out the top surface of mud and then removed the tiles so they could let their friend down on his bed by ropes (probably some ropes from the fishing tackle) that Jesus might heal him.
  - That is the only way they could get to Him.
  - And we are told that Jesus *saw their faith*.

TRANS> This is where I want to begin today...

## **I. Here is a display of beautiful faith.**

A. It is a beautiful faith because it looks to Jesus.

1. These men believed that if they could only get their paralysed friend to Jesus, Jesus would be able to heal him.
  - They had either seen or heard about the great things that He had done.
2. Our faith must look to the right place or it is of no worth.
  - If you buy tickets for a flight from a fraudulent company who doesn't even have any planes, you won't get to your destination.
  - If you look to the world for your ultimate happiness, you will be ruined.
  - Jesus is the Son of God who came down from heaven, in order, as we have seen, to establish God's righteous kingdom that is reconciled to God.
    - Coming to Him to enter that kingdom is definitely the right choice.

B. This faith of theirs was also beautiful because it was a loving faith.

1. The four men cared about their friend and they wanted to help him.
  - They were willing to carry him to Jesus from his house.
  - They were willing to do what they could to bring about his healing.
2. We should have such loving faith for our children, our relatives, our loved ones.
  - Our earnest desire should be to bring them to Jesus who can save them and bless them over the years.
  - Don't be indifferent about those who do not know Christ.
    - They might be blind and rebellious, and you can't force them, but you can try to persuade them to at least listen to His word—to read the Bible—to come and hear a sermon, and you can pray for them.
    - If you love them, how could you not.
  - And of course when you meet someone who is hungry—go out of your way to bring them to Jesus.
    - Often people are blessed because they have people who love them believing for them before they themselves have believed.
    - Faith finds ways to get them to Jesus.

TRANS> And that is the next thing we see about this faith that marks it out as real faith.

C. Real faith is a faith that is desperate... it will not be stopped... it must get to Christ.

1. These men did not let the crowds prevent them—that would not do.
  - They were creative and they were industrious because they had faith.
  - People are amazing when they are desperate—they will find a way through the desert or through a swamp—or through the roof of a house if they must.

2. This is what you do when the Holy Spirit has shown you your need.
  - You will find a way. Faith is a busy active thing...never passive.
    - When I hear excuses, I know that I am not dealing with someone in whom the Holy Spirit has yet done His work to draw them.
    - They are like the lazy man in Proverbs 26:13: **The lazy man says, "There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!"**
      - His creativity is not in finding a way, but in finding excuses.
  - When you have faith, you will not let mocking friends or angry family members stop you.
    - Your reputation will not matter—nor your job, nor your rank—
    - If God calls you, you will press on till you get to Him.
  - You will not let unfaithful professing Christians make you stumble.
  - You will not let busyness or poverty or fear or keep you away once the LORD has truly opened your heart to see your need.

D. Such faith is delightful to see.

1. It delights every believer.
  - Believers are thrilled to see God working in others so that they *must* get to the Lord for blessing...
    - so that they are tired of dragging around with the vain things of this world.
    - so that they are tired of dabbling with church and religion and are desperate to get to the root of the matter—to find the Saviour and to obtain life from Him.
      - We see it and we are reminding of the love and the grace of God that has reached out to us to give us faith.
      - When we see such a person, we do not say, “Fanatic!” but “Beautiful!” and we think of how God has graciously drawn us to Himself.
2. This faith delights Jesus.
  - He does not chide these men on account of the desperate measures they have taken, and He will never chide you for such measures either.
    - He commends desperate measures... even leaving father and mother, wife and children, for His sake and the gospel’s.
    - He says, “What will it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul?”
  - You see that far from chiding them, He responds to their faith...
    - He sees it and He acts on behalf of their friend.

TRANS> But look at what He does... at how He does respond to their faith...

## II. Jesus declares that the man’s sins are forgiven—this paralytic.

A. This is not quite what everyone was expecting.

1. Everyone saw this man on his stretcher let down through the roof.
  - Likely, many of the people of knew him as the paralysed man of their town.
  - They supposed that Jesus would heal him as He had done for others so that the man would be able to walk again.
    - But instead He says, **“Son, your sins are forgiven you.”**
    - Jesus did not ordinarily do this when He healed people.

2. We can safely assume that this man's sin was the cause of his paralysis.
  - Not that it was necessarily a direct cause in the sense that he got hurt while he was sinning—when he was drunk, or breaking into someone's house, or having a fight or something.
    - It certainly could have been that—many accidents do happen when we are in the very act of sin... and we should be humbled when it is so.
  - But very likely, he was afflicted with his paralysis after resisting the call of God for a time—perhaps a time of indifference or even rebellion.
    - David had that time of adultery and then murder to cover it up,
      - and the LORD responded by sending affliction to his entire household so that his sons rebelled and in some cases murdered each other and even attacked him, raped his wives and his daughters, committed treason.
        - He was afflicted for his sin and he carried the burden of these consequences for the rest of his life.
  - We know in the case of Job, that he was **not** afflicted on account of his sin.
    - That is not always the reason for affliction.
      - The man born blind, described in John 9, was also **not** afflicted for his sin or the sin of his parents according to our Lord.
    - But over and over in the Bible, affliction is chastisement for our sins.
      - Many of the Corinthians were sick or had even died because they were profaning the Lord's Supper—as we are told in 1 Cor 11.
      - In Hebrews 12, God promises that He will chasten us when we go astray if we are truly His sons.
  - In modern times, we are too quick to dismiss sin as the cause of affliction.
    - We might summarise a comparison of our day with Jesus day like this:
      - Sin was the cause of affliction less often than most people thought in the day of Jesus, but it is the cause of affliction more often than most modern Christians think.
        - So in Jesus' day, it would have been very misleading for Jesus to say that this man's sins were forgiven when he was brought for healing if personal sin was not the cause of his affliction.
  - It would also have also been very odd if this man were not mindful of his sin and guilt...convicted of his sin.
    - I say that because Jesus does not forgive those who do not confess their sin and repent of their sin.
      - We can be sure that this man was troubled about his sin when he came to Jesus—he knew that he had sinned and he had a guilty conscience.

B. What a delight it is to have the Lord declare that our sins are forgiven!

1. It is the best declaration this man could have heard.
  - It is much better than the relief of his paralysis.
    - That would only be of use to him for the extent of his life in this world.
  - But the forgiveness of sins... that freed him from the prospect of eternal punishment that would have brought unspeakable torment on him forever!
    - It secured paradise to him—a place in the city of God that all people of faith seek, that eternal city where righteousness rules.

- What great joy it brings to have this from the Lord—Your sins are forgiven you!
- 2. This declaration must have caused this man to rejoice even in his paralysis.
  - a. This paralysis had smartened him up. It was a teacher sent from the Lord.
    - It had prepared him to come to Jesus on this day.
    - It had caused him to face His sin.
      - Like Psalm 119:71, he could say: **It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.**
      - Without it, he would have gone on in his pride without ever seeking the LORD.
  - b. Can any of you relate?
    - Has God graciously used affliction in your life to bring you to Him?
    - What difficulty can you name even from before you were converted (if you know of such a time) that humbled you and was used to cause you to seek the LORD?
      - By His grace, instead of making you hard and rebellious, it made you soft and tender, broken, poor in spirit, so that you fled to Christ for mercy.
        - Not, of course, if you are self-righteous.
        - If that is so, you think your troubles were unjust... you cannot kiss them as your friends that God used to prepare you for grace or to bring you back to grace.
- But to whom does Christ make this declaration that your sins are forgiven?
- 3. You have this declaration that your sins are forgiven if you believe.
  - a. He says it to you as soon as you believe in Him.
    - **“Son, your sins are forgiven you!”**
    - In John 3:14-15, Jesus says: **“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”**
  - b. He says it to you each time you come to the Lord’s Table.
    - “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for the remission of your sins.”
    - He says to you, looking to Him, **“Son, your sins are forgiven you.”**
  - c. He says it to you each time you confess your sins.
    - 1 John 1:9 says: **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**
  - d. What an excellent blessing is yours in Christ!
    - What an excellent blessing was given to this paralytic.

TRANS> But there were proud religious leaders in the house when Jesus forgave this paralytic and they did not know the blessing of forgiveness... of having the LORD say, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

- Take a look at our text...

### III. The scribes object to Jesus forgiving this man of his sins.

- The scribes were men who were the experts in the law...
  - They were elite theologians who had special training.
  - Notice that they were seated in this crowded house, showing the honour that they were accorded.
    - Pick up from verse 6: **And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts,** <sup>7</sup> **“Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”**

#### A. They rightly recognised two things about what Jesus has said.

1. First, they are correct that only God can forgive sins.
  - How would you like it if one of your children yelled at you in a disrespectful way and you went to them and one of your other children was around and as soon as you approached the rebel child your other child said, “Hey, it’s okay, you are forgiven.”
    - You’d say, “Hey, wait a minute, I am the one who needs to do the forgiving, not you.”
  - Ultimately, our sin is against God.
    - He is the Creator and the Lawgiver and the Judge, and though all the world may forgive you, God has the final word.
      - You are not truly forgiven until He forgives you.
      - If you know God at all, you know that this is so.
  - And no one can speak for God.
    - It is only on the basis of His word that we can declare a person to be forgiven—if they repent and believe on the LORD Jesus, we can declare, on the basis of God’s promise, that they are forgiven...
      - But we can’t forgive people, ultimately—only as far as their sin was against us—but not as far as it was against the judge of all the earth.
      - We can and should forgive them for their sin as far as it was against us, but unless they are forgiven by God, they will still be punished by Him.
2. The second thing that scribes were right about was that Jesus was in fact claiming the prerogative to forgive that belongs only to God.
  - a. Based on what He said, it might be possible to take His words to mean that on the basis of God’s promise to forgive, the man was forgiven.
    - But even the language He uses indicates otherwise—
    - It is actually in the present tense so that Jesus is performative—in other words, Jesus is not telling what has happened in the past, but He is actually forgiving the man right then and there.
  - And we are not left to speculate about what He meant.
  - b. Jesus Himself makes it clear that He was speaking what would indeed be blasphemous for any man but the man who is also God to speak.
    - 1) He actually draws attention to what He knows the scribes to be thinking within themselves.
      - Look at verse 8-10: **But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do**

**you reason about these things in your hearts? , Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’? <sup>10</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins.’**

- They were not actually going to bring it up at this time, but Jesus brings it up on purpose.

➤ And He tells us why He brought it up...

2) He brought it up because He wanted people to know that the Son of Man has authority or power on earth to forgive sins.

- It was easier for Him to say, “Your sins are forgiven you” to make it clear that He does have power to forgive – than it would have been for Him to say “Rise up and walk.”
- He is doing all He can to make it conspicuous that He has this authority or power to forgive sins.

B. You need to know that Jesus does have power to forgive sins on earth.

1. This is essential for all who wish to be forgiven to know.

- Jesus is the Mediator who alone connects we who are sinners on earth to God’s forgiveness.
- We can’t have forgiveness unless it comes through Him.
- If He had not gone to the cross to atone for our sins, how else could our sins have been atoned for?

2. Jesus loves us and He wants us to know where forgiveness is to be found!

- He does not wish the fact that He is the priest from heaven who reconciles us to God to be hidden—not at all.
- He came here to give His life a ransom for many and He wants repentance and forgiveness to be preached in His name.
- There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

3. You must go to Him if you want to be forgiven.

- Even God the Father cannot forgive sin apart from Christ and Him crucified.
- He was crucified because it was a necessary requirement... it was the only way that justice could be satisfied.
- The wrong that our sin is against God has to be made known lest God be dishonoured – for He is holy and cannot be regarded otherwise without disrupting all that is right and good.
- The wrong is seen by appropriate punishment... and the only appropriate punishment is eternal punishment in hell...
  - Or the equivalent of that—that the Son of God should come from heaven and offer Himself for our sins—that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.
  - God will either be honoured by you going to hell to pay for your sin, or by you looking to Jesus as the one who paid for His people’s sin and resting in His suffering and death for full pardon.



TRANS> What a wonderful claim Jesus is making—

- That He, the Son of Man, has authority on earth to forgive sin.
  - How it honours God for you to come to Him for forgiveness, confessing that this is required for your acceptance.
- C. And now Jesus makes His wonderful claim good...
  - What I mean is, He verifies His claim that He has power on earth to forgive sins.
- 1. Having declared this man's sins forgiven, He now commands him to rise up and walk...
  - a. His words are recorded in verse 11: **"I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."**
    - Now if Jesus did not have authority to forgive, neither would He have authority to command a paralysed man to arise and take up his bed and go home with the result that the man was able to do this.
  - b. Don't miss the parallel here...
    - He claimed to forgive sin by His own authority—a thing that cannot be verified by observation if in fact the man were not forgiven...
    - But now by His own authority Jesus is also commanding him to arise and take up his bed.
      - This can be verified.
      - Either the man will be able to do this or he will not.
        - And if he does, it shows that Jesus, the Son of Man, *does* have the authority that belongs only to God.
- 2. And of course you can see that Jesus' claim of divine authority is verified.
  - Verse 12 says: **Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"**
  - Notice how it stresses that He did this in the presence of them all.
    - With the result that they were all amazed and glorified God.
    - They knew that this was special!
      - "We never saw anything like this!"
      - Jesus proved that the Son of man has authority to forgive sins.
- 3. And now (in our day), even though He is not here among us healing people, His authority to forgive sins is verified to us more than to them.
  - a. It is verified by the fact that now He has gone to the cross to atone for our sins, declaring that He was giving His life as a ransom for the remission of sins.
    - It is verified by the fact that when He died for that purpose, God raised Him from the dead and gave Him the name that is above every name.
    - He declared Him to be Lord and Saviour and now all who come to Him in faith receive complete pardon for sin.
  - b. This is verified further by the Holy Spirit.

- The Spirit not only gives us assurance by enabling us to believe what God has promised and to rest in what Christ has done...
- He also gives us assurance by changing the lives of those who come to Christ for forgiveness so that we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit...
  - so that we put off the old man and are renewed in image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness through Jesus Christ.
  - He enables us to love God and to love our neighbour.
    - He makes us new creations in Christ Jesus.

**Conclusion:**

So be amazed, but not like this crowd was in Mark 2.

- This crowd saw all this and they marvelled at it, but they did not repent and believe the gospel—they did not come to Jesus that they might have life.
  - They did not have faith that compelled them to come to Jesus for life.
- They just marvelled at things and then went on their merry way.
  - There were only a few, like this paralytic and like Jesus' disciples who saw that Jesus had authority to forgive sin and trusted in Him to forgive their sins.
    - That is the only right way to respond to what we have seen.
    - That is why Jesus reveals to us that He has this authority—that we might come to Him to obtain forgiveness and eternal life.
      - If you do not, there is no other place for you to go.
      - Do you have the faith to see that this is so?
        - Then go to Christ.
        - If you have true Spirit-wrought faith, nothing will be able to stop you.
        - If not, there are plenty of excuses.