

Scrolls

Meeting the Messiah The Harder Way Out

*Week 6
February 9, 2025*

Mark 2:1-12

DOCTRINAL TRUTH

We see all over scripture that God judges the heart. When Samuel was looking for Israel's next king and was choosing between the sons of Jesse, God told him, "Do not look at his appearance or his stature because I have rejected him. Humans do not see what the Lord sees, for humans see what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart." It may be easy to fool those around you, but each of us must ask God as David did, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way." (Psalm 139:23-24)

I. VV. 1-2

As Jesus' popularity has grown, the word had gotten out that He was home. This caused many to want to come to Him. The fact that Mark records that there was not more room is a reminder that all the details in scripture are important. The lack of room sets the stage for the saga that is about to take place. Mark describes crowds many times in his gospel. They listen and watch Jesus and even call upon Him to heal their sick and demon possessed, but Mark never describes as turning to Jesus in repentance and belief as they were commanded as the only true response to the gospel as mentioned in 1:15. It is ok to hear the gospel in public, but we must respond personally. Being in the crowd and then turning away without accepting the message of the cross will cause one to wind up in the same situation as the rest of the crowd.

As is seen in our passage, sometimes crowds are for nothing more than blocking access to Jesus or becoming a place to hide out. But the smallest person in the largest crowds cannot go unnoticed by Jesus. Crowds are not seen as a sign of success in Marks gospel in most scenarios. It is in houses and private settings that we will see Jesus reveal things more clearly to His followers. In following that truth, it is important that we do meet for worship as the Bible teaches, but also that we find time alone with God so that distractions are dissipated.

It can sometimes be assumed that it was only miracles and other works that drew the crowds, but Mark clarifies that it is the word that He is speaking to them that has brought them here on this day. Even though they did not all respond in an accepting way, they were still

LIFE LESSON

Seeing that the crowds did not turn to Jesus in repentance shows us that enthusiasm and being around the things of God is not the same as personally accepting His Only Son. Goosebumps never saved anyone, only repentance and belief in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins.

interested in the gospel because it was a message they had not heard before and one that Jesus embodies. One may reject the gospel or surrender to its message, but whatever the response, one thing is for sure, the gospel cannot be ignored.

II. VV. 3-5

As we have seen since chapter one, the gospel calls for a response, but it also calls for action. If someone truly knows that Jesus can heal, save, and change lives then that person is responsible to get others to Him for the same opportunities. This is the case for our four crowd members that we witness bringing a paralytic to Jesus and not letting obstacles deter them. Roofs in Palestinian homes were flat and were supported by the beams on the exterior walls. They would usually have a staircase leading to them, so that easy access was available when the hatch (a roof covering of straw, reeds, palm leaves and other similar materials) needed to be replaced or patched up. Because of the material that made up the roof, it made it possible to be dug through by the people lowering the paralytic. The crowd was so dense that there was no other way to get the man to Jesus. When there is no clear path to Jesus, then one must be made. This is what faith does. It finds a way when there seems to be no way. We have heard it said that faith can move mountains, but can it move roofs if that is what's necessary?

Jesus does not get angry with the people for digging through the roof, rather He is encouraged. Verse five reads, "Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven.'" We do not know for sure if by "they" Jesus is referring to the faith of the ones doing the lowering and the paralytic or just the ones doing the lowering. It is hard to imagine though that the people would have brought the man to Jesus against his will. But regardless, it is not uncommon for Jesus to answering the request from one on behalf of another (Mark 5:21-43; 7:24-30; John 4:46-53; and Matthew 8:5-13).

Anytime we see someone saved, it is always the faithful acts of at least two people. One has the faith to share it and the other has the faith to receive it. Your faith does not cease being relevant once you are saved, it is then used to trust and follow Jesus to carry out the work He has saved you to do.

Verse five also reveals a relationship between sin and illness. All illness and sickness are a result of the sinful state in which we live. It was after the fall of man that disease and death began. That is not to say that each time a

person is sick that it is the direct result of any one sin they committed, but that sickness is a result of the sinful environment. Jesus goes straight to the source of the problem and forgives the man's sin. Whenever Jesus heals someone, He is driving back the consequences of sickness and death caused by sin. But eventually, for those who are in Christ, the ultimate conquering of sin and all its consequences will take place when these bodies perish and new bodies that are not impacted by sin are given to us.

By addressing the man's sins, Jesus is making this a personal matter between Himself and the paralytic. This way there is no confusion that the faith of his friends might be a substitute for his own faith and response. The faith of or friends, family or strangers can get us to Jesus, but we must respond in our own faith to Him. So, Jesus has made it personal, and as we are about to see, this does not please everyone in the crowd. There seems to always be at least one in each crowd that Satan uses to discourage excitement about what God is doing.

III. VV. 6-12

It's hard to image that seeing all this would not be received with awe, but the scribes were already beginning to question what Jesus was doing. They were not saying anything out loud, only thinking it in their minds. The accusation of blasphemy might be appropriate if only the One doing the forgiven had not been God incarnate. The very idea that Jesus said "your sins are forgiven" was a reminder of Who He was and seeing His work and hearing His words should have been enough to convince the scribes, but their hearts were hard and for many of them they would stay that way. James Edwards writes, "What began as a heart-warming healing has suddenly become a perilous confrontation over religious authority." (pg. 77) Manmade religion very seldom brings peace. It usually leads to power struggles and anger.

Jews usually believe that sickness was a direct result of sin (John 9:2 and James 5:15-16) but since the forgiveness of sin was something only God could do, Jewish healers would not announce the forgiveness of sins as being part of their healing ceremony. Except for the Day of Atonement when absolution was enacted, not even the chief priests could forgive sin. So, the scribes are correct when they say, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" and in this situation it was God that forgave the sins. It must God that forgives sin because ultimately it is God alone Who has been sinned against (Psalm 51:4). Even though Jesus is going to be accused many more times of breaking

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1. Are you part of the crowd that only listens to the gospel but never responds or are you listening with a heart of response and obedience?**
- 2. Are you willing to do what it takes to get others to Jesus whether it be praying, witnessing, serving or a little of all three?**
- 3. Does seeing God work make you celebrate or critical?**
- 4. Is your walk and life since being saved one that people can see and know without a doubt that something miraculous has happened to you that only God can do?**

of God's Law, it is never God's Law that He breaks, only man's laws and traditions that they had taught as law.

Mark writes that Jesus "perceived in His spirit that they were thinking this within themselves." Jesus knew the sins of the paralytic, but He also knew the hearts of the others in the crowd. What a reminder this can be for us, that when we God dealing with other's sin that He knows ours as well. Physical illness can be healed, now the question is whether the heart of the scribes would be opened to the same thing. It appears to be simpler to heal a body than it is a spirit. Ligament, bones and epithelial tissue doesn't argue with God, but the human spirit will. The knowledge that the scribes had of the Old Testament and the status that the scribes had in the community made it harder for them to see their need for God's forgiveness. (This should be a wake-up call for all of us living in the Bible belt.)

In some religions, there are those who claim to have authority to forgive sins. This is easy enough to do since there is no way to prove it one way or the other. But Jesus shows evidence of His authority by telling the man to get up and walk. William L. Lane comments, "When Jesus caused the paralytic to walk before the eyes of his critics, they were forced to recognize that this declaration of forgiveness had been effective." (Pg. 98) It is the same for us today. The greatest evidence that God has forgiven us from our sin is our walk in the way we live our lives. Our desires change and that leads us to walking and talking a different way. What we used to love we hate because we realize that our sins had paralyzed us and once forgiven there should not be one part of us that desires to go back to that nasty mat that we were once confined to. Just like the witnesses of the paralytic being healed, those who witness our lives after salvation should be astounded and give glory alone to God for what He has done. Matthew 5:16 reads, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Our lives can be like nothing the world has ever seen before if we will surrender them to Jesus and let Him do what only He can do.

COMMENTARIES USED:

1. Edwards, James R. 2002. *The Gospel according to Mark*. Grand Rapids; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
2. Lane, William L. 2010. *The Gospel according to Mark*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans.