Mark Lesson 5 (2022)

**“GET UP, TAKE YOUR MAT AND GO HOME!”**

Mark 2:1-12

Key Verse: 2:10-11

“‘But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.’ So he said to the man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’”

In the previous chapter, 1:1-45, we learned how Jesus’ ministry in Galilee had become famous, preaching and healing the sick and demon-possessed, including the man with leprosy. Despite his growing popularity, Jesus remained on a low profile, trying to avoid unnecessary conflict with the Jewish religious leaders. But he couldn’t prevent it.

In 2:1-3:6, Mark records five incidents showing Jesus’ initial confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders, including the teachers of the law, the Pharisees, and the Herodians. Today’s passage, 2:1-12, describes Jesus’ healing of a paralyzed man who could walk by himself and how he declared himself as the Son of Man who had the authority to forgive sins, which puzzled and offended the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus said to the teachers of the law, “But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then he healed the paralyzed man by saying, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” This morning, let’s think about how the healing took place and what Jesus could have meant when he said that the Son of Man had the authority to forgive sins on earth.

Look at verses 1-2. “A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.” Jesus had been avoiding a large crowd of people by staying in a lonely place. Yet, a few days later, he returned to Capernaum, where he had ministered intensively. The house where he stayed in Capernaum is probably the home that belonged to Simon Peter. (1:29) Probably, Peter’s house was pretty big. However, it was packed with so many people that there was no room left, not even outside the door.

What did Jesus do? Most people came to see Jesus’ miracle, healing the sick and demon-possessed. Jesus didn’t do what people expected. Instead, he preached the word to them. It means that he preached the words concerning the coming kingdom of God, just as we read in 1:15, “The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news.” The main focus of Jesus’ ministry was not doing miraculous healing. Instead, it was to bring God’s kingdom into people’s day-to-day lives through their repentance and faith (1:14-15, 38).

Even though so many people gathered around Jesus, how many people truly understood what Jesus preached is questionable. We feel overwhelmed when we hear many ominous signs today, such as wars, global warming, natural disasters, inflations, etc. But we should also remember that history tells us that the world is constantly troubled with such things. And we should pay attention to the message of the kingdom of God despite what’s happening today. How can we have God’s kingdom in us? Through repentance and faith in the good news of God’s kingdom. We can surely experience God’s presence and everlasting life through repentance and faith.

And we see how Jesus demonstrated it in the following event. Look at verses 3-4. “Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on.” Jesus’ preaching was interrupted by these guys' unexpected and usual arrival. What these four friends did was drastic and out of the ordinary. They took extreme measures to bring their paralyzed friend to be as close to Jesus as possible.

We don’t know this man's condition except that he was paralyzed and unable to walk, which may mean he had to depend on others most of the time. Because of his physical paralysis, he must have felt miserable and didn’t have a bright future for himself. His view of life and the world was pessimistic. What wretched life he had to live not just temporarily but permanently until he died. Humanly speaking, he was useless, unproductive, and a burden to others.

But he was lucky to have friends who were ready to take him to Jesus, believing that he was able to heal him. However, there were too many people for them to come near to Jesus. It was easy for them to say, “Well, there is no sense trying to get to Jesus today! Maybe we can come back tomorrow.” No. Instead, they went up to the roof and made a big hole through which they lowered the paralyzed man right in front of Jesus. They appeared unconcerned about the damage they were doing to the house. Their extreme behaviors must have offended many people, including the house owner, Simon Peter.

How did Jesus respond? Look at verse 5. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’” Surprisingly enough, Jesus didn’t rebuke them as law-breakers. Jesus saw that they had just broken into someone else’s property and disturbed his preaching. But Jesus evaluated their extreme actions as the expression of faith. Of course, it doesn’t mean that we can damage others’ property and break the laws in the name of religion or faith. Yet, Jesus was impressed by their compassion for their paralyzed friend and confidence in Jesus.

Some paralyzed people may not want to show up in public places, perhaps because of doubt, a sense of shame, the fear of failure, etc. We are unsure if this paralyzed man was willing to come to Jesus. Perhaps, he was too pessimistic about his condition. So these friends had to persuade him to let them carry him to Jesus. So, to bring this paralyzed friend to Jesus required a lot of patience, courage, and sacrifice. And they never gave up on him. And Jesus was deeply moved by their faith.

Indeed, these four friends made a big difference in this man’s life. Today we celebrate Mother’s Day for all mothers who sacrifice their lives for their children. Our mothers might not be perfect people, yet we cannot deny that mothers make a difference in our lives. So, *“Happy Mother’s Day!”* Thank God for granting us mothers. I also believe that God our Father is our true Mother, who makes a huge difference in our lives through His ultimate sacrifices.

When the paralyzed man was brought to Jesus, I am sure he was willing to heal him. Yet, instead of curing him by saying, *“Son, be healed from your paralysis!”* Jesus told the man, “Son, your sins are forgiven!” Why would Jesus say that the man’s sins were forgiven when he needed to be restored from his physical immobility. Did Jesus think that sin caused this man’s physical paralysis? If so, why not everyone paralyzed physically? We are not sure if that’s what Jesus meant. It’s a difficult theological question. It’s hard to come to a definite conclusion. By the way, Jesus’ words, “Son, your sins are forgiven!” surprised everyone there, especially the teachers of the law, who were experts in the law of God and the theology of the Jewish religion.

Look at verses 6-7. “Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ‘Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Among the large numbers of people gathered in the house were the teachers of the law. Hearing rumors and news about Jesus, some Jewish religious scholars came to investigate what Jesus was teaching and doing. Of course, Jesus knew they were there. He knew that if he pronounced the forgiveness of sins, he would offend them. But he didn’t just heal the man by saying, “Son, you are healed and go home.” It seems that Jesus intentionally declared the forgiveness of this man’s sin. Certainly, hearing what Jesus declared, the law experts were offended. They thought to themselves that Jesus went too far, claiming as if he was God himself, the only one who has the authority to forgive man’s sins. But they raised questions against Jesus in their minds, “This is dangerous, a blasphemer!”

So what is blasphemy? Blasphemy is to express disrespect for the sacred things or God. Those guilty of blasphemy were condemned to the death penalty in Israel. It originated from Leviticus 24:15-16, which states, “Say to the Israelites: ‘Anyone who curses their God will be held responsible; anyone who blasphemes the Name of the Lord is to be put to death. The entire assembly must stone them. Whether foreigner or native-born, they are to be put to death when they blaspheme the Name.” Now, we know that Jesus got into big trouble, which eventually led him to death on the cross. The Jewish Sanhedrin condemned Jesus as a blasphemer, claiming to be God. (14:61-64)

So, was Jesus making his life and ministry difficult unnecessarily by declaring his authority? No. It was intentional. He was expecting their harsh reaction. He didn’t back out. Instead, he challenged them. Look at verses 8-9. “Immediately, Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, ‘Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, “Your sins are forgiven,” or to say, “Get up, take your mat and walk”?’” Knowing what these religious experts’ condemning thoughts were, Jesus asked counter questions to show that he was not going too far. Healing the paralyzed man or forgiving man’s sins is equally impossible to men, even to the great prophets, like Moses. Both Jesus and the law teachers agree upon the assumption that God is the only one who can heal the paralyzed man and forgive man’s sins.

Jesus could have healed the man simply by saying, “Get up, take your mat and walk,” thus making healing the man from physical paralysis to be an easier choice. Jesus would not be accused of blasphemy. But he chose the other, which is more challenging because forgiveness of sin is not verifiable. And he is now accused of blasphemy for declaring the forgiveness of the man’s sin. Why did Jesus do that?

Read verse 10. “‘But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.’” If Jesus was not God but was just a great man or a great prophet, he still deserves the condemnation as a blasphemer. The truth is that he is God the Son and the Messiah, even though he didn’t say exclusively that he was God the Son or the Messiah. The fact of the matter is that Jesus didn’t use the common term Messiah or even the title “The Son of David” for himself. Why not? He didn’t want people to have false expectations and make premature decisions concerning his identity.

Instead, he identified himself with *the title Son of Man.* This title became a messianic one based on the book of Ezekiel (2:1, 3:1, 4:1, 5:1) and the book of Daniel (7:13-14). According to Mark’s account, Jesus used this title for himself more than 12 times. He mainly used the title Son of Man when he spoke of his sufferings and death (8:31; 9:9-13, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21, 41) and his future return in glory (8:38; 13:26, 32; 14:62). Using this time, Jesus identified himself with humankind, stressing his human nature, yet was the man with authority on earth to forgive sins. He was declaring that the one who has the authority to forgive sins in heaven is now present in the Son of Man to forgive sins on earth. I call it a messianic secret – half-concealed and half-revealed.

Now, to validate his claim, Jesus healed the man from paralysis. Look at verses 10b-12. “So he said to the man, I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’ He got up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone, and they praised God, saying ‘We have never seen anything like this!” It’s interesting to see that Jesus commanded the man to get up, take his mat and go home. It was a testing of his faith. Even though healing was done, he couldn’t even dare get up on his feet if this man didn't believe it. Instead, he would have asked his friends to help him again, saying, *“Guys, can you help me?”* But when he believed that Jesus healed him, he could get up, take his mat, and walk out in full view of them all. Wow. Everyone there was amazed, recognizing that it was God’s unprecedented miracle among them.

People were amazed at the physical recovery of the paralyzed man, not necessarily because they realized that one who has the power to forgive sins in heaven is now present with them in Jesus, the Son of Man.

Let us close the sermon. The healing of this paralyzed man validated Jesus’ claim as the Son of Man that he had the authority to forgive man’s sins on earth. One of the signs of God’s forgiveness in us is the recovery of our full humanity. Healing and forgiveness of sins are interconnected. The good news is that God forgave all our sins, and there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Ro. 8:1). There is no reason for us to remain powerless and live a life as a burden to others. Christ Jesus can heal us from powerlessness or dependency on others, and we can live a new life for our full potential as independent and mature men and women.

But to experience God’s healing in our lives, we need to trust and obey Jesus’ words, “Get up, take your mat and walk!” We also need to be aware of the sins that make us weak, dependent, and paralyzed, such as fear, doubt, a sense of destructive entitlement, unthankfulness, pride, lust, greed, resentment, indifference, burnt-out, or any negative way of thinking. We should turn away from them and should not remain in darkness. How can we not stay in darkness? Through our repentance and faith in Jesus, we can come to light. 1 John 1:8 and 9 state, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Life in this world is not easy but challenging for anyone. We often pray that God may help us not to have problems. But that’s not realistic. God does not necessarily remove all the difficulties from his children. Instead, he wants us to become strong, healthy, mature, loving, and compassionate by facing and overcoming challenges and failures. Life is an adventure. Having no desire to get better is a sickness to be healed. If anyone of us is lying on the mattress, we need to hear and obey Jesus’ words, “Son, your sins are forgiven. Get up, take your mat and walk!”