

From Hell to Heaven in 5 Words

Mark 2:1-12

(preached 9/7/14 Pine Grove BC; Sunday AM)

Introduction

What do a paper map and a phone book have in common?

They are two items that my kids will probably never use.

Along with a video rental store, an encyclopedia, a rolodex, and a newspaper classified.

Why?

Because none of these are no longer needed with advances in technology.

In fact, all of those things are now available on a smart phone.

And that is true for most of the course of history.

As products are no longer needed, they eventually go out of production and use.

That has been the story of the world.

Now, some products will always be needed.

That's why some financial experts always say to invest in products that will always be in demand.

There will always be a clothing market.

There will always be a food market.

There are the basic needs of life.

And thinking along those lines, I must ask you what is man's greatest need?

In school, we learned about needs and wants.

Clothing, food and shelter were always needs and everything else was a want.

Is that true?

In 1943, Abraham Maslow developed a pyramid of needs.

His theory was that once our basic needs are met, we move toward our greatest need...

Which is self-actualization, or our need to discover meaning in life.

For Maslow, our greatest need is to find our purpose.

Other psychologists after Maslow have said that our greatest need is to have meaningful relationships with other humans.

And if you want into most college classrooms and take psychology 101...

You will find both of these theories discussed, but psychology isn't even close and never will be close to answering this question.

But how would you answer that question?

What is man's greatest need?

Or, what is your greatest need?

Some would say our greatest need is to worship God.

Some would say our greatest need is a relationship with God.

Some would say our greatest need is to live a life pleasing to God.

And though you may not be far off the mark, none of those fully describe man's greatest need.

Simply, the greatest need in every person's life is to have your sins forgiven.

Way before water, food, clothing or shelter is the need to have sins forgiven.

Because if that need goes unmet, the consequences are eternal.

If you don't drink water for day, you are thirsty all day.

If you don't have your sins forgiven, you are punished in hell for eternity.

So, there is no greater need in your life than that.

Push Maslow and all the other psychologists and experts to the side; they have no idea.

The top of everyone's pyramid of needs is the need to have your sins forgiven.

In fact, this is what separates Christianity from every other religion in the world.

Teenagers often ask me that question...

How is Christianity different? Just seems like another choice from all other religions.

And this is one way in which Christianity is different.

Every other false religion offers forgiveness through good works.

But not Christianity.

Forgiveness of sin is your greatest need, and
Christianity is the only religion...

That offers forgiveness apart from a person's good
works.

And there is no better place to see that than Mark
2:1-12.

Take your bible and open with me to Mark chapter
2.

We are in the early stages of Jesus' ministry in
Mark 2.

He has been baptized and tempted.

He has called some disciples and he has started his
preaching ministry.

Which is why he came.

He came as a preacher of the gospel.

Though he has been busy casting out demons and
healing all kinds of disease...

His primary mission is teaching and preaching.

He is the King, and he is calling on the people to repent and come into the Kingdom.

But this primary mission is often diverted by the masses of people coming to see him...

For all the wrong reasons.

Just last week, he healed leprosy, a disease which everyone thought was incurable...

But then he had to leave town because the healed leper was telling everyone what happened.

And now, when we come to Mark 2:1, Jesus has been on the outskirts of town for a few days...

To get away from the crowds.

He had probably been going to other towns preaching and teaching...

So, when we get to chapter 2, he has been gone from Capernaum for a number of days...

Let's read this together beginning in verse 1..

*2 When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. ³ And they *came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. ⁴ Being unable to ^[a]get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof ^[b]above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. ⁵ And Jesus seeing their faith *said to the paralytic, “^[c]Son, your sins are forgiven.” ⁶ But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷ “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins ^[d]but God alone?” ⁸ Immediately Jesus, aware ^[e]in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, *said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’?” ¹⁰ But so 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, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” ¹² And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”*

We are going to meet a lot of folks this morning in our time together...

And they will all teach us something.

But understand that the most important person in this scene is Jesus.

And the most important truth for you to take with you is His power to forgive sins.

The truth of these 12 verses is that Jesus has the power to meet your greatest need...

Which is your need to have your sins forgiven.

Verse 5 is the point of this whole passage.

Because if Jesus only has authority in teaching, healing, and casting out demons....

IF that is all the power He has, let's pack up and beat the church crowd to the nearest restaurant.

Everything we are doing here is just for show.

But if He does have the power to forgive our sins, we must honor Him with our lives every day.

So, we are going to see 4 parts of this story today...

The push to forgiveness, the power of forgiveness, the grumble about forgiveness, and the reaction to forgiveness.

Let's begin in the first 4 verses with....

I. The Push to Forgiveness (v 1-4)

When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home.

For at least a few days and probably more, Jesus had been on the outskirts of town..

The crowds are too crazy in Capernaum, so he leaves town for a while...

But now in verse 1, he returns to Capernaum.

He is most likely at the home of Peter and Andrew, where he healed Peter's mother-in-law earlier.

And the crowds hear that he is back.

In the original language, it is simply, "He is home."

You can imagine the excitement that would generate in town.

So the crowds rush to the house.

And remember, the people rushing to Jesus are no rushing to him in repentance and faith.

There is no indication that anyone has been actually saved through Jesus ministry at this point.

Possibly, Peter's mother-in-law who gets up to serve them after Jesus heals her fever.

Possibly, the leper last week, but we can't be sure since he immediately disobeyed Jesus after he was healed.

And there may be some in the crowds who are trusting in Jesus...

But it has to be a very small number....

Because we will not see these large crowds follow him all the way to the cross.

The crowds will come and go.

There will be over 20000 fed by Jesus but they will leave when he doesn't feed them more.

When the church begins after Jesus ascends, we know there were 120 in Jerusalem and 500 in Galilee.

Not a huge number by any means.

And Mark never says that the crowds were a blessing.

He along with the other gospel writers view them as a hindrance to Jesus primary mission, which was preaching the gospel.

So, the crowds announce, “He is home!” and in verse 2, the people gather..

² And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them.

We have seen this before.

Imagine a sporting event where people of waiting to get in...

Or the doors of your favorite store on the day after Thanksgiving.

They are lined up and literally out the door.

However, on this occasion, Jesus is speaking the word to them.

Though he has probably visited other towns by this point, this is the first time, he has been able to teach in Capernaum since he left the synagogue there.

And what would that word have been?

It was the gospel or the good news that the King had arrived.

And the need to repent and believe the gospel.

And so the scene is set and then we get to a story that most of you have heard.

And in this picture, we see the push of faith.

Verse 3 and 4...

³ And they *came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. ⁴ Being unable to [a]get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof [b]above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying.

“They” means 5 men...4 carrying an one laying on a bed.

I always get the picture of paramedics here.

Running through the streets with this paralyzed man.

And they arrive at the house, and I think we get a glimpse at the selfish nature of this crowd here...

Because they can't get in the conventional way.

No one in the crowd steps aside and lets them through.

Everyone is there for Jesus to meet their needs, so a paralyzed man needs to wait his turn.

But these men are the Macguyvers of the Bible.

For those of you who don't know MAcguyver, he was a special agent who was very resourceful.

He could take a loaf of bread and a piece of thread and build a boat.

And these men figure if they can't reach Jesus the normal way...

They will figure out another way.

So they climb up on the flat roof and dig through the clay and tiles and make a hole to lower the man down to Jesus.

Now, look there been 1000s of sermons on this verse...

And most preachers talk about these great friends, or the mat or the hole in the roof.

Here's what you need to know from these verses.

True faith pushes us to Jesus.

Real faith will find a way or make a way to the Savior.

IF God has awakened your heart and called you to His Son, nothing will keep you getting to Jesus.

Some churches worry about offending visitors, and not saying the right things...

And I think it is very important to love people who are visiting our church...

But let me assure you, if someone is seeking the Lord, nothing you do will prevent that from happening.

True faith pushes forward. It presses on despite obstacles.

That's why you don't have to beg Christians to come to church or to serve His people.

There is a burning desire to come to serve and to serve.

Real faith cannot be stopped. It desires to hear the Word taught.

It desires fellowship with other believers.

It wants to serve the Lord.

Do believers need a push at times? Sure.

Do they need to be begged to serve or attend church?

Not ever. True faith is an unstoppable force because true faith is powered by the Lord.

Lock the doors to this church on Sunday morning,
and a true believer will break a window.

Now, don't try that. Call me.

And that's the push of these 5 men to get to Jesus.

True faith pushes them to cut a hole in the roof and
lower this man down to Jesus.

Now, that we've seen the Push to Forgiveness..

Let's look at the....

II. The Power of Forgiveness (v 5)

*⁵ And Jesus seeing their faith *said to the paralytic, “^eSon, your sins are forgiven.”*

Think preaching over a crying child is difficult?

Try having a paralyzed man lowered into your pulpit.

But that is exactly what happened here.

The mat is lowered right down to Jesus.

But notice that Jesus doesn't rebuke them.

Even though his teaching is interrupted, he shows tremendous compassion.

Because this is an act of faith.

And Jesus sees the faith and says to the paralyzed man, “Your sins are forgiven.”

What a statement.

Here's a few truths in this one verse..

First, Jesus has the power to forgive sin.

Only God can forgive sins because HE is the One who we have sinned against.

For instance, I can only forgive you if you hurt me.

I can't forgive you if you hurt Dennis.

I can only forgive you if you hurt me.

And only God can forgive sin because they were against him.

Number 2, Jesus met this man's greatest need.

IF a man came in the back doors with crutches, we would feel sympathy for him.

And we should.

But if find out he is lost, we should feel more sympathy for their soul than their crutches.

Most Christians pray way more often for physical healing than spiritual healing.

Now listen, it is fine to pray for our health and well-being.

And if you join us on Wednesday nights here, we do pray for those needs.

But I want to challenge you and me and this church to pray for souls as often as we pray for sickness.

And that doesn't mean you come with a long list of names and share them with everyone...

But it does mean that we place a priority in our prayers on the spiritual health of folks.

Jesus met this man's greatest need before he healed his lesser need.

Three, this is a great picture of salvation by faith alone.

What can a paralyzed man do to earn salvation ??

Nothing.

He was carried there and lowered to Jesus on ropes.

Yet, Jesus forgave his sins.

On the basis of what?

His faith.

Jesus peered right into his heart and saw saving faith.

And that's the kind of faith that only God can see.

And it is true of us.

We do nothing to earn forgiveness.

We are people paralyzed by sin who simply express our faith and repentance in our hearts...

And God forgives our sin apart from anything we do.

Every past, present and future sin of this paralytic was forgiven in that instant.

At the end of that sentence, his destination changed from hell to heaven.

He passed from death to life.

From darkness to light in an instant.

HE went from sinner to saint right before the eyes of his friends and the crowd.

Those are the sweetest words that ever reach someone's ear.

Your sins are forgiven.

The burden on your back is gone.

The guilt that keeps you up at night vanishes.

The dread of eternal judgment never again crosses your mind.

The downward pull of sin that tugs at your soul every day...

Changes into wings that make you feel like you can fly to heaven in an instant.

That is what the removal of sin does for you.

Do you remember that day when you realized that your sin was gone?

Or have you never experienced that day?

Well, that paralytic probably never forgot that moment.

And in the joy of that moment when the angels of heaven rejoice of the salvation of a sinner....

It doesn't take long until the demons of the devil to act...

We've seen the push to forgiveness and the power of forgiveness....

We now encounter....

III. The Grumble About Forgiveness (v 6-11)

Verses 6 and 7...

⁶ But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷ “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins ^[d] but God alone?”

Well, it had to happen sooner or later, but we finally meet the scribes.

According to Luke’s account of this scene, Pharisees were there as well...

And they had come from all over Israel.

Surely, Jesus teaching in the synagogue had been passed on to the Jewish religious leaders...

And even they had come to hear Jesus teach.

Mark says they are sitting, and in my imagination, their arms are crossed and noses turned up.

They are listening to what Jesus has to say, and when he forgives sin....

They begin to grumble in their hearts.

We are going to meet these scribes and Pharisees over and over throughout the gospels.

And we are going to learn how much they come to hate Jesus.

They are going to try to trap Jesus, and they will eventually succeed in sending him to the cross.

But all you need to know about them, you see in these few verses...

Their hearts are darkened to the truth.

That's why they grumble silently in their hearts on seeing the wonder of a man's sins being forgiven.

This is the greatest miracle in the world.

Yet, instead of joy, they grumble.

And do you know why they grumble, their eyes are blinded to the truth.

So, just like Jesus looked into the paralytics heart in verse 5 and saw nothing but faith....

He looks into their hearts in verse 8 and sees nothing but unbelief...

⁸ Immediately Jesus, aware ^[e]in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, *said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?"

Not a word was spoken but Jesus knew what they were thinking.

And in a great display of grace, hoping to remove their doubt with more proof of who He is..

So he poses a question in verse 9....

⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’?

The point is not which words are easier to get out of your mouth.

Both are equally easy to say...

The point is...which statement is easier to prove?

Anyone can say “Your sins are forgiven” because there is no way to prove it.

And anyone can also say “Take up pallet and walk” but be ready to prove it.

Everyone in that crowd knew that only God could make a paralyzed man walk.

So to prove that he had the power to forgive sins, look what Jesus does in verses 10, 11 and the first part of verse 12....

¹⁰ But so 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, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.”¹² And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone,....

Every man is here knows exactly what just happened here...

Because at some point in our lives, our mouth has made statements that our bodies could not live up to.

I'm the better football player....baseball player....pool player....fisherman....hunter...

The saying goes that “talk is cheap”

And we have all put our mouths to the test and either backed up our claims or left sad...

To be clear, this is not macho Jesus here...

This is kind, tenderhearted Jesus. Slow to anger, abounding in love Jesus.

He senses disbelief.

So, in an effort to break through this unbelief, he offers more evidence.

With a simple command and without even a touch of his hand...

He commands the man to get up and he does, right before everyone's eyes.

This is complete and instant healing from the Lord.

If his muscles had shrunk from non-use, they were immediately strong.

If he had no sense of balance before, at once he had perfect balance.

This is total restoration...

From sin to no sin....from old heart to new heart...

From lame to walking....from weak to strong....

Only the Lord can do that.

And that is exactly what he did.

Mark doesn't take us there, but imagine this man walking home....

New legs. New life.

You think he jumped for joy?

He probably skipped the whole way home.

We don't know what became of his friends.

I can only imagine their faces peering into that hole in the roof.

The lowered down a lame man who left a leaping man.

Surely, their hearts were stirred by such a display of power.

Maybe they ran home with him and watched as he presented himself to his family.

He left laying on his back but returned standing on his feet.

Amazing power and even more amazing forgiveness.

That's so true of the Lord.

And then we see at the end of verse 12....

IV. The Reaction to Forgiveness (v 12)

so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”

Nothing so powerful had happened before their eyes that what had just occurred.

The crowd was struck with awe and fear in that tiny house in Capernaum.

And maybe that is you this morning.

Maybe in this tiny church in Fairview, SC, you have never heard anything like this.

Maybe you have never heard of the forgiveness of sin that Jesus offers.

Or maybe you have never realized that forgiveness does not have a price.

Maybe you are tired of trying to work off your sins.

Maybe you are tired of feeling the weight of our sins on your back every day.

Maybe sin has your paralyzed.

The good news is that you have also be brought to the Savior this morning.

Whether your wife or husband made you come...

Or your parents gave you no choice in the matter,
you are here today.

And this building is no magical place...

And I have no power to forgive your sins.

But the Jesus that you heard about from the Bible
this morning does forgive sins.

He forgives them not based on anything you do.

He simply looks straight into your heart from
heaven this morning...

And he is looking for saving faith.

Not the faith that turns to him for what you can
get...

But the faith that looks to him for your greatest
need....

And that is the forgiveness of your sins.

What does he see in your heart this morning?

Is there unbelief that Jesus is God?

Is there doubt that Jesus truly forgives sin?

Or is there the faith of child that simply says...

I am a sinner and I need a Savior.

There are no sweeter words that to hear...

“Your sins are forgiven”

And there is no other person in the universe who
can say that but Jesus...

But those words can be said about you this morning
if you repent and believe in Him.

Let us pray.