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Sermon Notes

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Jesus Has the Authority to Forgive Our Sins

Mark 2:1-12

For all eternity, heaven and hell will be populated by human beings... a vast multitude of people in each. One thing will be common to all of those people – every one of them, both the inhabitants of heaven and those who will be in hell will have been sinners on earth.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

The infinite difference between the sinners in heaven and those in hell will be one thing – the forgiveness of sins. The sinners in heaven will be forgiven sinners, and the sinners in hell will be unforgiven sinners.

In this amazing account, we learn that Jesus, the Savior of the world, has the power to forgive our sins... and also to heal all our diseases. When he is done saving us, and we are in our eternally glorious home, only then will we realize how great is Jesus' power and how amazing is his love!

This is one of the most important miracle accounts, because it directly links the miracle with the central need of the sinful human race... not healthy bodies but forgiven souls!

I. The Population of the Sick

Mark 2:1-2 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² So many gathered that there

was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.

A. Context

1. Mark 1: Jesus healed a leper and commanded him not to tell anyone but the priests
2. Instead, the man spread the word EVERYWHERE

Mark 1:45 As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere

B. Jesus returns to his home base: Capernaum

C. Huge Crowds Came to Him

1. The desperation brought on by disease and death pressed people to come from everywhere to Jesus for healings
2. People put absolute top priority on physical health
3. They say, **“If you have your health, you have everything.”** I think they really mean the opposite—“If you don’t have health, you have nothing.” What good is a delicious meal to a man who is in agony or who will vomit it all up? What good is a skillful musician playing a beautiful piece of music to a woman who is suffering from internal pain day after day? What good is a mansion or a box of gold coins to parents whose son is dying?
4. So, they came in huge numbers for the healings
5. And because Jesus preferred to heal one at a time and in person, there was a bottleneck at the door

D. Jesus Resets their Priorities

1. Jesus preached the word to them (vs. 2)
2. The centerpiece of his ministry... the proclamation of the gospel
3. Physical health is of little value if you are an unforgiven sinner

4. Faith comes by hearing the word of God... Jesus knew the true needs of the people
5. He was not there to heal every sick person or raise all the dead
6. He had come into the world to save souls from sin
7. So his top priority day after day was PREACHING THE WORD!

II. The Persistence of Faith

Mark 2:3-4 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.

A. A Picture of Genuine Friendship

1. We are introduced to five men, four of them in good health, but one of them paralyzed
2. Paralysis may be caused by a disease or by an injury; perhaps the paralyzed man had a spinal cord injury—maybe he fell from a tree or a cliff or was thrown by a horse; perhaps he had an autoimmune disease like MS or ALS or some neurological disorder; maybe he had brain trauma... we have no idea
3. The four healthy friends are giving a clear display of true friendship; though they are able to walk, their friend cannot; and they will do whatever it takes to get him healed
4. They have heard the reports of Jesus and they believe them... their faith is activated by these testimonies; they came believing that Jesus could heal their friend
5. They carry this man on a pallet, perhaps a wooden frame with leather straps

B. The Obstacle to Faith

1. When these friends arrive, they are immediately met by the overwhelming crowd that is jamming the house

2. They cannot see Jesus, cannot hear him, cannot get near to him
3. In Luke's Gospel account of this story, the friends try to get in through the crowd, but the other sick people are just as determined as they are to see Jesus
4. But true faith will not be deterred
5. The essence of faith is being a spiritual beggar... knowing we have nothing to offer, and that God can do anything
6. These friends have true faith... if they turn and walk away, their friend will be paralyzed for the rest of his life
7. True faith OVERCOMES obstacles

Romans 8:37 ... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

C. Extraordinary Steps

1. One of them, perhaps, has a brilliant idea!
2. These friends climb up on the roof, calculate where Jesus is inside the house, and begin digging through the roof

Usually houses back then would have been single-story, with a flat roof you could walk on; the construction probably was of large, wooden beams with smaller pieces of wood in between making up the rafters; these would be covered with pieces of straw, twigs, and mud making up some kind of a thatch.

The men carried their friend up the stairs and calculated where Jesus was inside, down below, and began digging through the roof. This would have taken some time and no doubt would have been an annoyance to those down below as pieces of roof material must have fallen down

I find it interesting that Jesus takes their faith where it was at and allows them to keep digging. He didn't need the paralyzed man to be lowered down in front of him; Jesus sometimes healed

people without even getting close to them – even from miles away

But Jesus let them do what their faith was leading them to do

Having finished their digging project, they lowered the man down by ropes right in front of Jesus

III. The Power of the Judge

Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

A. Jesus Sees Their Faith

1. Two possibilities... Jesus sees the fruit of their faith, because “faith without works is dead” (James 2); he’s watched all these actions, and their determination is clear evidence that they believe Jesus has the power to heal their friend
2. OR Jesus sees their faith directly in their hearts... Jesus can read people’s minds and hearts! Verse 8 is clear evidence!

B. Most Importantly... Jesus Sees HIS Faith

1. Jesus declares to the paralyzed man, “Your sins are forgiven!”
2. Jesus speaks to this man the greatest blessing any sinner could ever receive... full forgiveness of all his sins, past, present, and future
3. Forgiveness of sins (justification) comes by faith in Christ alone; no one can believe for someone else
4. His friends’ faith cannot save his soul... though their faith delivered him to Jesus for his salvation
5. NOTE: though we cannot believe the gospel for another person, our faith-filled actions can set up a lost person to come to know Jesus
6. Missionaries step out in faith, travel long distances, brave many challenges, to deliver the gospel message to a lost people

7. So, our faith can bring someone near to the gospel...but their own faith is imperative to the forgiveness of their sins
8. Parents can't believe for their children, wives can't believe for their husbands, friends can't believe for their friends
9. So, Jesus saw this man's faith and spoke his forgiveness for all to hear: in Matthew's account he says

Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven!

Now, though the man is still paralyzed and Jesus had done nothing for that intensely felt need, he has already given him the most precious gift imaginable... a ticket to heaven!

Since we know that all sins are forgiven only by the blood of Jesus, effectively Jesus was saying, "Take heart, son, I will pay your sin bill for you!"

IV. The Poison of Unbelief

Mark 2:6-7 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

A. Jesus' Enemies Were Constantly There from That Point On

1. The teachers of the law, sometimes called "scribes," were responsible for copying the scriptures physically (they didn't have printing presses back then... all books were hand copied)
2. They also were responsible to teach the people the Word of God... the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings
3. Beyond this, they made rulings on religious matters for the people
4. They were there with Jesus at this point to keep an eye on him and find reasons to condemn him
5. Now... they have one!
6. They were poisoned by their unbelief, as much as the paralyzed man and his friends were characterized by their faith

B. Blasphemy!

1. To blaspheme is to speak against God's word or against God himself... to take the name of the Lord in vain, or say false things about God
2. It was one of the most serious sins a Jew could be accused of
3. Even higher than those forms of blasphemy was to claim divine status or divine attributes for yourself... this was the blasphemy Jesus was accused of

C. The Essence of their Charge of Blasphemy

1. WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS BUT GOD ALONE??
2. Obviously, any human being has the right to forgive other human beings for sins committed against themselves
3. If someone strikes you on the right cheek and then later apologizes, you can and should say "I forgive you!"
4. But this paralyzed man had no connection to Jesus at all; as far as we know Jesus had never met him
5. Jesus was forgiving all this man's sins—past, present, future... as though he were the Judge, as though he were God himself
6. As they said, "Who can forgive sins but God alone??"
7. And actually, they were right! Only God has the right to do this
8. But they never considered the fact that this statement proved the deity of Christ!

V. The Proof of Jesus' Authority

Mark 2:8 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?"

A. First, Reading their Minds

1. The teachers of the law did not speak their opposition

2. But Jesus could read their minds... immediately!!

B. Jesus Challenged their Assumption

1. "Why are you thinking these things??"
2. Did you never stop to consider that I am the Son of God, as John the Baptist said I am... as God himself said I am

C. Jesus Puts a Test Before Them

Mark 2:9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?

1. Actually... they are equally easy to SAY
2. But they are impossible for an ordinary man to DO
3. It's a matter of POWER... a matter of AUTHORITY

If I went into Duke Hospital to the wing or floor where paralyzed people were being treated, I could go from room to room saying to each one there, "Rise and walk!"

But there would be no POWER behind my words

4. Only God could heal a paralyzed man like that!!
5. In the same way, if I were to go up to a total stranger and say the words "Your sins are forgiven", it would be the same as if I said "Rise and walk" to a paralyzed man... there would be NO POWER behind the words... their sins would not be forgiven

D. Jesus Proves His Power to Forgive Sins

Mark 2:10-12 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.

1. This is stunning... and the best news the human race has ever had!
2. The miracle proves the power... the authority of Jesus to forgive our sins

3. How beautiful this is!!
4. The miracle enacted: Jesus spoke directly to the paralyzed man and told him to get up, pick up his mat, and go home
5. Immediately he was healed! Again, no convalescence, no physical therapy needed, no need to build up the strength of atrophied muscles from years of disuse
6. Not at all! Like the leper, the healing was instantaneous and complete... including the power to walk
7. This miracle was "in full view of them all"

E. The Reaction

Mark 2:12 This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

VI. Lessons

A. Our Greatest Need is the Forgiveness of Sins

1. "The Tyranny of the Urgent" Charles Hummel, 1967 pamphlet
 - a. The urgent crowds out the truly significant
 - b. Priority structure... what is truly essential to our being
2. Most of our felt needs are not truly urgent
 - a. The things that scream for our attention... they are temporal
 - b. That includes even the physical health of our bodies
3. Satan's priority structure... health above everything

Job 2:4-5 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. ⁵ But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

4. In Jesus' days also, we see this kind of urgency... nothing was more vital than the healing of the body

- a. Parents brought their sick children to Jesus, desperate for the healing
 - b. Jairus threw himself down before Jesus, desperate for him to heal his 12-year old daughter
 - c. The Syro-Phoenician woman wanted only one thing—the healing of her demon-possessed daughter
 - d. The Royal official in John 4 came a full day's journey to beg Jesus to heal his child before he died
5. But in Jesus' priority structure, the soul's need was far more significant than the body's
6. He will make this plain later:

Mark 8:36-37 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷ Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

- 7. The needs of the body are secondary to this one central issue: the forgiveness of sins
- 8. If our bodies are perfectly healthy but our souls are full of unforgiven sins, what good is that?
- 9. At some point, our bodies will get old and die, and after that comes judgment

Hebrews 9:27 man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment

- 10. What good would it be to have a remarkably fit body and yet end up in hell?
- 11. Conversely, if your sins are forgiven, your body's bad condition, no matter how painful, is of small consequence

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not

on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal

12. This is not to say that sick people and wounded people and hurting people should not seek physical healing... Jesus did many physical healings... if he cared nothing for the body, why would he do that?

13. So also much provision is made for the benefit of the body

Matthew 25:35-36 I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me

James 2:15-16 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

James 5:14-15 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up.

14. Yet, the clear priority structure in this passage is this: the needs of the soul are infinitely greater than the needs of the body

15. When Jesus forgave the sins of the paralyzed man, he gave him the keys to heaven itself; if Jesus had done nothing else for him, he would have given him a gift of infinite value... eternity in heaven free from all guilt!!

16. This is the vast superiority of the health of the soul over the health of the body; and if your sins are forgiven, your soul is healthy... no healthy soul can ever die—for we have eternal life!!

17. So... members of FBC... is you are Christians and are in chronic pain, even with a malady that is threatening your very life here on earth, just know how much greater is the gift of forgiveness of sins! That is yours through faith in Christ

18. Conversely, if you are not yet a Christian, even if every other respect of your life is prosperous and your body is perfectly healthy, you are in grave danger... the fact of your physical health is no guarantee at all, but it is as if you are walking on a slippery precipice over a terrifying yawning chasm and at the bottom of that chasm is hell itself

19. FLEE TO CHRIST while you can!

B. Forgiveness of Sins is by Faith in Christ Alone

Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

1. The paralyzed man could do nothing... no works whatsoever
2. Therefore, he is a perfect picture of how our sins are forgiven... BY FAITH IN CHRIST ALONE
3. By Jesus' bloody death on the cross, God can both BE JUST (that is, be RIGHTEOUS as a judge and uphold his laws) AND JUSTIFY sinners (that means forgive them of all their sins)
4. God by his grace forgives all the sins of those who trust in Jesus
5. AND that forgiveness of sins is complete and perfect and eternal:

"My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought
 My sin, not in part but the whole
 Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more
 Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!"

C. "Take Heart": When Jesus Says You Are Forgiven, You Are!

1. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus speaks this word to the paralyzed man

Matthew 9:2 "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

2. TAKE HEART! That means "Be of good courage!" Let not your heart be troubled... quite the opposite! Rejoice! Be strong in your heart! See your true condition and rejoice over it!

3. WHY should we “take heart?” You are out of danger!!! The wrath of God against you is removed forever!
4. This is the good news of this message
5. The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins!
6. He has the power... he is the judge of all the earth

John 5:22-23 the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

John 5:27 [the Father] has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

7. Jesus has this authority

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

8. Every single human being will be gathered before him

Matthew 25:31-32 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

9. This is the Judge of All the Earth... and when he says your sins are forgiven... THEY ARE
10. So, TAKE HEART! Be of good courage!

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

11. Even if you are sick, your body is hurting, you are wracked with disease... you are dying... none of that matters! If your sins are forgiven, all of those other problems are TEMPORARY
12. If you are a Christian, your sins are forgiven... by the authority of the Judge of All the Earth!!

Psalm 103:12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

D. All Jesus' Healings Are Signs of the Future World

1. Someday, Jesus will perfectly heal the bodies of all the redeemed
2. There will be no paralyzed people in heaven... no blind eyes, no deaf ears, no lame legs, no diseased lungs, no decaying organs
3. Each and every one of Jesus' healings are signs, downpayments, deposits of our future inheritance
4. And that future inheritance includes a resurrection body free forever from ALL disease and pain and death

Revelation 21:4 There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Revelation 22:1-3 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.³ No longer will there be any curse.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Your present body will die someday... and the corpse that will be sown into the ground is perishable, dishonored, weak, and natural

But the resurrection body will be imperishable (unable to die), glorious, powerful, and spiritual

5. So... as Jesus already said

Matthew 9:2 "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

Final note: Evangelism... this is a GREAT STORY to memorize in order to preach the gospel!!