

Sermon Transcript from September 11th, 2016
Jesus Heals
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Last week we began a series in the Gospels called "The Character of Christ." And the purpose of this series is to ask and try to begin to answer the questions of "Who is Jesus? What is He like? What does He invite us into?" Those sort of big, giant questions in the Gospels. And last week, the teaching was on Jesus the Teacher or Jesus the Rabbi. And we're not so much Christians as we are followers of Jesus or apprentices to Jesus to become like Him and to be with Him and to do the stuff that He did. Today, I would like to turn to a passage of Scripture we read on Monday, I believe, in The Year of Biblical Literacy in Mark 2. And I'd like to talk about how Jesus heals. And I'm not just talking bodily healing, I'm talking about inner healing. How Jesus heals us.

So, Mark 2:1-12. I will read it and then we'll pray.

"A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him into the house 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. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'

"Now some of the 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?'

"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'? 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 up 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!'"

This is God's Word. Let's pray.

Lord, this authority that's here that You embody, that You exercised, none of us come close to having this authority. We just don't have this authority. But Lord, I'm submitted under the name of this authority. We are. We all are. All of us that are believers here, we just come under this authority now and we ask, God, that by this same Kingdom authority You would do these types of things here today. That You would forgive people of their sins, that You would heal people of their illnesses, that You would begin to do what happens when the Kingdom of God breaks in. Lord, I love that when we gather, I just love it that it seems that You are so near us. I never want to take that for granted. I'm so grateful. But Lord, this morning, I'm asking for more than that. We're asking for things that happen like this story. We want to see these things happen. So, give us faith. May You, today, as we gather, may it be said of us by You, "I see your faith."

Help us, Lord, to have faith. Teach us by Your Word now. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. If you are new to Jesus, His life and His message can be summed up in His own words. Just one sentence. This is how the book of Mark begins. This is Jesus' own words. He says this: "The time has come. The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the Gospel."

So, all of Jesus' teachings, if you've been with us from the Old Testament all the way to the New, when Jesus arrives on the scene, He begins to preach a message. That message is this: that the Kingdom of God has come near us. Jesus' message is that the Kingdom of God has come near and it's come near in Him. Not only does Jesus preach the message of the Kingdom, He lives it. Like, the Kingdom of God comes near because the King has come near. He brings – not only does He teach the message, but He is the message. He both taught and brought the Kingdom of God. Think of "kingdom." I know that's a hard word. We don't live in a kingdom. We live in the United States. We don't live in the United Kingdom or whatever. So, think of "kingdom" as a moniker of rule. Think of "kingdom" as a moniker of "rule."

So, it's like the Kingdom of God is the rule of God. So, Jesus preaches the rule of God.

And, wherever Jesus goes in, the rule of God follows. Think of the whole world under this long, frozen, perpetual winter where the ground is frozen and bodies are dormant and all stiff because they're so cold and everyone's isolated. Then, Jesus steps in and, wherever Jesus stepped, spring happens. Like, winter melts away and then the potential that's in the ground that's been dormant there is sprung to life and things come to life. Wherever Jesus steps, spring begins to happen. The sun begins to pull away the cold and the frozenness. This is what it looks like when the Kingdom of God breaks in.

Jesus reverses the effects of the fall. Jesus comes in and brings the Kingdom of God. So, whenever Jesus preached, the Kingdom of God drew near. The Kingdom of God, the way that Mark puts it, breaks in to the world. Lepers are made clean. The sick were healed. The powers of darkness fled. Ordinary people found new direction for their lives. Some people even left everything to follow Him. Jesus' first sermon – if you have your Bible, turn to Luke. Just turn over a few pages to Luke 4.

Luke 4:14. This is Jesus' first sermon. In His first sermon, He talks about what He's come to do; this Kingdom of God breaking in. He says this:

It says in Luke 4:14: "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

"He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

He reads that from the Bible.

"Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down."

Then, when you sat down, you were teaching. Everyone's now waiting. "Okay. We're waiting for the sermon now."

He read the text. Now, the sermon.

"The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'"

Let's pray. End of sermon. His sermon was, "This is me, everybody."

It's the shortest sermon ever. I think it's a great sermon. The sermon is, "This has been fulfilled. I have come to proclaim Gospel to the poor, the people that don't think they deserve the good news that need to hear good news. I have been here to proclaim freedom for those who have been captive to sin. I have come to recover people's physical sights or to heal them physically. I'm here to set the oppressed free to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. I have come here because I'm bringing the Kingdom of God."

This was His first sermon. Later on, John the Baptist, who was a cousin of Jesus, a forerunner of Jesus who would come and proclaim Jesus was coming, he was in prison. I mean, when you're in prison and the Messiah is out on the loose, you would think, "Okay. Jesus can break me out of prison. Why am I in prison? My cousin's the Messiah and we're going to overtake everything together. I mean, He's going to rule the world. Why am I in prison for proclaiming the Gospel; for proclaiming the good news with Jesus? Why am I in prison?"

So, actually, in verse 18, he actually sends some of his own followers – John's disciples – to Jesus and says, "Hey, we just want to know: are you the Messiah? Are you the one or should we be expecting someone else? Because, our boy, John the Baptist, is in prison and you're out here healing people. Could you undo a lock or something? Could you just heal him? Get him out of prison? Are you the one or should we be looking for someone else?"

In Luke 7:21, it says this: "At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, illnesses

and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.'

So, what Jesus is saying is – "Are you the one bringing in the Kingdom of God or not?"

And He's like, "Look at what I'm doing. The Gospel's being proclaimed, people are being delivered from illnesses and sickness and they're being made whole. The Kingdom of God is breaking in. I am actually the one who is bringing the Kingdom of God in. Just look at what I've been doing."

So, when Jesus comes in, the Kingdom of God comes with Him and breaks in with power and with authority. And that's what's going on here in Mark 2. The implications of the inbreaking Kingdom of God actually press its claim a little further in Mark 2. Further than anyone thought the Messiah would press the claims of Messiahship. Jesus claims to have authority to forgive sins. And they were not expecting this. Nobody was expecting this sort of move. They thought the Messiah would bring in healing, He would bring in His rule, but the forgiveness of sins was reserved for God alone and no one was expecting this.

So, here's the scene: Jesus was preaching the word of the Kingdom and He was preaching it probably out of Peter's home, which was like His home base at the time. And after word got out that Jesus was there, droves of people started showing up. I mean, the house was packed. The homes were really small then. Think San Francisco. And really small little places. And then everybody started coming over and people were crowded inside listening to Jesus preach. People were spilling outside where you couldn't even get in by the door. And four men, who obviously heard about Jesus and knew what Jesus was capable of, loaded a friend of theirs who was paralyzed – he was a paralytic. They loaded him onto a mat and they brought him to where Jesus was preaching. But, he couldn't get in. It was like, I don't know, a new restaurant in this city. They just couldn't get in. Like, line is around the building. "What are we going to do?"

So, these guys, they think fast. Like, "Hey, what do we do? We cannot get in. We can't wait in line. He's preaching right now. There's no way we can get in."

They decide to get their friend to the roof of this building and then they decided to vandalize the house. They're like, "Okay. I have an idea. Just go with out. Hear me out. Let's begin to tear a hole in the roof and then let's lower our friend down below."

Now, a typical roof in Israel was made of these wooden beams and across it they would put stone and mud-brick walls and the beams were covered with reeds and layers of thatch and clay. So, it wasn't impossible to break into a roof. So, they would start it and they would peel it back. But, to break through wouldn't be too difficult, but it would have made a huge scene. So, if you imagine the whole house being packed with people and the roof started to cave in. Like, literally, they started punching a hole through the roof and pieces of roof would come from the ceiling and you'd look up and you'd see a hole and you'd be like, "Oh."

And then the hole got bigger and the big enough to where four heads popped in and they're like, "Oh, there He is." And they pointed at Jesus and Jesus is like, "Okay." And then they begin to lower their friend in. Or they dropped him. I mean, I don't know if they were like, "He's paralyzed. I mean, let's just..."

Somehow, they get this mat through the hole, okay? And they get him through the thing and they drop him right in front of Jesus. Now, this is a whole different sermon. This is not this sermon. But, their friends literally make a way to get their friend to Jesus. They literally make a way. They're like, "There's no way to get our friend to Jesus. Uh huh. Vandalism. Let's do it. Let's do that."

But, that's a whole different sermon. Maybe we'll come back and do that one later on friendship and getting your friends to Jesus. But, what happens next is this. So, Jesus sees this man being lowered in and the paralyzed man is now on the floor. And everyone looks at Jesus and Jesus, it says that He sees their faith. We'll come back to that in a bit. He says this. He says, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

He doesn't say, "You are healed." He doesn't say, "Be healed." He doesn't say, "Pick up your mat and go home." He says, "Son, your sins are forgiven. Your sins are forgiven."

Now, there are immediately a couple things wrong here that seem wrong here or wrong with this. First is who can forgive sins but God alone? This is something the scribes pick up on right away. They're like, "Whoa, whoa. Wait."

And the funny thing is they're thinking this. They're like, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

And Jesus is like, "I heard that. So, there's that. I heard what you were thinking."

"Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

That's a very important thing here if Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. If the Messiah that was to come is Jesus, it was believed that the Messiah would come and exterminate the godlessness in Israel. He would purify Israel. That the Messiah would crush demonic power. That He would protect His people from the reign of sin. But, the forgiveness of sins was never attributed to the coming Messiah. It wasn't on the Messiah's job description. He would indeed crush the power of sin and sinners and He would usher in the rule of God. But, it was not predicted that the coming Messiah would actually forgive people of their sins. It was predicted that the Messiah would come as a warrior like Joshua or King David, demolishing Israel's enemy. But, not necessarily as a humble servant working from the margins, forgiving sins of wicked humans. This is why the scribes were so mad. This is why it was so scandalous.

The scribes were experts in the Law and custodians of the sacred tradition of the Old Testament. And they saw their task as establishing clear cut guidelines around the Law and around the boundaries of the Law. So, they were the ones to decide what was acceptable to God in all spheres of life. That was their job. That was the scribes job. That was his duty. They had the final say so that people would live in accordance with God's will.

Think of the scribes as like the religious police; having the power and authority in the Jewish community. A huge red flag comes up when Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven," because everyone knows – and the scribes especially know this and it's their job to guard this – God alone forgives sins. The scribes knew to presume to forgive sins is an arrogant affront to the majesty of God, which is blasphemy. And this is why they said, "This is blasphemy," and blasphemy is punishable by death.

Now, here's the irony: that Jesus could read their hearts. The scribes were thinking in their hearts, "Who does this guy think He is? God?"

And Jesus hears it and He reads their hearts. But, the scribes are not wrong. When the scribes say, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?" they're not wrong. Only God can forgive sins. So, Jesus here is pushing the claim of who He is even further. He is the one to bring about the Kingdom of God, but He's also the Son of Man that is to come from the book of Daniel, that has all authority and all dominion. Daniel saw in one of his visions – we just got finished with the book of Daniel – a vision of a Son of Man who had dominion over everything. And He was a heavenly figure and Jesus says, "I am the Son of Man. Not a heavenly figure. I am a Son of Man who has authority on earth."

Like, this heavenly thing has broken onto earth and He's pushing His claims further of who He is and His authority on earth. But, here's the thing. The scribes were offended because they're like, "You can't say that. You can't say, 'Sins are forgiven.'"

So, they were offended by that. You and I might be offended for a whole different reason. You and I were offended because what Jesus said is irrelevant. "Who cares if his sins are forgiven. This guy is on the ground and he's paralyzed. Do something about that. Why are you talking about sin? Oh, the church. They always go to sin. So much brokenness in our world and all they want to do is talk about sin. Here it goes again. Here's Jesus and here's a man who's obviously in need and He talks about someone's sin?"

Such a church word. But, this word, I would argue, needs to be recovered in our world. Our world that's filled with so much violence and hate and oppression. We need the word to be reintroduced into our world today. David Brooks was giving a lecture last year about the walls and the ramps of the Christian faith in secular society. David Brooks is a writer for the New York Times and an author of several books and also teaches at Yale. And he was talking about Christianity and the Christian faith and the language of sin. And he said there's a lot of roadblocks or walls that we build in Christian culture that completely isolate secular culture from Christianity. But, there's a lot of ramps that we can build.

He said, "One of the ramps is our language around sin and good and evil." He says, "Christians have to talk about this." And he says this. I'm just going to quote it. It's not on the screen. It's a long quote. I'll tell you when it ends. He says:

"A ramp is the language of good and evil. This language has become absent in the secular world. The word 'sin' is now mostly used in reference to desserts. But, if you want to talk about the deepest affairs of the heart, only words like 'sin,' 'soul,' 'redemption,' really work. And if you don't have those words, you're losing the tools. People don't change because they decide to be better. If that happened, then New Year's resolutions would work. People decide to change because they elevate their loves. And, as Saint Augustine said, you become what you love. But, if you can't talk about the struggle of sin, if you can't talk about why some loves are higher than other loves and ordered versus disordered loves, you don't have the moral vocabulary, the mental toolkit, to even think about how to be better. The Christian tradition gives us that."

Here's a man who lives and works of the secular world of the New York Times and says, "What the Christian faith has going for it is that it claims to talk about sin. Because, the real evil, the real problem is something really, really deep within."

We can talk, and he does, he says he talks about education. He goes, "You can do education. You can throw money at it. But, it doesn't change the human heart. And this is the language that we need. We need this kind of language; this sort of language."

I shared this before, but Francis Spufford wrote a book called "Unapologetic." And I recommend this book to you. And he says the same thing as David Brooks. He says that we have used the word "sin" to talk about desserts, but this word needs to be reclaimed. He says, "For us [followers of Jesus], sin refers to something much more like the human tendency, the human propensity to 'F' up. Or, let's add one more word: the human propensity to 'F' things up. Because, what we're talking about here is not just our tendency to lurch and stumble and screw up by accident – our passive role as agents of entropy – it's our active inclination to break stuff. Stuff here including moods and promises and relationships we care about and our own wellbeing and other people's as well as material objects whose high gloss positivity seems to invite a big fat scratch. Now, I hope we're on common ground. In the end, almost everyone recognizes this as one of the truths about themselves."

Every single person in here knows this to be true about you. In the first season of HBO's mini-series, "The True Detective," which I do not recommend to you, about two Louisiana detective, one played by Matthew McConaughey and the other by Woody Harrelson. Matthew McConaughey's character is the interrogator of the department. He's like the go-to guy. He can get confessions out of anyone; almost anyone. His method, he explains how he does it when he's asked, "How in the world do you get a confession out of people?"

And he says that his confessions – or his ability to get confessions – is rooted in a philosophy about human nature that Spufford was talking about. And McConaughey's character, Rust, says, "Look, everybody knows there's something wrong with them. They just don't know what it is. Everybody wants confession. Everybody wants some cathartic narrative for it; the guilty especially. And everybody's guilty."

We need to talk about sin and we need to talk about the need for forgiveness. We need to reintroduce that sort of language in our own lives. We need to be able to come to church and receive communion like, "This week, I have sinned. This week, there has been this big gap between where I am and where I know God wants me to be and I'm trying to live and close that gap in confession every single week. From Sunday communion to Sunday communion is me trying to close that gap. But, I must confess. I must confess that I, too, am a sinner."

We all need this confession. We all need this bit of forgiveness. But, what makes this scene so strange is that Jesus stands over this paralyzed man and begins with, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Not only does it seem maybe irrelevant to us, it also seems maybe insensitive. It would be like going to a medical doctor with a broken bone or a strange rash or something and your doctor takes one look at you and says, "I forgive you." And you're like, "Okay. It just got weird. Really got weird in here. I didn't ask for that. Do something about this broken bone. Do something about this immediate need."

We don't know what this – I would imagine people around Him were like, "Don't You know what this suffering man has gone through? The things he's never been able to do? How he has been, his whole life, a victim of things out of his control? Do something about that."

And Jesus brings something to the surface that is very important. I don't mean to be trite when I say this, but I believe this is true. The main problem humanity has is never their suffering, it's their sin. And Jesus goes to the most important need first. The biggest need, the greatest need this man has is that his sins would be forgiven. So, Jesus goes there first. I understand how this might seem insensitive. I understand how this scene in Mark 2 might seem insensitive. Jesus, suffering is real. And God deals with suffering and He mobilizes His Church to deal with suffering. But, what lies at the heart of the Gospel is our need for forgiveness. Our greatest need is to be reconciled with God. Our greatest need – the greatest need of our friends – is that they would be reconciled with God. And it's only out of that reconciliation with God that true healing can begin to take place. It's only out of reconciliation with God that healing can come out.

And only God can forgive sin. Only God can forgive sin. Just like the scribe said. Only God can forgive sin. Because, when we sin, when you and I sin, God is always the most offended. It's not that others aren't offended, but God is always the most offended. Because, all sin is ultimately sin against God. Don't think of sin as much as breaking a law. Don't think of it like that. I read one commentator one time that said, "What Jesus was saying when He said, 'I forgive you,' He's like, 'I forgive you for punching a hole in my roof.'"

That's not what's going on there. Okay? He's like, "Oh, I forgive you. Your sins are forgiven. Because, that was my roof and you just punched a hole in it. I forgive you."

That's not what's happening there. Don't think of it like, "I broke a law." Think of it like this. Think of sin as a betrayal of relationship. That's what makes sin so hurtful. When someone sins against you, it wasn't that they broke a rule that you had in your house. "I had this rule and you broke it. I can't believe it."

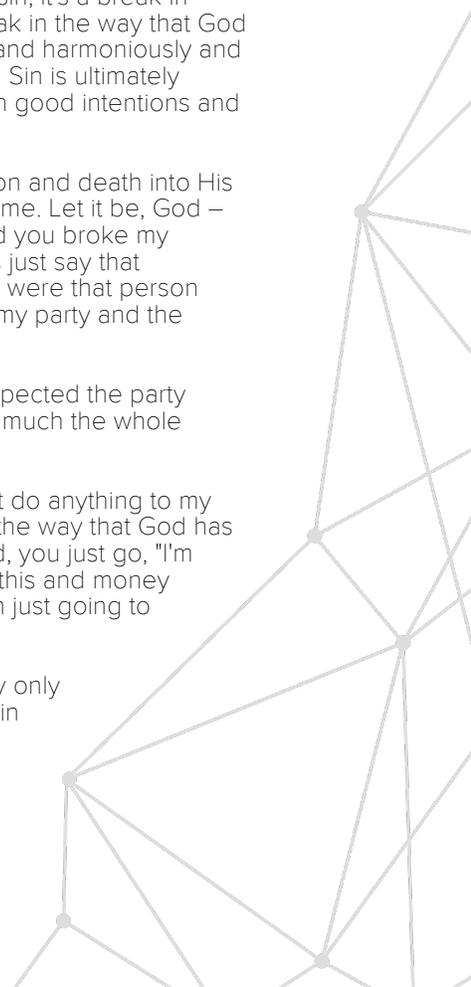
It's that the relationship is betrayed between you and that other person. And that's what makes when someone sins against you or when we sin against God so arresting. It's because a relationship has been broken. That's what makes sin so hurtful to God. Sin is ultimately against God because it's a break in relationship with God. We were created for God. We were created to be in relationship with God. Our hearts are restless until they find rest in God. We were created for God. So, when we sin, it's a break in relationship. But, sin is ultimately against God because it's a break in shalom. It's a break in the way that God created the world to work. God created the world to work peacefully and organically and harmoniously and everything to be interwoven. And sin breaks God's shalom; the shalom that He set up. Sin is ultimately against God because it's rebellion against His good authority. God rules the world with good intentions and good authority and sin breaks all of that down.

Sin is ultimately against God because it poisons God's world and introduces destruction and death into His world. Think of it like this: if I hosted a big party in my house – assuming I had a big home. Let it be, God – and a lot of people were there and you came over and you got drunk in my home and you broke my favorite serving bowl from Heath and then you got in a fist fight in my living room. Let's just say that happened – it hasn't happened. Hopefully never happens. But, let's say it did and you were that person who did this: you would have broken shalom in my house, you would have poisoned my party and the relationship between both of us would be marred.

Like, "You didn't get in a fist fight with me. But, you came into my home and you disrespected the party shalom that I set up. You got in a fight with one of my guests and you poisoned pretty much the whole party. You did that."

And now there would be a relationship between you and I that was marred. You didn't do anything to my face. Imagine that on a cosmic scale. The thing that God has set up to work properly, the way that God has ordered the world and relationships and life and love and everything that God created, you just go, "I'm going to do my own thing and I'm going to do this thing. I'm going to treat people like this and money like this and my body like this and their body like that and the environment like this. I'm just going to do this because."

And it breaks down everything. This is why sin is ultimately against God and this is why only God can forgive sin. So, Jesus says, "Son, your sins are forgiven," and the scribes say in their heart, "This fellow is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?"



And then Jesus says in Mark 2:9: "Which is easier:" – this is so like, you just don't do this kind of stuff around Jesus because you're going to get busted. Okay?

He's like, "Which is easier? I'm going to ask you guys a question. Which is easier to say to this paralyzed man? Your sins are forgiven or say get up, take up your mat and walk? What's easier?"

Well, the point is this: anyone can claim to forgive sins. How will anyone know that your sins are forgiven. How will anyone know? "Hey, I forgive you of your sins. I'm the Messiah. I just forgave you of your sins."

"But, how do I know my sins are forgiven?"

But, you can't claim to heal a paralytic without immediate proof. Like, "Get up, take your mat and walk."

"He didn't get up. It didn't work."

So, Jesus says, "What's easier?"

Well, it's obviously way easier to say "your sins are forgiven," because no one knows in the room if the man's sins are forgiven or not. He says, "But, I want you to know that the Son of Man..." – again, that title from the book of Daniel – "...has authority on earth. This heavenly thing has broken into earth to forgive sins."

"Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

You see what Jesus is claiming here?

"So he said to the man, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.'"

And the man got up and he grabbed his mat and walked out in full view of them all. I just imagine this guy scanning the room like, "Alright. All you guys."

In full view of them all and the friends on the roof just like, "Oh my," like freaking out. They're still on the roof. I don't think they came down. They didn't go, "Wait, stop. We'll be right down."

They're on the roof just listening to this whole thing and they're like, "We did it! Look at this!" They're freaking out. Everyone is amazed. Everyone, even the scribes somehow were amazed too. They're like, "Oh my gosh. He just read my mind and healed a paralyzed man. I've never seen anything like this."

I mean, everyone is freaking out. Here's the point: the point is that Jesus does the visibly harder thing of healing the paralytic because He can certainly do the visibly easier thing of forgiving sins. He can forgive sins, and that's the point. But, it's also important to remember that the miracles of Jesus in the book of Mark are enacted sermons. Meaning when Jesus preaches a sermon, you want to know what does that sermon feel like? Anyone can preach a sermon on forgiveness. But, what does forgiveness feel like? What does the forgiveness of sin feel like? That makes a good sermon, but what does it look like? What does it sound like?

So, this whole scene is an enacted sermon. Being forgiven of sin by God looks like being paralyzed. Like, you can't move. You can't even begin to reach out for healing. You can't even get to Jesus because you can't walk. And Jesus looks at you and says, "Pick up your mat and walk," and you do. Forgiveness feels like that. Forgiveness feels like I was bound, I was limited to my paralyzed body, I feel like I can't move and being able to move. Forgiveness feels like that. That is what forgiveness is like. It feels like kneeling in confession and standing forgiven. It feels like that. Forgiveness sounds like everyone around you and your friends on the roof who lowered you down amazed and everyone is cheering with excitement that your life will never be the same again. Forgiveness sounds like that.

This is enacted sermon. Jesus is like, "Your sins are forgiven and it sounds like this." Everybody's like, "Oh my gosh." Yeah. That's exactly what it's like. It feels like, "I can feel everything again."

That's exactly what it's like. The psalmist talks about how when he did not confess his sin, his body started to get weak. Like, we feel sin in our body. We do. It weighs us down. We do. And this whole thing is Jesus enacting the sermon like, "This is what it feels like

to be forgiven. This is what it looks like to be forgiven. This is what it is."

Lastly, what ignited this healing? What started this whole chain reaction of events? It was faith. Faith. Look at Mark 2:5.

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"

He saw their faith. Whose faith? I don't even know if I can explain this theologically, to be honest with you. Jesus sees all of their faith. Like, the man wasn't unconscious coming down. So, He saw the paralyzed man's faith too. But, He saw the faith of their friends. Honestly, I just don't know how that all works out theologically. I haven't decided yet. I'm undecided. I'm agnostic about that. But, somehow, Jesus sees the faith of friends who would do this sort of act and courage and faith and vandalism to bring their friend down. He sees the faith of this paralyzed man willing to just be lowered down and everybody looking at him and he's like, "Oh, come on. Come on. I need a miracle here."

And he goes down and Jesus sees all of their faith. The first mention of faith in the book of Mark – and you can actually argue in the New Testament, since Mark was the first Gospel written. So, the first mention of faith in the Gospels is right here. Therefore, one commentator writes this:

"Faith is first and foremost not knowledge about Jesus, but active trust that Jesus is sufficient for one's deepest and most heartfelt needs."

It's active trust in Jesus. So, again, if you are new to Jesus, it's not about knowledge, it's about active trust in what you know. And what you know might be limited. But, it's active knowledge. It's doing something with what you know. It's moving forward in faith in Christ. And this is what these friends did. They knew this. "Okay. This Messiah is buzzing around healing people. Our friend is paralyzed. He is down the street. Let's get Him there. We can't get in the house. Let's go to the roof and punch a hole in the roof and lower him down even though it's going to make a scene."

This is enacted faith. They don't care about what sort of obstacles they have to get over to get to Jesus. And this is the kind of active trust that removes any obstacle to get to Jesus. This is a kind of active trust that will remove any obstacle to get to Jesus. There's a theme that starts right here and develops in all of the Gospels, and the theme is people who overcome social, religious or customary boundaries and they cross them in a bold move to get to Jesus. People do it all throughout the Gospels. They do this almost insane thing where they break through customary barriers, religious barriers, social barriers. It's like, "You don't do that."

But, "We don't care if you're not supposed to do that. We must get to Jesus."

In Mark 1, there's a story of a leper who – lepers were in leper colonies. You were unclean if you were a leper. You were not allowed to be in with the regular public. You would have to wear a giant cloak around you and they'd yell "unclean" if you even tried to. A leper crosses all these ceremonial and religious boundaries to get to Jesus in Mark 1. He goes up to Jesus through the crowd and says, "Will you heal me?"

And Jesus says, "Yes, I will."

In Mark 5, there's a woman who is unclean because she's been menstrually bleeding for 12 years. And she, again, is unclean. Not allowed to touch anyone. But, she pushes through the crowd and almost superstitiously touches Jesus' cloak and immediately is healed. And Jesus turns around and says, "Wait. Everybody stop."

And everyone's touching Jesus, by the way. He's like, "Someone just touched me."

And everybody's like, "We're all touching you. Everyone's touching you right now."

He's like, "No, no, no. Power came out from me. I felt power come out. Someone just stole some power. Who did it?"

And this woman says, "It was me. I just thought if I just touched your cloak I'd be made well."

And Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well."

She overcomes all these social boundaries to get to Jesus. She doesn't care what people think. She didn't go to a counselor and go, "I think I might just touch His cloak and by His cloak I'll be healed."

Like, "I don't know if it works that way. That's kind of superstitious. You shouldn't do that. And you'll probably touch a lot of people and you're unclean. You probably shouldn't do that. Send Him an email and try to make an appointment with Jesus."

Like, "No. I don't care. I'm going to bust through people, touch His cloak and that's how I'm going to be made well."

My favorite one is in Luke 7 where this sinful woman, she's called. She's probably a prostitute. She broke into a Pharisee's house – the Pharisees were like the upper echelon of religious authority – where Jesus was eating and drinking with them and she broke in, crawled at Jesus' feet, broke open a bottle of expensive perfume, poured it on Jesus' feet, was crying and wiping her hair with His feet. It doesn't matter what world you live in. That's different. That's breaking all kinds of things. And, again, the Pharisees think in their minds, "If this guy knew who that was, then I can't believe..."

And Jesus hears it and asks someone across the table, "Let me ask you a question," of one of His own disciples. He says, "Imagine someone owed 50,000 dollars and someone owed 500,000 dollars and both their debts were forgiven. Who's going to love the forgiver more?"

"Well, the guy who was forgiven of 500,000 of course."

And Jesus says, "Do you see this woman? She's come in. You guys didn't wash my feet when I came in, which is what you're supposed to do as a show of hospitality. But, you didn't do that. She's come in, she's anointed my feet with perfume and her hair and her tears and she's washing my feet with her own tears. I will tell you this: she is forgiven. She is loved much because she's been forgiven much. She has a lot of sins, but that also means that she's been forgiven a lot of debt. So, that means she's going to love a lot. And this is a sign of her love."

She breaks every single social, religious and customary barrier. "You're not supposed to do that. That's not how you get to Jesus." And all these different people going, "I don't care about the little thing that you have or all your customs. I must get to Jesus."

This is what faith means. This is faith. Faith is active trust in Jesus and going through any boundary, any barrier to get to Jesus. This is the kind of stuff where we're going, "We will throw aside anything to be with Jesus. We will sell anything to be with Jesus."

Jesus said, "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off."

And that's obviously a metaphor. But, it's that sort of thing. Like, Jesus is more important. He is more important than all the social constructs that we set up, He is more important than all the things that we build up, all the things we trust in. Jesus is more important. And I think the point can be made that Jesus receives people with some pretty messed up and often incomplete faith. I mean, it's kind of incomplete. Like, "We're going to drop our paralyzed friend through a roof and we'll see what happens."

"I'm going to touch His cloak and I'm going to be made well."

"I'm going to wash my..." – oh, by the way, He tells the woman who's washing His feet, "Your sins are forgiven." That's what He says to her. "Your sins are forgiven."

These things here, a lot of us don't have complete knowledge. Like, you maybe have just read through the book of Mark and you're like, "I haven't even read the other two Gospels. I haven't even read the whole rest of the Bible yet. I'm still kind of in the middle of the story."

Even if you have just this almost incomplete faith that goes, "I believe that Jesus is the Messiah and I think that He can heal me, I think that He can forgive me of my sins, I think that He can make my life "better."

If you came in and sat down with me, I'm like, "Well, I don't know if He'd make your life better."

And I would explain it all out theologically and sound really smart and you're like, "I don't really care. I just want Jesus."

Like, we set up all these things and sometimes we have to push past them. So, I would like to, as a church, begin to respond to some of this. And this is kind of incomplete. I don't really even have a complete thought around this yet. So, let me just try to feel my way through it right now. I want to believe – and the elders here and our leaders here want to believe that the things that happen when the Kingdom of God breaks in still happen today. So, there are people that need to be forgiven of sin. And you can be forgiven of sin today. There are people here that need healing. Those two things are not always related. You might need a physical healing and it's not tied to your sin. Your physical healing might actually be tied to someone else's sin. Your physical ailment might not be tied to anyone's sin.

So, there are people here that need forgiveness of sin and there are people here that need to be healed. And I'm going to keep those in two separate buckets right now. So, if you're asking Jesus to heal you, I'm going to ask that you come forward and get prayer. That if you in this church this morning sense that God is prompting you to pray for someone to be healed that you would do that. And we'll see what happens. We'll practice it. We might do really good at it or it might go really bad. I don't know. I just know God's at work and God can work through that stuff.

But, let me combine these two buckets. So, it's two separate buckets, okay? So, people that need to be forgiven of sin? You're here. People that need a physical healing for God? Here. Two separate things. But let me real quick combine these two things. There are people here that are under – you're an integrated being. And there are people in here that, because of sin, you're under physical attack, oppression, maybe even depression or sickness. And it's due to sin in your life. So, I want to invite you to repent, confess and be free and healed. Those three things. But, this is what I want to do in the room, because I know it can get awkward. I don't want you to think everyone who's coming up for healing has this ginormous sin in their life they're not confessing. That is not always the case. But, there are some people that is the case and there's room for you here and we – again, push through social weirdness. This is not the time when we move into prayer and worship, to be polite. Not the time to go, "Okay. How does this thing work again?"

We want Jesus. And there are people here that need to be forgiven of sin. Like, your sin that separates us from God, it is an offense to God, needs to be forgiven. That is our greatest need. So, as we close, I'd like to close with a word of confession. Because, I find very often that I want to confess my sin to God, I just don't have the language to do it. And we need the language sometimes. So, I'm going to ask that, as quietly as you can, would you stand with me?

On the screen is a prayer of confession. We're going to pray together as a church community. We're going to pray it in sincerity and then we're going to move our bodies into enacting this prayer. Meaning there'll be carpets here to kneel. You will kneel in confession and rise forgiven. We need that physical act, many of us. We will stand in communion and receive the body and the blood of Christ. And, as we take the forgiveness and life of Christ in us, we become part of Him and the promise of being forgiven and new life and salvation and all the things He's promised.

So, would you pray this prayer with me out loud? It's on the screen.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways. To the glory of Your name, amen.

May the Almighty God have mercy on you. May He forgive you of all of your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ. May He strengthen you in all goodness and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, keep you into eternal life.