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Mark 2:1-12 Jesus Forgives and Heals

Discussion: What would you be willing to publicly confront? Perhaps an issue about which you feel passionately, perhaps enough to inspire you to protest. Or, are there any particular injustices that make you wish to intervene, with little concern for the immediate or long-term consequence to yourself?

Mark 2	Matthew 9	Luke 5
<p>Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man</p> <p>1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.</p>	<p>Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man</p> <p>1 Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town.</p>	<p>Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man</p> <p>17 One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there.</p>
<p>2 They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.</p>		<p>They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick.</p>
<p>3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them.</p>	<p>2 Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat.</p>	<p>18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.</p>
<p>4 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.</p>		<p>19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.</p>
<p>5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."</p>	<p>When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."</p>	<p>20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."</p>
<p>6 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?"</p>	<p>3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"</p>	<p>21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"</p>

Bible Study of Mark's Gospel

Mark 2	Matthew 9	Luke 5
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? 9 Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?"	4 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? 5 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?"	22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 23 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?"
10 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."	6 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."	24 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."
So he said to the man, 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.	So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home." 7 Then the man got up and went home.	So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.
This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"	8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.	26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

In this chapter, Mark continues his development of the divine authority (*exousia*) given to Jesus by giving five pronouncements that prove especially controversial to the *religious* authorities.¹

Comparison

- Mark and Matthew report that Jesus has returned to Capernaum, while Luke highlights the presence of the Pharisees and teachers of the law right from the outset, to emphasise their importance as participants in this event.
- Mark also states that Jesus had "come home" which most commentators understand as a reference to Peter's house.²
- Luke records that the people came from all over the entire country, not just Galilee.

Bible Study of Mark's Gospel

- Mark and Luke state that Jesus was teaching but, once again, it is the demand for a healing that interrupts his primary objective of teaching the Good News.
- Mark and Luke describe how even the roof was removed in order for the friends to get the paralysed man to Jesus.
- The tiles in Luke indicate this was probably a well-to-do home with a roof you could work or sleep on.³

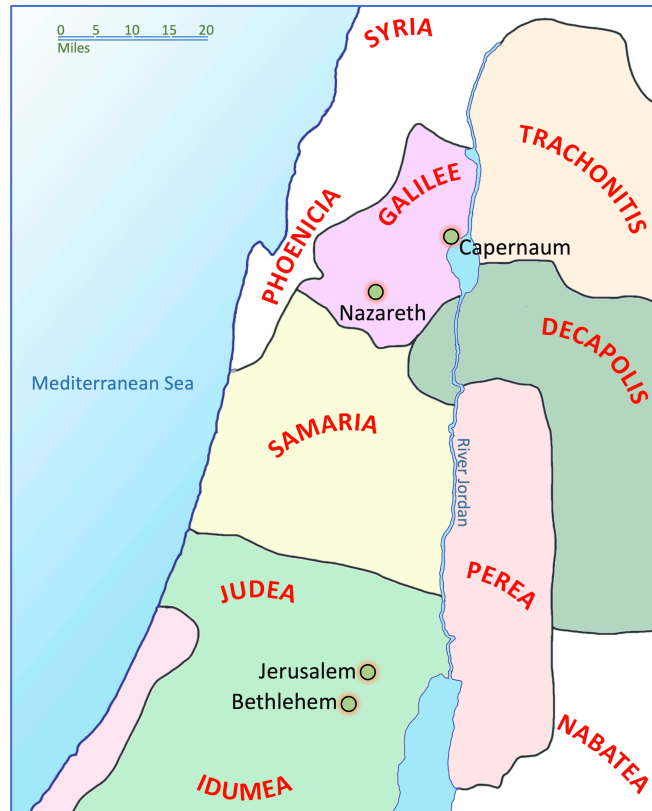


Figure 9: People come from a wide area

Context

- The scribes (*teachers* of the law) and Pharisees (whom we might consider here as *enforcers* or *implementors* of the law) have come to examine this Jesus, the miracle-worker. They come with questions as to who he is, that he should have such ability to heal. Is he from God, perhaps? Or, is he contravening the Law in any way?

Key Points

- Jesus commends the faith of the friends for their willingness to overcome any obstacles in their attempt to get to him. Their *action* is a sign and evidence of their faith.
- This is the first mention by Mark of faith in relation to healing. Mark does not clarify whether they fully perceive him as the Messiah or simply a healer anointed by God. Nor does Mark explain whether their faith makes any contribution to the healing itself. They simply believe that Jesus can heal and that he has authority from God.⁴
- Unlike someone in 1st century Palestine, the modern reader may be surprised to hear “your sins are forgiven” as a response to the paralytic’s condition. At that time, sin, disease, forgiveness and healing were often thought to be interrelated.^{5,6} Note that Jesus does not heal the man yet.

Bible Study of Mark's Gospel

- We can speculate that the friends had heard how, when Jesus was last in Capernaum a few days earlier, he had healed everyone who came to him when the Sabbath ended. Then Jesus left the town! They were now determined to get their friend in front of Jesus, no matter what obstacles lay before them.
- However, this is not what the friends had hoped for – they expected a healing. We assume Jesus recognized an association between the man's affliction and his sins.⁷
- The scribes, as *guardians* of the Law, were offended by Jesus' declaration. Jesus is not using the "divine passive" mode of speaking (as used by a priest who, while *interceding* for God, issues a declaration that forgiveness has been given by God through a priestly rite (i.e. "The Lord God forgives your sins," Lev. 4:26, 31). Instead, Jesus creates controversy by declaring that he *personally* forgives sin. Jesus is demonstrating a shared responsibility with the Father to deal with sin.⁸
- For the Scribes and Pharisees, this is blasphemy. Surely, only God can forgive sin (Ex. 34:6-7, Is. 43:25)? Jesus can sense what they are thinking, and challenges them on it.

Going Deeper: C.S. Lewis on Christ's Forgiveness, from *Mere Christianity*⁹

C.S. Lewis explains how Jesus told people their sins were forgiven, but never waited to consult all the other people whom those sins had injured in some way.

Instead, Jesus behaved as if he was the party primarily offended by the sin, indicating that we mostly need to apologise to him! This only makes sense if Jesus is God.

- While it is easier for anyone to simply utter the words "your sins are forgiven", this outcome is not something that can be seen or verified. Jesus argues that it is much more difficult to actually perform a miracle and cause a paralysed man to walk, something that ought to be impossible but can be observed by everyone present. Jesus makes a connection between his authority to pronounce on sin and his authority to heal. If he can do one, he can certainly do the other.
- Notice that this is an announcement by Jesus. He is not intending to prove himself or convince anyone. The translation "so that you may know the Son of Man has authority..." is, therefore, better stated as simply "*Know that* the Son of Man has authority"¹⁰ He is simply informing them of the fact.

Bible Study of Mark's Gospel

Going Deeper: The Son of Man

Jesus uses the term "Son of Man" to refer to himself. While it literally means a *human being*, people in the 1st century would have recognized the words of the prophet

Daniel:

*"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. **14** He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Dan 7:13-14).*

See also **Acts 1:6-11**, for the Ascension and the manner in which Jesus will return.

- After saying this, Jesus addresses the paralysed man and performs the miraculous healing. The critics are forced to take the pronouncement and healing together; they are left in no doubt about the physical healing and must therefore conclude that the declaration of forgiveness has also been effective.¹¹ Like the healing of the leper, it is a further testimony placed before the religious leaders, something they cannot ignore. In contrast to the scribes, the man walks away, praising God, and the crowds join him in that praise. A new era has come.¹²

Discussion:

People whose voices were once well respected in society (i.e. doctors, lawyers, teachers, pastors) seem to be held in less regard today.

- Who has authority in our society today?
- What undermines authority?
- What have we gained or lost with the undermining of professional authority?
- When is it right to challenge, and when not?

Summary

Once again, Jesus has demonstrated yet another area over which he has divine authority, in this case, the authority to forgive sin.