

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Senior Pastor Titus Green
April 23, 2023
Faith, Forgiveness & The Identify of Christ
Mark 2:1-12

There's something that has always made me struggle to completely enjoy the Superman movies. What trips me up isn't that Superman can fly or turn back time or see through walls. What I can't quite get over is that somehow, he puts on a pair of glasses, and no one knows who he is. Every scene with Clark Kent in glasses, I get worked up. How could Lois Lane fly through the city with him and not recognize him the next day? It feels like the people around him have made up their minds to be blind to his real identity in such a way that they refuse to recognize who is standing right in front of them.

And the reason I bring that up is that our text today has a similar dynamic. We are still at the beginning of Christ's earthly ministry. And, in a sense, Jesus has a secret identity. He's the Messiah. Even more, He's God in the flesh. And, if you were here last week, you might remember that He is carefully revealing His identity to the people around Him. He knows that if He comes right out and says exactly who He is, there are multitudes in Israel who will insist on making Him Israel's king with the expectation that He would overthrow the Roman Empire. But Jesus came to earth on a mission to die on the cross. It won't be until His second coming that He overthrows the nations by force. So, He is strategically making His true identity known in a way that will also preserve His mission to the cross.

And, in our text, Mark is showing us that from the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus revealed the truth that He is God. But there were people who remained blind to His real identity in such a way that they refused to recognize who was standing right in front of them. So, with that in mind, let's read our next passage to study from the Gospel according to Mark.

Mark 2:1–12

1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. 5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But 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, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." 12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

I hope you see what I was saying about Jesus revealing who He is. Only God can forgive sins and Jesus sets out to prove He has the authority to forgive sins. That means Jesus is God.

And that's the main point Mark is making in this passage. But there are two more really important truths that are closely connected to that main point. The first truth is this: through His authority as

God, Jesus wants to forgive sins. The second truth connected to the main point is this: Jesus forgives the sins of those who have faith in Him as their only hope. And those are three incredibly important truths Jesus is revealing in this passage. And when you put them together, they give us our big idea for this morning:

Big Idea: As God in the flesh, Jesus wants to forgive the sins of those who have faith in Him.

My prayer for each one of us this morning is that God would remove any blindness we might have to those amazing truths. Jesus is God. And with His authority as God, He wants to forgive the sins of those who have faith in Him. That's who Jesus is. That's what Jesus wants to do. And I pray that our eyes are open to that spectacular truth. Now, let's go back through our text and take a closer look at the three big, connected truths of that big idea.

1. Jesus is God.

Remember, this is the primary takeaway from this text. Jesus is God in the flesh. Let's dig in a little bit into how Jesus is making that known.

Look at verses 5-7:

5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

The scribes of Jesus' day were experts in the Old Testament, they were ancient bible scholars. And as soon as they hear Jesus declare that this man was forgiven of all his sins, they immediately think He is blaspheming. And their accusation hinges on this question: Who can forgive sins but God alone?

And some of us might say, "well, pretty much anyone can forgive sins. I mean, even Jesus commanded us to forgive sins. So, can't anyone forgive sins?" In one way, yes, we can forgive people when they wrong us. Maybe: as a matter of fact, only the person who has been sinned against can forgive that sin...raking, neighbor, random dude: it's ok, I forgive you.

But Jesus is acting as if all of this man's sins were somehow against Him in a way that gave Him the authority to forgive them. So, what's that about? Well, the scribes knew something that the Bible teaches us about sin and it's this: every sin is ultimately a sin against God. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

Psalm 51:3-4

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

David wrote this Psalm after being confronted about his adultery with Bathsheba and his attempt to cover it up by having Bathsheba's husband killed. It's a story of terrible sin against multiple people. But David comes before God and says under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that, ultimately, God is the One he had sinned against.

And that teaches us something about sin. Sin is always primarily against God. Every expression of sin is a departure from the commands of God. That means sin is always primarily and ultimately against God.

Now, that doesn't mean the sin we commit against people isn't horrible. It means the sin we commit against people is even more horrible than we realize. Telling a lie to our classmates isn't just a sin against our classmates, it is a sin against the God who commands us not to lie. Taking something that belongs to someone else isn't just a sin against the rightful owner of that property, it's a sin against the God who commands us not to steal. Every act of sin is an expression of our refusal to honor our holy God. It's operating like we are our own gods. It's essentially usurping the throne of God where He should be enthroned in our hearts.

That's why hell is the just punishment for sin. Sin is disobedience and rebellion against God. And because that is true, it means unless we are forgiven by God we aren't ultimately forgiven. Our parents or our children or our spouse may forgive us for the specific ways we have wronged them, but they can't forgive us on behalf of God. So, we aren't truly forgiven until God forgives us.

And I don't want to move past this too quickly. The greatest problem facing every person in this world today is that we have sinned against a holy God. The greatest threat to every person in this world today is the just punishment of our sin against a holy God which is eternity in hell. The greatest need of every person in this world today is forgiveness of our sins. We have sinned against God, so we aren't ultimately forgiven of sin unless we are forgiven by God Himself. And that's why the scribes think Jesus is blasphemous. He looks at this paralyzed man and declares all of his sins to be forgiven. And He knows exactly what He's claiming. Look at verse 8:

8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But 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, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." 12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Jesus knows exactly what they are thinking. And He doesn't correct them. He doesn't say they are wrong for thinking that only God has the authority to declare someone completely forgiven. As a matter of fact, the reason He heals this paralyzed man is to display His authority as God. He essentially says, "You can't see the effect of my miraculous forgiveness in this man's life, so let me work another miracle that you can see."

And that's the primary significance of this text. Jesus is revealing His true identity by proving that He is God. So, do you believe Jesus is your God? Are you living like you believe Jesus is your God? Is your life a life of worship to the glory of Jesus? And if you want something that will stir you to worship Jesus this morning, just think about the next part of our Big Idea.

2. Jesus wants to forgive sins.

1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. 5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Now, we don't know everything that was going on in this man's heart. Perhaps he associated his paralysis with some sin in his life and perhaps he was thinking about that while he was being lowered

down to Jesus. We just don't know. Here's what we do know. There's one person who brings up the idea of forgiveness and it wasn't the paralyzed man or his friends or the disciples or the scribes. In a massive crowd of people, the first person to mention forgiveness is Jesus. Jesus brings it up. He's not reluctant. He wants to forgive sins.

He came on a mission to seek and save lost sinners like us. And that mission would take Him to the cross. You see, God forgives our sin, but He doesn't sweep it under a rug. He deals with sin. And the way God dealt with our sin so that He could rightly forgive and accept us was by accepting the death of Jesus as a sacrifice on our behalf.

Ephesians 1:7

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

Hebrews 10:12-14

12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Redemption and forgiveness may be a gift to us, but they weren't free. They were purchased by the price of Christ's blood. Jesus had to suffer and die, enduring the rejection of men and the punishment of God so that we could be forgiven, and God could still be a just judge who rightly punishes sin. And listen to what Jesus said on His journey to that cross, knowing He would suffer and die.

John 10:18

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.

Jesus willingly chose to die because Jesus wanted to provide forgiveness of sin. And this is one of the many amazing things about Jesus. He wants to forgive. He desires it. Let that settle into your heart.

When I was in high school, my younger brother and I went out to eat with a group of friends after a basketball game. While we were in the restaurant, it started snowing pretty hard. By the time we came out, the ground was completely covered with snow. So, instead of driving out on the roads, I decided to take a shortcut through the mall parking lot. The mall had been closed for awhile, so there were absolutely no cars around. Well, as I was driving around to the front of the mall, I must have been driving too fast and I lost control. The car started spinning in circles until it crashed into one of the only trees in the entire area.

Thankfully, my little brother and I were completely fine. But the car was an absolute wreck...literally. It was completely undrivable. And those were the days before cell phones, so I had to walk around the mall to the mall security office and call my dad. And with every step through the snow, all I could think of was "How in the world am I going to explain this to dad without him being justifiably angry?" I mean, in a completely empty parking lot I wrecked our car into the only tree around. What made it worse was that dad had trusted me with my little brother and I put his life in danger.

I called dad and he came out. We had to call a tow truck and it was really late before we got settled back at the house. While dad got the tow truck driver squared away, I slipped upstairs to my bedroom to go to sleep. And I lay there in the dark, dreading the morning. Dad spent money he didn't really have to get that car for me to drive. How did I repay him? I hit the only tree in an empty parking lot! I couldn't stand the thought of having to face him the next day. Dread, shame, guilt.

That's when I heard dad's footsteps coming up the stairs. I hoped he would just pass my room and go off to bed. But he didn't. He stopped and came into my room. He broke the silence. "Titus." I thought about disguising my voice and saying, "There's no Titus in here." He said something like, "Titus, I don't want you worried about that car. It's just a car. I care way more about you and Tate than I care about that car." He told me he loved me. I apologized. He assured me I was forgiven. Then he went off to bed. And I'll never forget what went on in me as Dad walked away. I thought, "Man, my dad is the best." He came to me. I didn't have to convince him to forgive me. He wanted it because He loves me. He's the one who brought it up.

And even though there were consequences for my actions, like I didn't have a car for a long time, and if I kept intentionally running my cars into trees, those consequences would have compounded...my dad's heart for me was a heart of forgiveness. He wanted to forgive. And in an infinitely greater way, that's what Jesus is like. He desires to forgive. He came to this world with all the authority of God Himself and He chose to use His authority to provide forgiveness for our sins.

And some of us have messed up so many times that we can hardly believe Jesus would want to forgive us. We can't bring ourselves to pray because we feel so undeserving. Surely, He's out of patience. Surely, He's run out of grace. You think, "How could He ever forgive me?" Listen, He's the One who brought it up. He loved us before we loved Him. He came to us and died for us while we were still sinning. The gospel is good news. Jesus wants to forgive. That's who Jesus is. That's what Jesus does. That's what I pray we see.

But that brings me back to what I said in the beginning. There are some who are blind to the truth about Jesus. Not everyone in the room receives the forgiveness of Jesus. These scribes who think Jesus is blasphemous were part of the system that put Jesus to death. They refused to see the truth about Jesus, so they didn't enjoy the forgiveness Jesus came to bring. So, how do we receive the forgiveness of Jesus?

3. Jesus forgives those who have faith in Him.

5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Jesus sees their faith. And it's on the basis of their faith that Jesus gives him forgiveness.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Salvation and forgiveness come by God's grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Like the paralyzed man who believed Jesus was his only hope, we have to believe that we are completely unable to make ourselves right with God and that Jesus is our only hope.

And for those who are trusting in Jesus but struggle with the idea that He has a list of the big ones, the worst of the worst, that He can't quite get over and you can't quite get over, hear the voice of Jesus...son, I see your faith not your failure...your sins are forgiven...stop laying down in your guilt, get up and walk in my power.

And I can't think of a more important way to end this morning than to simply ask you if you are trusting in Jesus? Has there ever come a point and time in your life when you acknowledged your sin before God and placed your faith in the work of Jesus to save you?