

Jesus of Nazareth: The God Who Forgives Sin

Mark 2:1-12

Introduction: 1) All of us, unless we are a socio-path with no conscience, will be forced to consider 2 critical and unavoidable questions of life: 1) Can I be forgiven of my sins? 2) Who can forgive me of my sins?

2) That we must face such questions should not surprise us.

- Sin is our greatest problem.
- Sin is our greatest enemy.
- Sin separates us from God.
- Sin renders us spiritually dead.
- Sin, not forgiven, results in eternal death in a place called hell.
- Sin shatters relationships, causes us to think foolishly, leads us to make bad choices and decisions, moves us to act in evil and destructive ways.

3) Can I be forgiven? The Bible has a wonderful answer. Yes! And, who can forgive me? God can, the God who is revealed in the person of Jesus, the Son of God (1:1), the Son of Man (2:10), the Holy One of God (1:24).

- This One and only this One can deliver me from the penalty of sin (Justification).
- This One and only this One can deliver me from the power of sin (Sanctification).
- This One and only this One can deliver me from the presence of sin (Glorification).

Transition: In light of who Jesus is and what Jesus can do, our text provides responses that are the appropriate actions we should take when we are confronted with His greatness and glory.

I. We should bring the hurting to Jesus

2:1-5

- 2:1-3:6 is the beginning of 5 controversies Jesus will have with the religious leaders of Israel in Galilee in northern Israel. Mark will record another series of 5 controversies with the same antagonists in Jerusalem in Judea (the south) in 11:27-12:37 as Jesus' earthly ministry comes to an end with His atoning death on the cross. John 1:11 is sadly true, "He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him."
- Jesus is back home from His preaching and ministry tour throughout Galilee (1:38-45), probably once again at Peter's house (1:29). One has to wonder how his mother-in-law was handling all this disruption. Of course, she has no idea just how severe that disruption is about to become!

1) We need to hear His teaching

2:1-2

- Many gathered hearing the report He had returned, so many there is no room. Near Eastern hospitality would have made this not all that unusual. Even the doorway is jammed (cf. 1:32-33, 37). Probably a crowd of 50-75 is in view. I suspect they had come to see if He would perform another miracle. They are interested in Jesus, but their interest is for the wrong reason.
- They want another miracle but Jesus instead gives them preaching. He preached (spoke) the word (*logos*) to them (v. 2). He would have taught the Scriptures (our OT) and continued His call to repent and believe the gospel because of the coming of God's kingdom (cf. 1:14-15, 22, 38-39).

- James Edwards is right on target when he says, “More than any other expression in early Christianity, “the word” defines the essence of Jesus’ ministry” (*Mark*, 75). We need to hear His preaching.

2) We need to experience His forgiveness 2:3-5

- Four men show up with a paralytic, a man who could not walk (v. 3). Obviously they believed Jesus could heal their friend.
- Because of the crowd, they could not get in to see Jesus (v. 4). Not deterred and convinced He could heal their friend, they take the outside staircase ascending to the flat rooftop. Needless to say, Peter’s mother-in-law is not going to be pleased with what happens next!
- The roof was made of wood beams, cross layed with branches and packed with a thick layer of grass, mud and clay. One could easily walk on it. One could also dig through it. This, no doubt, would leave a terrible mess and disturb those below! Nevertheless, the men “unroofed the roof” showering those below with dirt, grass, mud and sticks. They lower the man on his bed until he lay on the floor there before Jesus.
- “Jesus saw their faith”: the 4 men, probably all 5? The text does not say. Still, our Lord clearly was impressed with their faith and determination and He honored the faith of the 4 on behalf of the paralyzed man. (cf. James 5:13-16. Did James have this event in mind?).
- “Son (*teknon*, “child”), term of affection, your sins are forgiven.” In this instance, it appears personal sin and sickness were related, though this certainly is not always the case (cf. John 9). Jesus, with compassion, looked

past the man's surface need and met His deeper need, He looked past the man's immediate need and met His real need! Based on who He is and what He would accomplish on the cross, He extended to a paralyzed sinner God's full and complete pardon of sin.

Transition: He may have needed healing, but even more, he like all of us, needed to experience the forgiveness of sins made possible by Jesus. This man got more than he wanted. He got what He needed.

II. We should see Jesus for who He truly is.

2:5-9

- We are hardly stunned by the reaction of the scribes, the religious leaders of Israel. They had come to hear the young teacher, maybe see another one of His miracles. They had not expected anything like a declaration of deity!
- Immediately they accuse Jesus of blasphemy, the very charge they will use to get Him crucified (cf. 14:64-65). They see Jesus' words as dishonoring and disrespectful to God. And they are (!), unless He Himself is God!
- Blasphemy against God was a serious Old Testament offense, punishable by death from stoning (Lev. 24:15-16). This charge was serious with serious consequences. Who is this One proclaiming to forgive sins?

1) Jesus is God

2:5-9

- The scribes were correct. Only God can forgive sins! That is exactly and precisely what Jesus was claiming. He will prove it momentarily by healing this man. He will prove it for all time by His resurrection from the dead.
- In Jewish thinking, even the Messiah could not forgive sins! A detailed description of Messiah in a non-biblical Jewish writing called the *Psalms of*

Solomon says Messiah would overcome demons, usher in perfect government, judge the godless. He does not, in this writing, or any other ancient Jewish writing, have the power to forgive sins. God and God alone has that exclusive authority and right. If He can forgive sins, then Jesus is God.

- Jesus “immediately” knew what they were thinking (another evidence of deity, “omniscience”). And He agreed, at least in part. Only God can forgive sins. And, He immediately confronts them with 2 direct questions one in vs. 8 and another in vs. 9. [Read]
- Jesus knew, as did they, it is one thing to say it. It is something else to prove it! The proof is just around the corner!

2) Jesus is the Son of Man 2:10-11

- As He prepares to prove His deity and ability to forgive sins, Jesus introduces us to a specific title that will become His favorite self-designation. It is the title “Son of Man.” It is found for the first time in Mark’s gospel in 2:10.
- The title “Son of Man” is found 81 times in the Gospels and fourteen times in Mark. It is never used by anyone but Jesus. It is clearly Jesus’ favorite way to refer to Himself. Why did Jesus use this term so often and what did He mean by it? Why did He not use more often the term “Christ” or “Messiah” or even “Son of God” since that is truly who He is? A look at the way the term is used can help answer those questions.

1) The Son of Man Serving: Mark 2:10; 2:28

2) The Son of Man Suffering: Mark 8:31; 9:9; 9:12; 10:33; 10:45; 14:21; 14:41

3) The Son of Man Coming in Glory: Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62

We should note that the title occurs more often after Peter confesses Jesus is the Christ and He begins to teach clearly about His death (12 of the references are after 8:29). The title also finds its origin in the Old Testament.

The title “Son of Man” is used in various ways in the Old Testament. In Psalm 144:3 it simply means “man.” However, in Daniel 7:13-14 it refers to One who will come with the clouds of heaven to establish God’s kingdom: “I saw the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” Jesus uses the title to refer to Himself with both connotations. As God incarnate, He is a man who identifies with sinful humanity as He serves and suffers on our behalf. As God, He is the coming Lord of Glory, the divine heavenly figure of Daniel 7:13-14. Jesus avoided the term “Christ” (Messiah) because the popular concept of Messiah was far different than His true mission. He was a much different kind of Messiah than the Jewish nation anticipated in the 1st century. He first came to suffer and then He would come in glory. This title allowed Him to refer to the total scope of His Messianic mission without all the political overtones of His day. It is interesting to note the title appears very infrequently outside the four Gospels (cf. Acts 7:56; Rev. 1:13).

- Jesus in Mark 10:45 weds the Son of Man of Daniel 7 to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 thereby redefining who the Messiah is and what He will do. He is God,

a divine heavenly figure who will receive an everlasting kingdom. That kingdom, however, will be realized thru suffering service that will climax on a Roman cross and a brutal death.

- Interestingly, only here in the Gospels is the forgiveness of sins linked or connected to the title “Son of Man.”

III. We should glorify Jesus for what He does

2:5, 10-12

- In spite of opposition from the religious aristocracy, this story has a happy ending. Those who bring the hurting in faith to Jesus will not be disappointed.
- William Lane says it well, “The healing of the paralytic was more than a display of mercy to a wretched man. The announcement [of forgiveness] and presentation of radical healing to a man in his entire person was a sign of the Kingdom of God drawn near. The paralytic experienced the fulfillment of God’s promise that the lame would share in the joy of the coming salvation.” (*Mark*, 99). The promise:
- Isaiah 35:6, “then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.”

1) Jesus forgives our sins

2:5

- Coming in faith to Jesus, this hurting man received more than he expected and exactly what He needed. He has received the full forgiveness of his sins.
- He and his friends believed Jesus could meet their deepest and most heartfelt needs, and He can and He will. They were simply wrong on what was really needed.
- Application: The problems you are facing today is not your:
 - Spouse, children or parents.

5 Questions We Always Ask of Every Text

1) What does this text teach me about God?

- Only God can forgive our sins.
- God is compassionate to those wounded by sin.
- God honors all who come to Him in faith.

2) What does this text teach me about sinful humanity?

- Our greatest need is not physical healing but spiritual forgiveness.
- Those who are the most religious are often the most judgmental.
- Sometimes physical maladies and personal sin are related.

3) What does this text teach me about Jesus Christ?

- He is God who knows our hearts.
- He is God who forgives our sins.
- He is God who heals our diseases.
- He is the Son of Man who fulfills the glorious vision of Daniel 7:13-14.

4) What does God want me to know?

- We need the ministry of the Word.
- We need to flee to Jesus and Jesus only for the forgiveness of sins.
- Jesus can forgive sins because He is God.

5) What does God want me to do?

- He wants us to act on our faith.
- He wants us to glorify God for all that He does for us in Jesus.

Conclusion

- In his classic work *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis gets at the heart of the identity of Jesus with his famous “trilema.” He pinpoints the astonishing claims of Jesus and carefully leads us to the logical and unavoidable conclusions we must face.
- “Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God...He says He has always existed...Among Pantheists...anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God; there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world Who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips...I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him. “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic-on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg-or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pgs. 54-55.

- Jesus is the God who forgives sin. The question you must answer is clear. Is He your God and has He forgiven your sins?