

Called to Heal

Bible Background • MARK 2:1-12

Printed Text • MARK 2:1-12 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 103:1-14

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will STUDY Mark's account of Jesus healing the man who was paralyzed, APPRECIATE how one's physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs are intertwined, and PRAY for God's healing grace to touch us at our particular point of need.

In Focus

Brenda listened to the small group's prayer requests. They were going to pray for Lee's cousin who had cancer, Jordan's knee replacement surgery, and Georgie's nephew who had an opioid addiction. Brenda thought hard, but her family was blessed with good health at the moment. She had just video-chatted with her parents a couple of days ago and everyone was happy and healthy.

Especially in the face of the other serious prayer requests, she felt embarrassed to ask about what was really weighing on her heart. She often suffered from mild Seasonal Affective Disorder. She had felt it settling in over her once Christmas vacation back home in Mississippi was over and she had come back to Virginia where she worked. When it was her turn, Brenda took a deep breath and shared, "I feel silly asking this, but could you guys pray for my mental health?" Brenda met the small group's sympathetic gazes. "I usually have seasonal depression and I'm worried this year will be worse than usual since this is my first winter here away from my family."

"No need to feel silly at all, Brenda. Thanks for letting us know how to help you," the small group leader Jordan said. "I've had some bouts with depression myself and I am happy to talk with you about it, if you want."

God cares about our wholeness in all aspects of our beings—bodily, mentally, and spiritually. How can we work as the church to make sure we minister to the whole person?

"Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" (Mark 2:9, KJV)

KJV

Mark 2:1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

NLT

Mark 2:1 When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home.

2 Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them,

3 four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat.

4 They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus.

5 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven."

6 But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves,

7 "What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"

8 Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts?"

9 Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk'?

10 So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said,

11 "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!"

12 And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before

People, Places, and Times

Palsy. This disability is due to the loss of motor function of muscles or certain nerves. It refers to all forms of paralysis. The word "palsy" translates the Greek word paralutikos (pahrah- loo-tih-KAHSS) from which we derive the English words paralytic and paralysis. The man in this week's Scripture is paralyzed, hence he is unable to walk by himself to meet Jesus. Matthew records the Capernaum centurion asking Jesus to heal his servant of paralysis, which causes him terrible suffering. (Matthew 8:5-6). The apostles also healed those who suffer from this condition (Acts 8:7; 9:33-34).

Scribes. Often called lawyers, doctors, or teachers of the law (Matthew 22:35), they were not considered a Jewish sect or a party, nor were they priests. The title scribe referred to their capacity as transcribers of the Hebrew Bible. They would copy the entire Old Testament by hand onto new scrolls when a new copy was needed. This careful, precise copying of the entire Law, Prophets, and Writings gave them great knowledge of the Scriptures. Mark presents the scribes as often in the company of Pharisees and of the chief priests and coming from Jerusalem.

Have you had special training or a profession that gave you expertise in a subject? How do you and others value that skill?

Background

The news of Jesus, the worker of miracles, spread throughout Capernaum. This was an exciting time. The community had never experienced a healer and teacher like Jesus. No wonder Mark 1:32-33 speaks of the townspeople bringing all the sick and demon-possessed to Jesus. And in Jesus' great compassion He healed every one of them, but He too needed a time of restful healing. So the next morning He departed to be alone with the Father.

The Scriptures do not tell the length of Jesus' solitude, but His time was shortened by the disciples' appearance. Jesus did not appear to be irritated by the disciples' presence, but informed them that He must preach in other places: "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth" (from Mark 1:38). Of a certainty there were more people in need of healing in Capernaum, but Jesus knew His mission was to spread the Gospel to everyone, so He traveled to other towns.

Do you make time to recharge with periods of solitude?

At-A-Glance

1. Jesus Preaches (Mark 2:1-4)
2. Jesus Pardons (vv. 5-9)
3. Jesus Heals (vv. 10-12)

In Depth

1. Jesus Preaches (Mark 2:1-4) When Jesus entered Capernaum (v. 1), He preached "the word," meaning the Gospel of God's kingdom. Mark's description of the enthusiastic crowd that gathered suggests that it filled the house, jammed the doorway, and spilled out into the street. What a tribute to the ministry of Jesus!

Four men carrying "one sick of the palsy" joined the crowd but were unable to access Jesus through the doorway. Therefore, to get within touching distance of Jesus, they carried the paralytic up the outside stairway to the roof of the house. The oriental house structures in those days were one or two stories, built in a rectangle or square. They had one door that opened into an open space called the porch. Often the porch contained a stairway that led to the roof. So these friends saw the roof as a means to reach Jesus. They tore the roof open and lowered the paralytic on his bed down through the opening to where Jesus stood preaching. What a scene!

Share about a time you have worked hard to help a friend hear the word of God.

2. Jesus Pardons (vv. 5-9) Jesus knows this extraordinary action was based on extraordinary faith. He pardons the crippled man's sin. The teachers of the law said nothing but were outraged as they pondered Jesus forgiving the sins of another. Based on Old Testament laws (Exodus 34:6-7), the scribes knew only God had the authority to forgive sins. In their view, Jesus had committed blasphemy (Leviticus 24:15-16), a serious charge that was punishable by death. Even though the scribes do not voice their concerns aloud, Jesus knows their thoughts, which serves as further proof that He is the all-knowing, all-powerful God. Jesus declares His authority as One who is able not only to heal but also to forgive sins. Jesus' words convey to the scribes that forgiving sins are no harder than healing. Since Jesus can heal, as the scribes had seen Him do, then He can also forgive sins.

3. Jesus Heals (vv. 10-12) Jesus turns His attention to the paralytic and commands him, “Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house” (v. 11). The healing verified Jesus’ claim to grant forgiveness. Since the healing was real and impossible for any but God, the claim to forgive sins is also real. The paralytic immediately arose, took up his bed, and walked out in full view of the crowd. This amazed everyone and they praised God—they had never seen anything like this!

Every healing that takes place is cause for rejoicing and praising God. God still heals, but we all know instances where healing didn’t occur. Sometimes in the face of our illness, our faith demonstrates God’s higher purpose (John 9) and our relationship with Him. Our faith, despite the absence of physical healing, can recognize the grace of God’s peace and strength amid our weakened state. God’s healing may be physical, emotional, or spiritual. Even in the absence of healing (2 Corinthians 12:7), we must remember that His grace is sufficient and our faith is the trademark of our relationship with Him—a relationship based on the forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation with our God.

Search the Scriptures

1. What was the main thing that Jesus noticed about the four men who brought their friend to Him? (v. 5)
2. What did Jesus do before He told the man to “take up thy bed, and walk”? (v. 9)
3. What was the reaction of the people when Jesus healed the paralytic? (v. 12) What about when He forgave his sins?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Why did Jesus perform the miracle of forgiveness before performing the miracle of healing (Mark 2:10)?
2. Given their commitment to upholding Jewish law, were the scribes justified in their accusations against Jesus? What motivated their thinking?

Liberating Lesson

Illness and infirmity in body, mind, and soul afflict everyone today. May those who have not yet found physical healing continue seeking it in the faith, believing that God does heal physical illnesses. Yet He does not heal in every situation. Whether God offers you healing to overcome your illness or strength to continue despite it, you have witnessed the power of God in your life. Paul tells us that God comforts us so that we can comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:4). The testimony of God’s presence in your life at a time when healing or deliverance was needed, provides an opportunity for you to share how God sustained you through that time. Whether He has brought you out or continues to help you through, simply sharing with other hurting people helps them know they are not alone.

Application for Activation

Think of someone you know who is suffering from a physical illness. Pray that God might grant wisdom and a deeper understanding of the role of faith in their healing process. Dare to believe that when physical illness prevails, there is more to pray for than a cure. We can pray for God to give us grace and increased faith amid our pain. Make a list of the times God has healed you physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Reflect on how that healing changed your life and deepened your faith. If you are still awaiting healing, reflect on the blessings He has given you during your situation.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do?

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned?

Say It Correctly

Capernaum. kah-**PEER**-nah-um.

Palsy. **PALL**-zee.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Peace and Healing Will Come
(Isaiah 57:14–21)

TUESDAY

Healed by Christ's Wounds
(1 Peter 2:18–25)

WEDNESDAY

Canaanite Daughter Healed by Mother's Faith
(Matthew 15:21–28)

THURSDAY

Anoint Sick with Oil and Prayer
(James 5:13–16)

FRIDAY

Woman Healed by Her Faith
(Mark 5:21–34)

SATURDAY

The Sick Need a Physician
(Mark 2:13–17)

SUNDAY

Jesus Heals and Forgives the Paralytic
(Mark 2:1–12)