

The authority of Christ.  
Mark 2:1-10

Isaiah 45:18-25

Hebrews 1

Responsive. Psalm 103:1-10

Last week we finished up chapter 1 which ended with the healing of the Leper in the synagogue. Let us read verse 40 to the end of the chapter for a bit of a review. It was here that we see a dynamic shift in Jesus ministry there that parallels his salvific work. A man, who was unclean, sick, full of disease, who was cast outside the city. He was treated as though one who was already dead for his illness was not one that could be healed except by a miracle. This man, went against every obstacle, everything that stood in his way to approach Jesus. Even the traditions and laws of Moses could not keep him from Jesus. He was to remain at 50 paces from everyone, proclaim loudly that he was unclean as he walked bearing the shame of his illness, believed to be stricken and cursed by God for his sins.

And yet, here he is, approaching Christ asking to be healed, reaching out in faith that this one who has come would be willing to heal him. As I mentioned last week, notice he did not ask Jesus if he was able, but rather if he would be willing to heal him. He already believed that Jesus had the power, and the authority to cure him and in desperation, defied every obstacle in the hopes to be healed. It is not hard to draw parallels here between this healing of the leper and the healing of our wicked diseased dead heart in the new birth. Both make us outsiders to the city, the heart of the wicked is estranged from God, his wicked rebellion is a pox and disease of the soul, and though alive is as if one dead just as this leper was.

Also notice, that it says that Jesus was moved with compassion for him. The bible is full of moments of God showing compassion, how many times has he told the prophets that he was going to utterly destroy Israel, yet he was moved by compassion to save them. Is this not the reason that Christ came? Leaving his throne in heaven, becoming a mortal man, dying to pay the price for the sins of his people is the ultimate act of compassion. To die, for those who hate him, so that one day they will be reconciled to him by his own healing hand upon their hearts. To make alive those who are dead, who are outside the city, but not only are they allowed to enter that glorious city of God, he has adopted us as his children through the blood of his Son granting us every promise, every right that an heir would inherit

And just like this leper who was healed by Jesus, it was Jesus' who reached out and touched him. Jesus did the unthinkable, the forbidden, and would have been seen as dirtying himself, infecting himself with this disease. But that was not the case, he was not stained by the contact of this leper, but rather the leper was healed. In much the same way when Christ took our sin and nailed it to the cross in our place, he did not become polluted by our sin he took it, and overcame it, cleansing it, erasing it. Some believe that he took on our sins and became sinful himself therefor in his death spent those days he was in the tomb in hell paying that penalty. But we must remember who we are talking about here, the holy one, the lion of Judah, the Son of God, the Messiah, the word of God, the one who touches the leper and heals yet remains holy, and clean, a spotless lamb. I know there is much controversy here over what happened to Christ during those 3 days, and there are those who take a literal understanding when it says that he became sin for us, and descended into Sheol meaning that he went to hell and payed the punishment for the sins laid upon him.

And I will clarify that this is my own view, but I believe that it is rather more like what we see here with the healing of the leper. He did not become sick himself, transferring the sickness to his own body and then healing it, but rather he reached out, touched him, and with a word said, be cleansed. And immediately the leprosy was gone.

Christ died, on the cross in our place. Perfect, and holy, took the punishment of death that was brought upon mankind by the fall of Adam and in 3 days resurrected defeating death, paying the price and breaking that curse for those who are, and who will become his brothers and sisters, adopted heirs to the promised land, the City of God. One of the best explanations of this is the example of a guilty criminal facing the judge, after being charged with the most heinous of crimes, an innocent man stands up and says to the Judge, Sir, I will stand in his place, I will take his punishment for him. That is much how I picture judgement day, all of humanity will be lined up and we will see God on his throne, and the lamb sitting at his right hand. As we approach the throne all of our sin, all of our rebellion, will be exposed to us, but Christ will stand there and say, this is my brother, or this is my sister for whom I have died, whose sin and rebellion is covered by my blood and it is then we will hear the precious words of our Lord and savior, well done my good and faithful servant.

We to, like this leper come to Christ in faith, the one who is not only able, but willing to cleanse and forgive. And I mentioned it last week as well, notice what had happened here. Because of the healing of the leper, word got out and such a crowd amassed that Jesus was no longer able to enter the city but had to stay outside. He traded places with the leper, he became the one outside the city while the leper was now able to enter. It is the same with the cross, he himself was not uncleared but suffered as one who was unclean, outside the city walls so that we God's children may now enter.

Now, starting up chapter 2 here. For those who are keeping notes, this is still under the section of the start of Jesus' Galilean ministry. For the next 2 chapters we will see accounts of Jesus' ministry here, and these 2 chapters could be split into 5 sections each having their own compact narratives that Mark give us insight into the Authority of Jesus and a picture of his daily life during his time here in Capernaum.

So let us start off here by reading the first 12 verses here which is 1 of the 5 story accounts the Mark records of Jesus ministry here in Capernaum. Mark records here that after a few days they return to Capernaum. If you remember earlier in the chapter 1 they were at Peters house and many were gathering there so Jesus took his disciples and they left to visit the neighboring towns. So now we see Jesus has returned. The greek word used here is oiko, which could be translated as home, and suggests that it is a returning to a familiar place which is why many scholars believe that it was Peters house. The construction of these homes were such that there was stairs outside the home leading to the roof, which is flat, constructed by cross sections of beams, covered in thatch and mud creating a sort of patio that would be used much like we use our decks and patios

It was through this roof of dirt, hay and wood that these 4 men dug into to be able to gain access to Jesus since there was such a crowd of people there was no access through the doorway. Mark uses the term crowd over 40 times before chapter 10. People would gather and listen to Jesus preach, they would witness his miracles but it is interesting to note that it is never recorded that these multitudes would repent and become followers of Jesus. Sure they would follow him, they would listen to him but there is no record of a mass conversion of these Jews. Mark never uses the number of people who gather and listen to the teachings of Christ as a measure of Jesus ministry.

Infact, it appears that the mass of people gathering around him seemed instead of be more of a negative effect, limiting access to him. These crowds who gather around Jesus, seeking to hear or see something shocking seem to have little interest in believing that Jesus is the Messiah but rather are either there to judge him and cause problems as we see later with the Pharisees, or they are there because it is the new exciting thing happening in town.

We even see it in Jesus ministry, how he treated the teaching of the crowds who gathered, verses the private teaching of those who followed him. In chapter 4 Mark records that Jesus used parables but in private would explain the parables to those who were his closest followers. There is not much different in the teaching of the word of God today. Almost everyone has heard the Jesus story, almost everyone knows that Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus, yet this does not bring about salvation, forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to God. It it takes a special teaching, a special revelation, a special understanding before belief and repentance occur. This is where we get the idea of the general, and effectual call of the gospel. There is the call of the gospel the the masses, to the crowds. But they do not come to repentance, they hear the word, reject it and go about their life.

Then there is the effectual call, the special call and revelation of Christ. It is much like what we see with Jesus and his disciples, he reveals to them the truth of his word. With out this revelation, which comes along with the new birth our understanding would be clouded just as the crowds who hear the parables. So to put it simply, the view of salvation that is supported by this teaching here is one of a particular redemption. This is not just an open gospel call relying solely on the wills of the listeners to respond to what they hear, but rather along with this open gospel call is a particular gospel revelation which is kept for those who God has chosen to reveal it to. In fact Christ himself says this is the very reason he uses parables in his teaching, Turn with me to Matthew 13, starting in verse 10. Jesus had just finished the parable of the sower and the seed and his disciples asked him,

“Why do you speak to them in Parables? He answered and said to them. Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefor I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled which says Hearing you will hear and shall understand, and seeing you will see and not percieve; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.”

The gospel is given to all to hear, but only given to some to understand. This is the biblical view of the gospel call and we see it here in the gospel of Mark as well. James Edward in his comentary says, “ The throng in the courtyard is blocking a needy party from reaching Jesus. Being part of the crowd around Jesus is not the same as being a disciple of Jesus. The crowd stands and observes, while the disciples commit themselves to action, as illustrated here by these four men. If an opening to Jesus can not be found one must be made. This is a description of faith, it will remove any obstacle even a roof if necessary to get to Jesus. The first mention of faith here in Mark significantly links it with acting rather then with knowing or feeling. Faith is first and foremost not knowledge about Jesus but active trust that Jesus is sufficient for ones deepest and most heartfelt needs.”

Notice the similarities here between the paralytic, and the leper. There is nothing that is going to stand in his way to get to Jesus, he is not like the crowd standing and watching but rather was seeking the Messiah to be healed, to be blessed, to be saved. Just as the leper disregarding the law, and traditions pushing his way through the crowd to get to Jesus, risking it all. So are these men, digging through the roof probably showering straw and dirt on those inside.

We also see just Jesus response to them was just like that with the leper. He did not retract, he did not shout out in anger for them destroying the roof, he was moved by compassion and says to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." This is an interesting statement by Jesus. His friends dug a hole in the roof and lowered him down in hopes that he would be healed of his physical infirmities but Jesus tells him that his sins are forgiven. On one level this seems a bit odd, but Mark goes on to explain the discourse that happens afterward in verse 6. "And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, Why does this man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

There are many different ideas as to why Jesus made this statement instead of just healing him like he did so many others. One is the idea that physical infirmity are tied to our sin. The idea that our sickness is a judgment upon us because of our sin. I never really liked that idea, it sounds to charismatic, it seems to just be another way to try to keep people in check. You better not sin because God will strike you with horrible diseases! That being said I do think that there definitely are sins that cause physical problems, but to make blanket statements that all illness are caused because of some sin in your life I think wrong. That idea of sin is something that is taught using this account of the paralytic man as proof but it is not supported at all by this text.

If we continue on in verse 9 and following we see exactly why Jesus said what he said. "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven you, or to say Arise take up your bed and walk?" and here is the key here, he says. "But so you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic, I say to you arise take up your bed, and go to your house. I think instead of trying to use this passage to support some idea or doctrine of sin and illness I think it is better to just go with what Jesus himself says. He said, your sins are forgiven because he has the authority to do so. All those who heard him knew that no one else but God has the authority to forgive sins, which is why the scribes there were saying that Jesus was speaking blasphemies.

With this statement, he was claiming to be equal to God and the scribes were no slouches, they caught on immediately. And Jesus says that he will heal this man to show that he not only has authority to heal his illness, but to show that he also has the authority to forgive sins. This is the very message that the scribes needed to hear, salvation and forgiveness of sins comes by God through his Son. It is not the mosaic law, their traditions and sacrifices. But it is only by the power of God and his grace that our sins can be forgiven. The scribes should have heard and seen this and bowed down in worship, but they didn't, they did not see Jesus as the fulfillment of the old testament prophesies and promises, but they saw him instead as a blasphemer, someone who is worthy of death because of his claims of being equal with God.

It is interesting to note as well, that not only did Jesus heal this man, but he knew the thoughts and intentions of the scribes. Notice that mark does not record that they were talking among themselves but rather that they reasoned within themselves.

He called them out on their thoughts and answered them according to what they were thinking not what they were saying. This also attests to who he is, that he is the messiah, not only able to heal the sick, cast out demons, and forgive sins, he is also able to know the thoughts and intentions of these scribes. This entire discourse was directed by God, for his purpose and glory, which we see in the following verse.

“Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God saying, We never saw anything like this.” Jesus is the messiah, with all power given to him over sin. Have you sought after him like the leper, or like this paralytic man and his friends? It is only Christ who has the power to heal us, to bring our dead hearts to life making us able to hear, able to see, and able to believe his word. Are you trusting in him? Are your sins covered by his blood? Repent, and believe and follow him who has the power and the authority over all things.