

Well, if you're anything like me, and you grew up going to Sunday School, you probably know that story well... It really captures our attention, doesn't it:

- the crowded house;
- the four friends, not at all perturbed by the impenetrable wall of humanity;
- climbing their way to the roof;
- digging their way through the roof; and
- lowering their mate down at the feet of Jesus.

And some of us will of heard the story many times,,,,, but have you ever stopped to imagine what it would've been like to of actually been there??? – the messiness of it all...

Here's Jesus preaching:

“You're all here at just the right time, because the time is now... The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Today is a day for repentance and faith. Repent of sin – turn from your evil ways, and believe in our God – Believe in the God of justice; Believe in the God of mercy; ... and trust in Him...”

And then something distracting happens:

- bump; bump; bump, with little bits of dirt falling from the roof;
- then a rustling sound;
- followed by a scraping sound, coming from up on the roof;
- and then debris begins falling;
- first a little bit of dried mud; and
- everybody starts looking up; and
- it falls into your eyes; and then

- snap. Crack!, as the sticks and light timbers are parted; and
- down falls a big lump of old thatch and dried mud; and
- ahh, you dust it out of your hair; and
- it keeps going;
- cough; cough; cough;
- ohh, what's going on???
- *“Hey, Simon & Andrew, is your house going to fall down, or what?”*
- *“Just as well there's a carpenter here... I guess he's going to have to fix this before he goes”;*
- And as the dust clears, you look up, and there's 4 faces peering down at ya... ;
- They disappear for a moment; and
- then a paralysed man, suspended by rope, is lowered down through the hole;
- Everybody's just looking upwards, amazed;
- Jesus Himself, is marvelling... He doesn't say it at the time, but He's just amazed at their faith...
- And He looks at the man laying in front of Him,
- ***“Son, Your sins are forgiven.”***

What does that mean? “I've forgiven you for destroying the roof...”???

Now, for us modern people, we might instantly think, “What a disappointment that would've been.”... I mean, they just went to all that effort, to bring a paralysed man to someone who had a reputation of miraculously healing people, and all Jesus gives him is forgiveness????

And to us, that might sound like a disappointment. But there's a fair probability, that for the Paralytic and his 4 friends, that's exactly what they were looking for... The Jewish understanding was very much that "forgiveness of sins" and "healing" went hand-in-hand. The Talmud (which **isn't** the Word of God BTW – [it was a Jewish writings that the teachers of the Law studied], and it outlined the practical application **of** the Law) said: "*No one gets up from his sick-bed until all his sins are forgiven*"ⁱ

Alright, so it's quite likely, that for them, the act of them bringing this man to Jesus, was so he **could** repent of his sins,,, as the first step of his healing... Jesus is preaching, "**Repent and believe in the Good News**"... With our western perspective, we automatically assume that the paralytic is looking for immediate healing, but it's highly likely that he came to repent – he came to the one who was preaching repentance, as the first step of his healing, and maybe he came, because he **believed** in the Good News"...

Jesus saw their faith. Jesus saw their belief, and He knew what it was.

Righto.

When Jesus came to Capernaum the first time, He ended up having to get out of there because the crowds of spectators were flocking to Him. – they'd seen His miracles, and they wanted to see some more.... And Jesus moved on to **other** towns, because He came to preach... That was His main purpose. That was His calling... – to preach repentance; and faith – To preach The Good News...

And you know, that should **always** be the focus of the Christian church... In the era of the mega-church, it's becoming more and more about being a concert-like atmosphere of entertainment, sometimes mixed up with 'good advice for living'... But preaching repentance, and faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, must **always be** the focus of the church...

Many people will come and have a bit of a look at God – a bit of a 'taste' of this 'church thing', or this 'Christianity thing', because they sense they have a **need** in their life:

- there might be sickness;
- maybe they lack direction;
- there may be trouble in their marriage;
- a struggle with anxiety; or
- depression; or
- loneliness.
- Maybe it's financial hardship; or
- maybe they're estranged from their kids; or
- they just feel that they're drowning, in everything that is the messiness of life...

And they feel "Maybe God might be the answer..."

And so they come along to church for a few months, but their problems aren't solved, and so they cross that one off their list, and they say, "Well, I gave the 'God thing' a go..." and they'll move on to something else.

And the whole time, they missed their **greatest** need... Our greatest need, is forgiveness. Our greatest problem, isn't an external one, that we need some more tools to help us to

rectify it, or to help us to cope with it – Our greatest problem is **internal** – Every one of us, is a sinner in need of a saviour... And the only one who can help us out with that is Jesus Christ...

And as we become disciples of Jesus, and as we **follow** Him day-by-day, some of our other issues **will** be sorted out,, But first and foremost, our most pressing need, is the forgiveness of sins.

And whether the paraplegic **did** come seeking healing, or whether he came seeking forgiveness, it doesn't matter... Jesus straight away, identified His **greatest** need. Forgiveness of his sins...

Jesus' message has been "Repent and Believe"... He saw their belief – He saw their faith,, and He said, "*Son, Your sins are forgiven.*"

Now, at this point, we come to the first of five stories (coming one after the other), involving conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities. **This** is where the tension first begins to build – the tension, that will eventually lead to His crucifixion...

The issue:

They were thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"...

And you know what??? They're right and they're wrong... No one can forgive sins but God alone... If anyone else presumed to forgive that man's sins on behalf of God, they **would** be blaspheming... But because of who Jesus is – the Son of God – He Himself, is divine...

And that's what the Gospel of Mark is about – revealing to us, the Son of God.

That's how Mark introduces this Gospel, **Mark 1:1** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. – We've got the executive summary (right at the beginning) – we know what this Gospel is about, but as we read this Gospel of Mark, we're going to see how many people missed it.

^{v8} 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!"

Why did Jesus heal that paralysed man??? It was to prove that He had authority to forgive sins.

- Was the paralytic paralysed because of some horrendous sin that he'd done in the past??? Don't know.
- Was he paralysed, simply so that Jesus could make his point there at that time??? Don't know.

But what I do know, is:

1. If I got what I deserved, I wouldn't only be paralysed, I'd be deaf, dumb, blind, and dead....

Do you get this? If God had a practice of punishing us **all** (in **this** life) for our sins, by inflicting sickness, disease, disabilities and hardship, there'd be no one left to bury us – because that is what we all deserve...

I used to visit a bloke in the old-folks home (he wasn't a Christian BTW), and he used to tell me stories about how he was a bit of a rogue, and did a few spiteful things (that hurt other people a fair bit),,,,

But then in his next breath, he'd tell me about all his ailments, and how he's stiff and sore, and had a bit of a complication and had to spend a day in hospital (when he'd never been to hospital before), and he'd say to me, "Why is God doing this to me??? What did I do to deserve this???"

And I'd say to him, "You're in your mid 80's, you've never been in hospital until now, and you're blaming God for doing something to you that you reckon you

don't deserve....."

Scripturally, God sometimes does punish the wicked with sickness, disease, adversity... But these instances are to be a reminder to us, that we will **all** be judged, on the Day of The Lord..

So the first thing is, If we got what we deserved, it wouldn't be pretty...

2. The second thing I **do** know, is that a word of forgiveness from the Lord God Almighty, is not an empty word... With forgiveness, comes healing and wholeness. Of course, Spiritual healing is what's **most** important, but **sometimes** in the mercy of God, He also grants (at his discretion), physical healing...

And **sometimes**, unconfessed sin, and ongoing sin, is a barrier to our healing... But not always.

Some people have the view, that **any** sickness and **any** disease, is a direct result of unconfessed personal sin... And if you've been praying for healing and not **getting** healed, then there's obviously some sin that's **stopping** the healing...

Well **sometimes**, that **is** the case, but as I said before, if we all got what we deserved, we'd **all** be on our death-beds... The day of judgment isn't now. The day of judgment is coming...

In fact, it's obvious that mostly, the wicked are **not** punished in this life:

- Jeremiah asked of God, “Why does the way of the wicked prosper?”ⁱⁱ
- Job wanted to know, “Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power?”ⁱⁱⁱ
- In the Psalms, we see the observance of the prosperity of the wicked – “They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind...”^{iv}

Alright, it's not normal for God to judge the sinful in this life... (**Sometimes** He does, but not usually)

And so The Lord's word of forgiveness, is not an empty word. When we repent of our sin, and turn to Jesus as Lord, and follow Him as our Lord, Our forgiveness is real, and it's powerful (regardless of whether we receive physical healing or not).

3. And the third thing I know, and this is the best news of all, Jesus came to save sinners. Jesus has the **authority** to forgive sins.

We don't have to go to a priest, and kill bulls and sheep and goats, to make atonement for our sin. That work has been done on the cross. Jesus gave Himself, to make that atonement. ...

And we don't only have the healing of this paralysed man to prove the authority of Jesus to forgive sins – The fact that Jesus was raised from the dead, is all the proof we need...

But what we **do** with that proof of Jesus' authority to forgive sin, is what matters...

Last week we talked about the difference between 'a spectator' and 'a disciple of Jesus'... The spectator is there to have a look, and maybe to have an experience, but a disciple of Jesus:

- repents;
- believes in Jesus; and
- follows Jesus...

And by healing that paralytic, Jesus gave them everything they needed, to be able to believe in Him...

And some people were changed by that incident...

- The paralytic and his mates – men of faith, received what they needed.
- But the spectators were still focussed on what they saw.
“We never saw anything like this.”

What do we do with the proof that Jesus has authority to forgive sin???

Let's believe it....

And let's respond to it.

Let's pray,
Lord Jesus Christ,
We want to thank you that you have the authority to forgive
sins.

Sometimes we get fixated on our health; our circumstances;
our physical needs,,,
and we neglect our **greatest** need of all – the forgiveness of
sin...

But Lord, we thank You, that You **didn't** neglect this need.
We thank you that You willingly gave Yourself, to be
humiliated on the cross,
to free us from sin...

thank you Jesus.

And Lord, Your message is “repentance” for the forgiveness
of sin.

And Lord, we have so much we have need to repent of.

- the way we've followed our will instead of Yours;
- we've been living as citizens of the Kingdom of this world, instead of the Kingdom of God...
- We've been selfish
- We've been bitter
- We've been unforgiving;
- spiteful; vengeful;
- We've stored up treasures in this world, instead of treasures in Heaven

We may refer to You as “Lord”,

But we haven't truly submitted to You as "Lord".

God, forgive us.

And Lord, as we repent, and as we ask forgiveness in the
Name of Jesus,

We thank You for the gift of forgiveness.

It is a gift. Help us to never devalue it.

And be our strength, as we go on,

as disciples of Jesus, following Him because He is Lord.

And Lord, in Your mercy,

we also pray today for physical healing.

If there be any here today,

that it is Your will to give physical healing to,

then Lord, please do Your mighty work.

Lord, may You be glorified.

May You be glorified in the forgiveness of sins;

May You be glorified in the faith of the forgiven; and

May You be glorified in Your gracious gift of healing.

Lord, be glorified in us, as we follow You,

Our Lord, our Saviour, our Redeemer.

in Jesus' Name,

Amen

ⁱ B.Ned.41a . Quoted from: Hooker, Morna D. Blacks New Testament Commentaries – The Gospel According to Saint Mark. Hendrickson Publishers, 1991. (p.85)

ⁱⁱ Jer 12:1

iii Job 21:7
iv Psalm 73