

Mark 2: 1 – 12. Jesus heals a paralytic man.

It's always good to hear or read eye-witness accounts of events, the story told by someone who was actually there.

I've been reading a book the last couple of weeks about Backyard Brighton, about the streets that used to be between Edward Street and Albion Hill, down to Lewes Road, in the early 1900s. Most of the streets and buildings were demolished in the 1930s onwards. In that book there are the memories of life at that time, when people didn't go to see the doctor when they were ill because it cost a shilling – 5p! If you had a toilet in your house you were posh! If you were a child and you misbehaved in the street, you'd get a clout round the ear from the local policeman. Boys got their first pair of long trousers when they were 14! One girl was nearly suffocated when her sister closed a drawer she was sleeping in. Happy days!

But the book comes **alive** because it's told by people who were there, these are **their** experiences. They were there.

It is generally accepted that Mark wrote his gospel as he heard the first-hand, eye-witness accounts of Peter. In 1 Peter 5:13, Peter refers to Mark as 'my dear son, Mark', maybe indicating that Mark first came to faith through Peter's witness.

As you know, Mark's gospel was the first to be written down, probably between 20 and 30 years after Jesus' death, and it is **action-packed** – it records more miracles than the other gospels, showing Jesus to be a man of power and action and not just a good teacher.

As we read the miracles that are recorded here, we can see that these are the events that Peter witnessed – he was there – these are the events that excited and inspired Peter. Simon Peter, you remember, was the one who left his fishing nets **immediately** when Jesus invited him 'Come, follow me, and I'll make you a fisher of men'. He was the impulsive one, he did things spontaneously. When Jesus was reported to have risen, he ran to the tomb to see for himself. After Jesus' ascension to heaven, Peter went around preaching the good news about Him, and said 'We **cannot help** speaking about what we have seen and heard.'

You can imagine Peter getting excited as he remembers and tells Mark about the wonderful things Jesus did during his earthly ministry.

Here in chapter 2, you can maybe hear Peter say, ‘Oh yes and then there was the time when the man was lowered through the roof.’ Peter was there – he saw it as it happened.

In chapter 1 and verse 45 we read, ‘(Read verse)’. In Matthew chapter 4 and verse 24 we read ‘(Read verse)’. News about Jesus spread like wildfire – by word of mouth, mind – you couldn’t send your friend a text in those days! – they heard what he was doing, and people came from **everywhere** to see him & to hear him, but most of the time hoping to experience his healing power. This man Jesus worked miracles and people wanted to be there. When Jesus was at Simon Peter’s house in chapter 1, it says the **whole town** gathered at the door, bringing the sick and demon-possessed.

Drop a rock into the sea, it causes ripples, and the ripples spread out further and further, and affect an increasing area. The effect of Jesus has been like a rock dropped into the sea of history – gradually his life has affected more and more people, no other person in the whole of history has affected people like he has. Those ripples are **still** being felt as the good news of his salvation changes people’s lives all over the world. This passage – like the whole of God’s word - revolves around who Jesus is. We will see that Jesus is the Son of God, so we can approach him with our burdens, we can be confident he will supply our needs, but not everyone will recognise his Lordship. Let’s look **firstly** then at the people drawn to Him here.

A burden shared is a burden eased.

(Read verses 1 – 5) Capernaum has become Jesus’ home, his base from where he went into the area preaching the word. As we’ve already said, the crowd attracted was enormous, all intent on experiencing what Jesus had to offer. There was no way through the crowd, and so these men – we aren’t told their names, that isn’t important – what is important is what they did and why – so these men went up the steps that would have been at the side of the house, up to the flat roof on top. The only way in was to make a hole in the roof big enough to lower a mat through with a man who was paralysed lying on it. We’re not told what the owner thought of his roof being dismantled – today they would have been screaming ‘compensation’! It must have been quite a hole, but we’re not told what was said about that – what Jesus said and did was much more worthy of being recorded.

If one man had come carrying his friend, he would have struggled; even two would have found it difficult to carry him to Jesus; **four** men brought him on a mat.

Recently I was wanting to move one of those picnic benches at school, you know with the table and benches attached either side. They are so bulky and awkward! I asked another person to help me, but it still kept wobbling from side to side as we tried to move forward. So I asked two other people to help, and with the four of us - one on each corner - it was much more stable and easier to carry. Carrying a burden is easier with help.

These four friends are moved by their compassion for this paralysed man, they are moved to action. They have heard that Jesus has been healing people of their diseases, so they have brought him. But they didn't act on their own, they acted together. When they see the massive crowds, they don't say 'Oh well, we tried, but we can't get to Jesus, let's go.' No they persevere, take extreme action for the sake of their friend. 'Jesus is here and now, he may not be here again, we may miss the opportunity – we must do something.'

'Cast all your anxieties on him (Jesus) because he cares for you' 1 Peter 5:7. These men have come to the right place. They can cast their burden upon **Jesus** because he cares. Likewise **we** can come to Jesus with any care, anxiety, problem, worry, burden because he cares for us – sometimes we try other avenues before we do that – it should be automatic, our first port of call, because Jesus cares for **us**. But here we see more than this – these four men bring their concern to Jesus **together**. It is essential to bring our worries to Jesus, but it is good to bring our concerns to God **together**. We say 'a problem shared is a problem halved', well a burden shared is a burden eased – maybe not removed, but eased. As Christians we are in God's family, we share our highs and lows. The early church in Acts had everything in common. We are one. This extends to our worries – it is good to share our concerns, and to bring these to God together.

Attendance at our prayer meeting on a Monday has been excellent in recent weeks – between a third and a half the number of people that attend a Sunday meeting – that's excellent. **That's** the place to bring our needs before God together. Martin Luther said 'Let's pray in the church, with the church and for the church'(x2). But it doesn't have to be in a meeting – we can share all things with our brothers and sisters in Christ, anywhere, any time (within reason, of course!) Sometimes we're reluctant to share our burdens with others – let's move away from that – God **wants** us to bring our needs to him, and the more people praying, the more prayers that go up to him the better – Satan, the devil will hate it!

And the rewards? Philippians 4: 6, 7 (Read) ‘The peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.’ Let’s help each other to know this peace.

If we want something badly enough we try our **hardest**, we don’t stop at the first hurdle – these men didn’t turn away when they saw those crowds. Let’s get into the habit of sharing our concerns with one another and bringing those needs to God fervently and together.

(Read verses 5 – 11). **Secondly**, but most importantly, **Jesus can supply man’s need because he is the Son of God, but also the Son of Man.**

Jesus recognises the faith of these men. They have brought this man to Jesus because they have faith in his power to heal their friend. **They** recognise that Jesus has power and authority over sickness and disease, that he has supernatural power to heal. Jesus sees their faith in him as well-placed.

In chapter 1 and verse 1, Mark begins his gospel with ‘The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus is the one and only Son of almighty God, and the gospel Mark writes goes on to support this claim by giving accounts of the miracles Jesus performed, and his supreme work of salvation on the Cross and in his rising from the dead. Only God could do the things Jesus did – only the sinless Son of God was able to take upon himself the punishment for **our** sins; only God has the power and authority to lay down his life and take it up again. Jesus, the Son of God. This title emphasises that Jesus is fully God. The teachers of the law were absolutely right when they said (verse 7) ‘Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ Only God **can** forgive sins – in Jesus, the Son of God, fully God. Jesus says in John 10:30, ‘I and the Father are one’.

But here in chapter 2 of Mark’s gospel, we see Jesus referred to as the ‘Son of Man’. This title emphasises that Jesus was also at the same time fully man, fully human, open to the same feelings and needs as we are. For example, we see him in chapter 3 verse 5 experiencing anger and distress (read); in chapter 6 verse 34 we read that he had compassion (read); in the garden of Gethsemane in chapter 14 verse 33,34 we read (read). Jesus was fully man – yet sinless. Because of this he identifies with our feelings and needs, he helps us to overcome sin.

So when these men bring their paralysed friend to Jesus, the Son of God but also the Son of Man, he (Jesus) recognises that the man's **first and paramount** need was to know forgiveness for his sins. 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'

We're not told what the four helpers thought when Jesus said this – perhaps they brought their friend to Jesus just to see him healed from paralysis. Would they have been disappointed at this point? We don't know. Jesus saw that the man's **real** need was for forgiveness for his sins. You know, Jesus is the Son of God – he knows all things – he is the Son of Man – he identifies with your feelings and needs. He knows what you **really** need, he will supply your needs – in Philippians 4: 19 we read 'And my God will supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.' Do you believe that? He may not supply all your wants – but he **will** supply all your needs.

And God has supplied for your greatest need – the forgiveness for your sins. Jesus himself – only he was good enough – died on the cross, and took upon himself the punishment for your sins, so that you may know forgiveness – that is your greatest need. Do you know anything of that? I pray and trust that you do.

But the teachers of the law will have none of it. I suppose words are easy. I could say that I can do 30 press-ups and run a marathon in 2 hours – but without evidence, it's difficult to believe! Very difficult to believe! It's easy to say, I suppose, that you can do something like forgiving sins, without anyone being able to see the effect on the person, because it affects their heart. It **will** be evident as time goes by, miracles of forgiveness bring changed lives to those that trust Jesus, but the evidence is perhaps not immediately apparent. Jesus knows what these teachers of the law are thinking in their hearts, and so he heals the man of the physical disease. (Read verses 10 and 11). Jesus shows that he has the power and authority to heal both physically and spiritually. He frees this man from the physical chains of paralysis and also from the spiritual chains of his sin.

Jesus can supply man's need because he is the Son of God, but also the Son of Man.

Before we move on to my third point, I'd just like you to notice the way Jesus speaks to this man. In verse 5 – '**Son**, your sins are forgiven.' Have you noticed that before? '**Son**, your sins are forgiven.'

A few weeks ago, Derek was telling us about his delight at becoming a father, and wanting to shout it to the world – I can echo that – it’s wonderful to take part in a small reflection of God’s work in creation. When it happens, it’s hard to take it in – it’s a miracle! I’m a father. John 1:12 tells us ‘Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God’ I’m a son! I’m a son of God! Can you say to Jesus from your heart ‘You are the Christ, the son of the living God’ as Peter did? If you know God’s forgiveness for your sins, you are a son or daughter of almighty God! Does that thrill your heart? Do you want to shout that to the world? I think we should. Becoming a son or daughter of God is just as big a miracle – if not greater – than becoming a father or mother.

(Read verse 12) **Finally, some receive, but some don’t.** It is a fact that some people see what God is doing through Jesus and **their** eyes are opened to who he is, but some people seeing the same things remain totally blind.

‘This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying ‘We have never seen anything like this!’ We read at various times in Mark’s gospel that the people who saw what Jesus was doing were amazed, and they praised God. I am sure that many saw and heard the truth about Jesus and believed and had their whole lives turned around, completely changed like this paralysed man here. When a person recognises Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life, they become a new creation – 2Cor. 5:17 says ‘... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!’ Some receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

We saw earlier that the teachers of the law recognised that Jesus was claiming to be God, when he forgave this man for his sins, but they preferred to think he was blaspheming rather than accept that he **was** the Son of God as he said he was.

There is a warning here. Capernaum, as I’ve already said, became Jesus’ home, his base, and as a result Jesus spent a lot of time in the area teaching and preaching the good news, and also performing many miracles. But Capernaum was a thriving business community with great wealth. The warning comes in Matt. 11:23-4 (read). Some prefer to continue in their sin. Some prefer to totally reject Jesus’ claims.

Some will not accept Jesus' forgiveness for their sins, no matter what they hear or see. '... it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgement, than for' these people.

Look at our country, look at our city, rejection of God and evil abounds, rampant sin all around. There **will** be great rejoicing at the salvation of some; but make no mistake, **judgement** will come to those who refuse to put their trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Some will receive, but some will not.

Well, in summary. This is a wonderful account of a historical event, it actually happened – Peter was there.

We see Jesus the Son of God, with power and authority over all things, able to heal, able to forgive our sins; Jesus the Son of Man able to understand and identify with our feelings and needs. Wherever you are at the moment whatever your needs – whether you are still in need of forgiveness for your sins, whether you have other needs, Jesus is the **only one** who can supply all your needs. Let's come to him, let's bring one another and one another's needs to him. Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear the truth, will recognise and receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

I'd just like to finish with the origin of the term 'Son of man'. And we find this in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, chapter 7 and verse 13. This is part of a passage where Daniel has a vision about the end times and we read (read). Put Jesus where it says he or him (re-read verse 14). Do you know him? Do you know the Son of God? Do you know Jesus? He is coming one day to reign forever – will you be part of that?