

The Forgiving of the Paralytic

Galilean Ministry Part 8

Mark 2:1-5 1/6/2018

Summary: Jesus' house is mobbed so he preaches the gospel. Four believing men rip a hole in Jesus' roof to bring their unbelieving, paralyzed friend to Jesus, and Jesus forgives the man, showing the priority of spiritual healing over physical. Forgiveness is restoration of closeness with God, and comes through faith alone (in this case, through the intercessory actions of the friends' faith).

Introduction.....	1
Dr. Jesus.....	1
Review: Cleansing.....	2
The Priority: Forgiveness.....	3
The Setting: The People Mob Jesus.....	3
Jesus' Response: Preaching the Gospel.....	3
The Arrival of the Five Men.....	4
Jesus Heals the Paralytic's ... Heart.....	5
The Priority of Forgiveness.....	5
The Meaning of Forgiveness.....	6
Restored Relationship.....	7
For Evangelism.....	8
The Prerequisite: Faith.....	8
Intercessory Action.....	8
Conclusion.....	9

Mark 2:1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. **2** So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. **3** Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. **4** Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. **5** When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Introduction

Dr. Jesus

What would you do if Jesus walked into the room here right now and said, "I will give you any kind of healing you want. Pick one thing that's wrong with you, and I'll heal it." What would you pick?

All through Mark chapter 1 we got to see how the people of Capernaum answered that question. Fever, demons, leprosy, paralysis, various other diseases and injuries. And Jesus healed every one of them. What would you pick?

We finished up ch.1 before the holidays, so today we begin Mark ch.2, which starts with yet another healing. And to help us understand what's going on in this section and what it all means, glance down real quick to v.17, where Jesus refers to himself as a doctor. Dr. Jesus. That's how Jesus thought of himself. He was a doctor, which makes sense, right after that whole explosion of healings. It seems to

make sense, but if you take a quick glance at the context of v.17, you'll see that what Jesus meant by "doctor" has nothing to do with physical healing.

Look at v.16 – who are the sick that Jesus came to be a doctor for? Tax collectors and sinners. Jesus came to be a doctor, not for people who have *physical* illness, but people who have *spiritual* illness. But if that's the case, what's with all the physical healings? What's the relationship between the physical healing and spiritual healing?

And what is spiritual healing? If I asked a doctor, "What does it mean to have the flu?... " he would describe the process of how some virus gets inside the body and causes damage, and results in all the various flu symptoms. He could tell me all about what cancer does and how that works, or paralysis or allergies or brain damage or a sprained ankle. We understand all that, but what does it mean to have a spiritual disease? What does it mean for there to be something akin to a virus or an injury or a cancer – infecting your inner man – the immaterial, non-physical part of you?

That's the language the Bible uses to describe sin. And here's something important to understand – it's not just an illustration or a figure of speech. Don't think that physical disease as real disease, but spiritual disease is just a spiritual analogy that's not literal. When you think of the immaterial part of you – your mind, thoughts, emotions, will, your beliefs – is all that just a figure of speech? No. That's really you. It's just as much you as your body is. It's very real, and it gets broken and diseased and sick just as literally as your body does.

And Jesus came into this world to set up a medical practice to treat our spiritual diseases. So what is that like? What is it like to have Dr. Jesus give you treatment? What is it like to be treated by him, and what you have to do to get that treatment? Jesus is going to answer those questions tonight in a very vivid and very unexpected way. As we've already seen, Jesus is full of surprises, and he doesn't disappoint here.

Review: Cleansing

It's been a while since our last session, so let me refresh your memory on where we left off. At the end of ch.1, we left Jesus out there in the boonies. Jesus had cleansed a leper, and in the process, ended up trading places with the man, which is a profound symbol of how Jesus cleanses us.

And that whole account introduced Jesus as a spiritual doctor, because remember the guy didn't say, "If you are willing, you can heal me." He said, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Even more than the physical disease, his biggest problem uncleanness. And ceremonial uncleanness was an illustration of spiritual filthiness before God. So curing that leper was a physical healing, but it was an illustration of spiritual cleansing.

Every time we sin, it makes us dirty. And we can all relate to that? We all know what it's like to feel dirty and stained. That's a horrible feeling, isn't it?

There is a classic description of that feeling in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Lady Macbeth convinces her husband to murder the King of Scotland. She tells him, "A little water will clear us of this deed." It won't create much of a stain on our souls – we can be absolved of it. So they kill him, and the guilt ends up driving Lady Macbeth to the brink of insanity. And she ends up incessantly rubbing her hands, trying to get rid of the bloodguilt, and she's talking to a doctor and says, "Out, damned spot! Out, I say! ... will these hands never be clean?" (She apparently didn't realize that by using profane language, all she did was put another spot on her soul.) The doctor responds and says, "This disease is beyond my practice."

That's a famous scene in a play because people can relate to it. Psychologists have even studied it – they call it the "Lady Macbeth Effect." And the burning question for researchers in psychology is, "Why is it that when people do something evil, they feel dirty? You can see how if you are an evolutionist, that would be a hard thing to explain. If a strong person eliminates a weak person – that's the evolutionary process. Why would you feel dirtiness? And it's not like it's cultural conditioning, because that feeling of being dirty or stained is pretty much universal across cultures. Why? Why do people feel dirty on the inside? How's this for a profound theory that seems to elude all the researchers: people feel dirty because they *are* dirty. Guilt feelings are not just some social construct or learned behavior. They are a reflection

of reality. Doing evil things does make your soul ugly and disgusting and loathsome, and everyone who hasn't completely destroyed their conscience can feel that.

So Jesus comes and heals a leper as an illustration of his ability to cleanse our filthy souls. He can get that spot out.

That was last time. But what we're going to find out today is that's not enough. It's not enough to be cleansed and washed.

When the blood of Christ covers your sin, there are various fringe benefits you get. You get a pardon from God, so you no longer have to suffer the punishment you deserve. You get rescued out of slavery to sin. God washes you clean, gets that spot out, and removes your guilt. He gives you spiritual life and the Holy Spirit. He begins the sanctification process and makes you holy. Your destiny changes from hell to heaven. All kinds of marvelous things happen. But all of those are fringe benefits. They are not the main thing. What is the main benefit – the core thing that happens from which all those other things flow? That's what Jesus is going to show us right now.

The Priority: Forgiveness

The Setting: The People Mob Jesus

Chapter 1 ends with this statement:

Mark 1:45 ...Jesus could no longer enter a town openly, but stayed outside in deserted places.

Jesus could not enter a town openly, so he has to stay out there.

Mark 2:1 Some¹ days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum

He can't enter a town openly, but eventually he decides to sneak back into Capernaum. He probably needed some rest. But word gets out, and immediately there's an unmanageable crowd.

1 ... the people heard that he had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door

We don't know if this was Peter's house, or if Jesus got his own house,² but whichever was, it's jammed full of people now. So now what? What do you do when a whole bunch of people are invading your privacy and crowding, not just on your front lawn, but inside your house? And this isn't the only time this happens. People would follow him right inside his own house so that he couldn't even eat sometimes. Jesus' life was no fun. There was no rest - it was relentless. The very problems that Jesus came into this world to solve dogged his steps everywhere.

Jesus' Response: Preaching the Gospel

So how does Jesus handle this?

2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.

That's what Jesus always does – he sees a crowd; he starts preaching the Word – the gospel.³

¹ The NIV says **a few days**, but the word "few" isn't in the Greek. It is not specified how long it was.

² Most commentators assume it is Peter's, but see Lenski for an argument that this was Jesus' own house.

³ The Word seems to refer to the gospel in the parable of the soils in ch.4, and we saw in ch.1 that the gospel was what Jesus devoted himself to preaching.

The Arrival of the Five Men

And it's not just sick people who were there. Jesus was starting to attract the attention of the religious leaders.

Luke 5:17 Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there.

So this crowd moves in, the religious leaders from out of town are there, Jesus starts preaching, and outside on the fringes of the crowd...

3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them.

This poor guy is paralyzed. We don't know if he was paraplegic or quadriplegic, but he couldn't walk. Rough existence back then. No wheel chairs – had to be carried everywhere. If he had to go to the bathroom, get a drink, everywhere. He required 24-hour care.

Fortunately, he had some great friends. They haul this guy from wherever he lived, and bring him to where Jesus was. You can imagine these 5 guys on the way – talking about the stories they had heard about Jesus. They must have been full of hope and anticipation. “We're almost there guys. His house is right down there.” They come around the corner, and their hearts sink. “Oh no – look at the crowd.” But that doesn't stop them.

Luke 5:18 and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.

So these guys are trying to squeeze their way through the crowd, but their efforts fail. Nobody will let them in.

Have you ever been excited to show up somewhere, only to find out it was full – and so you just have to turn around and go home? That's what happens to these guys. They try to get in, they can't, so they do the only thing they can do – they leave. Off they go, right back down the road they came on.

Meanwhile, Jesus is in there preaching his heart out. The Pharisees and Scribes are there. The house is packed, and Jesus is proclaiming the gospel of God. And as usual, the people are captivated – listening in rapt attention. Jesus is revealing things about God that had never been revealed. He's teaching with authority they had never seen. And his teaching is interrupted by debris falling on his head.

What are those noises up there, and all this dust falling down? Now nobody is listening to Jesus anymore – they are all looking up. And now you can see daylight through the ceiling – someone is up there ... digging a hole through the ceiling. The hole is getting bigger and bigger. And it's ... it's those guys – those same guys that were there earlier with their friend on the stretcher. When they left, they didn't go home; they went to buy some ropes.

Then they came back and somehow hoisted their friend up onto the roof, cased the place out to figure the exact spot where Jesus was standing.

4 ... they made an opening in the roof (lit, they unroofed the roof) where Jesus was

How do you get to someone who is a nationally known figure that everyone is trying to get to? These guys figure, “If we just take our friend and drop him right on Jesus head, then he can't ignore us.”

Why are they so aggressive? Were they just calculating, “It would be a lot of work to tear up the roof, but that's still less work than carrying the guy all the way back home, so this is actually the easier path”? I think there was more to it than that, as we'll see later, but the point here is that this is simply that they would do anything to get their friend to Jesus. This is creative, persistent, insistent faith. They *are going to get their friend to Jesus*. They didn't see the impossible situation and say, “Oh well, I guess the Lord closed that door.” No, the Lord closed the door, they open the roof. This is such a dramatic moment. Mark wants us to feel drama, so he switches from the past tense to the present tense when they lower the guy down. So it sounds like this: they unroofed the roof where Jesus was, and having dug through it, they *are lowering* the mat...” He does what we do when we want to really make a story

dramatic – we jump into the present tense to make people picture the scene in their minds. Mark wants us to imagine the scene, so let's do that.

Imagine the dead silence. Everybody's minds are racing, but nobody saying anything. Look around the room. There's Mary – Jesus mother. What's she thinking? She's thinking about her roof. This is getting out of control. What if it rains? Is the homeowner's policy going to cover this? Or maybe she's worried about these guys' safety – "Be careful boys. You could fall."

Some guy is stuck back there in the doorway. He sees the paralytic being lowered down, but he doesn't have a view of Jesus, so he can't see the reaction.

The Pharisees and Scribes are sitting right in front, looking down at this guy in thinking... , *I wonder what kind of horrible sins he committed for God to strike him with this curse.*

A guy on the side with his sick little baby in his arms thinking, *Wow, I should have thought of that.*

Look at the paralytic. Beat red, embarrassed, all eyes on him, shaking in fear. He's looking up at Jesus – what is he going to do?

So that's the scene. Jesus stopped preaching, and he's just standing there in silence. The Pharisees, arms crossed, looking down at the man with disdain. The crowd, in stunned silence, watching, waiting. The paralytic, waiting. Four upside down heads poking down through the ceiling – they want to see what's going to happen. Jesus is about to act.

What you think he's going to do? Well, what does Jesus always do when somebody brings a sick person to him? Do you think Jesus is going to heal this guy?

No, he doesn't heal him. Just about the time you think you have Jesus figured out, he's full of surprises.

Jesus Heals the Paralytic's ... Heart

At first, it sounds like Jesus is going to heal him. The way miracle stories are typically described in the gospels, right here is the point where you expect the healing. And Jesus' has a very favorable response to this guy.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son..."

That's the normal word for "child." Jesus calls this guy his child. That's a very affectionate term. Jesus associates himself with this man in family terms.

It's a term of endearment, but it's also a term that implies a certain amount of authority. Typically, guys in their early 30's don't refer to adults as "child." It's the language of a benevolent superior.

Ok, so everything about this account goes along exactly according to the pattern of all the healing stories, except for the very last line. At this point you expect, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, you are healed. Take up your bed and walk." But Jesus is full of surprises. Instead of saying, "Son, your legs are healed," he says, **Son, your sins are forgiven.** Nobody saw that coming.

So what happened next? Nothing. Nobody spoke – the room was silent. The paralyzed guy tries to move his legs – he can't. Everyone watches to see if his toes twitch or something – nope, nothing. The friends on the roof are watching – is something else going to happen here or what?

The Priority of Forgiveness

Do you think Jesus just misunderstood what these guys wanted? "Oh, you were wanting healing? Oh yeah of course, the paralysis, I should have known. My bad – I was thinking you wanted forgiveness." No. Jesus knew exactly what they wanted and what everyone expected, and he intentionally throws all of us for a loop to teach us something. To teach us what? To teach us what's most important.

How do you think the paralytic would have felt if the story just ended right there and the friends had to carry him back home? They bring this tragic figure to Jesus – a man whose life must have been a nightmare, trying to survive with paralysis in the ancient world. And Jesus just forgives his sins, and

leaves him as paralyzed as ever. How would you feel about that? Your answer to that question reveals something about what you value.

Last time, when I talked about how the cleansing of the leper was more important than the healing of his leprosy, that didn't bother anybody, because the guy was healed. We can handle it just fine when someone says the spiritual is more important than the physical as long as we also get the physical. But what if all you get is the spiritual?

When hurricane Harvey flooded Texas, there was a mega church in Houston that got nationwide criticism for failing to open up their doors to help flood victims. From what I understand, that criticism was unfair because the church was simply taking some safety precautions. But there was a debate on Facebook about that that took very interesting turn. A friend of mine posted on a Christian Facebook forum and said he was glad that that church wasn't opening its doors, because it was a church that teaches a false gospel.

What was interesting to me was the reactions he got from that post. There was a firestorm of negative reaction against him, even from people who agree that that church teaches a false gospel. They said my friend was being cruel, and inhumane, and he didn't care about those poor flood victims what they were going through. And as I watched the debate unfold, became clear that those people would rather have the folks in Houston be exposed to a false gospel and get some temporary relief from their physical suffering, then to be protected from that false gospel but not get physical relief. People give lip service to the reality of spiritual dangers, but in real world situations, they don't seem to really believe that spiritual dangers matter nearly as much as physical dangers.

Which is worse – to be homeless and cold and uncomfortable? Or to be led astray by false gospel and go to hell? Which is the greater danger?

What Jesus does here has all kinds of implications about priorities in ministry. So often people say that you need to meet people's physical needs first before you can deal with their sin and present the gospel to them. Evidently Jesus didn't buy in to that philosophy, because he does the exact opposite of that here. Jesus deals with this guy sins first, and even though Jesus has the power to heal the man the word, the guy is still laying there as paralyzed as ever.

Jesus doesn't look at people the same way we do. We care mostly about temporary, physical things; he cares mostly about spiritual, eternal things. We look at a quadriplegic and think, *Oh, poor guy – he can't walk.* Jesus looks at this guy and his first thought is, *Oh, poor guy. He's doomed to judgment. He's alienated from God. He needs forgiveness.* The paralysis is incidental compared to that.

Nothing in the text indicates that this paralytic was seeking forgiveness of sins. And if he was seeking forgiveness, then he's unique. People came to Jesus asking for a lot of things. They ask for healing, they ask for spiritual information, they ask for deliverance, they ask if they can follow him, they ask for positions in the kingdom – but one thing you never see anyone ask for is forgiveness of sins. If it comes up it's because Jesus brings it up.⁴ My guess is the man was mostly wanting healing, and Jesus gave him something far greater. Sometimes the cruelest thing God could do is to answer our prayers and give us our deepest desires. If Jesus would have healed this guy and sent him home unforgiven, that would have been tragic.

The Meaning of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not something people typically seek, which is insanity because it's the most important thing there is. Earlier I said that things like getting pardon, cleansing, rescue from bondage of sin, spiritual life, going to heaven – those are all fringe benefits, but they aren't the most important thing. What's the most important thing? The most important thing is what Jesus gives this guy – forgiveness.

⁴ John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The people go out to John the Baptist and confess their sins, but that's the last time you ever see anyone confessing their sins in the book of Mark.

Now, you might hear that and think, *Wait a minute. That list of fringe benefits – I thought that was forgiveness.* Doesn't forgiveness mean the same thing as pardon – you don't have to be punished for your sin? No. Think about it. Suppose a child disobeys and his father is angry with him and imposes some consequences. After a while, the child can't stand being at odds with his dad, so he goes and apologizes and begs forgiveness. Let me ask you this – would it be possible for the father to lift the consequences but still not forgive? No punishment, but dad is still just as distant and cold and angry? Yes.

And would it be possible for the father to forgive the child completely – like the prodigal's father embracing him in his arms with tears in his eyes and celebrating, but he still leave the consequences in place? Yes. So clearly, forgiveness is not the same thing as removal of punishment. It's not the same thing as pardon. You can have pardon without forgiveness, and you can have forgiveness without pardon, so clearly they are two different things.

Pardon is a legal issue; forgiveness is relational. Forgiveness is when the closeness of the relationship is restored, and the offended party no longer looks at the sinner through the lens of that sin. He no longer allows the sin to affect how he feels about the person. That's forgiveness. It's the restoration of closeness. As one writer put it, forgiveness is the "untroubled communication of ... love."⁵ The love was there all along, but the communication of that love was disrupted and troubled by the sin. And when forgiveness happens, that disruption ends.

Restored Relationship

It's sad that we so often seek the fringe benefits of forgiveness, but not forgiveness itself. We want to be free from the guilt feelings, we want to be absolved of the punishment, we want that spot to be gone, we want all that, but a lot of times we don't even seek the part that is the heart and soul of forgiveness – restored closeness with God.

Imagine a co-worker got mad at you and just cussed you out in front of everyone at work. And he also went around spreading false rumors about you, and now everyone believes all these lies about you, and it's almost impossible to do your job now. A week or so later, he gets to feeling really bad about what he did. He feels the stain on his soul. And he's talking to his friends about how he wishes he could be rid of that spot. He wishes he could be washed clean. So he does everything he can do to change and become a better man.

That's great. That's great that he wants to be clean and to be rid of that spot on his soul. All that is great as far as it goes, but what's missing? He hasn't come and made things right with you. You see, his guilt feelings are one problem, but they are secondary. The main issue is the broken relationship with you.

When you say the sentence, "I forgive you," that is a very personal, relational thing to say. If you say, "I forgive your financial debt," that could be just a business transaction. But if you forgive someone for sinning against you, that's personal. The relationship is restored. You're back on friendly terms. No longer looking at that person through the lens of that sin, or allowing that sin to color how you feel about the person, or how you think about the person. That's forgiveness.

And that's what Jesus gave this man. This is like, if a beggar came and asked for a dollar and got a billion dollar estate instead. Did this paralytic understand all that? I don't know, but I promise you he understands it now. If we could interview that paralytic right now from heaven, what you think you would say? He might say, "Yes, at the time, I thought being able to walk would be to the greatest gift I could ever get. I wanted that more than anything. But I've been up here with Jesus for about 2000 years now, and I can tell you that being able to walk or not being able to walk during those quick few years on earth was nothing compared to closeness with the Lord Jesus Christ."

⁵ H.N. Mackintosh, *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness*, 26. This book is a classic work on the doctrine of God's forgiveness, and Mackintosh does an excellent job making the case that forgiveness is primarily restoration of the broken relationship.

For Evangelism

And by the way, as an aside – thinking of forgiveness as the central issue in salvation can be very helpful in evangelism. One of the most difficult parts of sharing the gospel with someone is beginning the conversation, and discerning whether they are already believers or not. If you ask a person, “Do you know for sure that you are going to heaven when you die?” I’ve found that there are a whole lot of people who are quite confident that they are going to heaven who have absolutely no understanding of the gospel. Then you’re in the uncomfortable position of telling them that they are not going to heaven and that their beliefs are all wrong, which usually doesn’t the most effective approach to winning someone’s heart. What I found works a lot better for me is to ask, “Do you know for sure that all of your sins are forgiven?” I found that there are a lot of people who are sure they are going to heaven, who aren’t so sure their sins are forgiven. Or sometimes I will ask, “If someone walked up to you and ask how they could know for sure that their sins are forgiven, what would you say?” If you ask whether they’re going to heaven, or how does a person get to heaven, that usually gets people thinking in terms of things like religious observance, or good works. But asking about forgiveness puts them more into a mindset of thinking about an actual relationship with God in personal terms.

Okay, so what is the answer to the question? How can you know for sure that all your sins are forgiven? On what basis does God decide to forgive some people sins and not others? Jesus is going to answer that question right now.

The Prerequisite: Faith

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

What reason does that verse give for why Jesus forgave this guy sins? Faith. He forgave his sins when he saw their faith. The only prerequisite for forgiveness given in this verse is faith. And that’s what you see wherever you look in the Bible. That’s out was for Abraham, that’s how it is for us, and that’s how it was for this guy.

Romans 3:28... A man is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Romans 5:1 therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God

If you have faith, then you are forgiven. And if you don’t have faith, you’re not forgiven.

John 8:24... If you do not believe that I AM, you will indeed die in your sins.

That’s really hard to swallow for a lot of people. They think you must have to do something – get baptized, or at least pray a prayer and ask God to forgive you. It’s hard for people to accept that a person can just believe, and instantly all his sins are forgiven. That’s hard for people today; it was even harder back then, because for them, forgiveness of sins was all tied in with the sacrificial system. This guy didn’t offer a sacrifice, they are miles away from the Temple, no priests, none of it. Jesus is rattling the very foundations of their entire religious system. He’s showing them what they should have already understood – that being right with God is all about faith, and faith alone.

Intercessory Action

So we understand all of that, but in this passage, there’s a little bit of a twist. It doesn’t say, “When Jesus saw *his* faith,” but when he saw *their* faith. Why is the focus on their faith? Who ever heard of God showing one person mercy because of someone else’s faith?

Actually, that happens all the time in Scripture. It’s called intercession. Job routinely offered sacrifices for his children just in case they cursed God at some point. Moses asked God to forgive the people of Israel – so did Daniel. Stephen and Jesus both asked God to forgive their murderers. There is nothing unusual at all about God having mercy on someone because of someone else’s faith.

What makes this different is that normally intercession takes place in the form of prayer. In this case, it's action. Instead of intercessory prayer, it's intercessory action. But either one works because the issue is not the prayer or the action; it's the faith.

Now, does the person being forgiven have to also have faith? Yes, but very often the reason they have that faith is that someone prayed for God to have mercy on them, and to forgive them, and God answered that prayer by sparking faith in the person's heart. I believe the paralytic believed, but I don't think he believed until he met Jesus. If he had already been a believer then his sins would have already been forgiven. So evidently, he was an unbeliever until his friends managed to bring him to Jesus, and because of their faith, Jesus moved in this man's heart to spark faith in him, and then forgave all his sins.

Here's another question I wrestled with: Why doesn't Jesus say anything about the friends being forgiven? The only answer I could come up with for that is that they were already forgiven before they came. They did what they did because they had faith, and if they had faith, they were forgiven. So these guys were already believers trying to bring their unbelieving friend to Jesus.

One more question: if the man finally did have faith, why does the passage mention the faith of the friends? Because that's where God wants to direct our attention. He wants to teach us the importance of intercessory action. We should learn from this that if we get creative and insistent about bringing a friend to Jesus, Jesus may just decide to have mercy on that person more than he would have otherwise. It might be as simple as, "You can't make it to church? How about if I swing by and pick you up on Sunday mornings?" "How about if you and I read through Scripture together?" Do you have faith that says, "I know if I can just expose my friend to some of Christ's glory, he will be saved" and you're so confident about that, that you'll get as creative as you need to get to bring that person to Jesus?

Conclusion

So, if you look at it through Jesus' eyes, and you understand what's really important, it would be fine if the whole event ended at v.5. Jesus forgives the guy's sins, teaches us what faith is all about, shows us God's priorities, reveals how to be forgiven – Mark could wrap this account up right here at the end of v.5 and this account would be a great treasure, because these first 5 verses show us what it's like to have an appointment with Dr. Jesus. We learn that if you could have one thing healed, it should be a spiritual illness, not a physical one. And you can have your spiritual sickness healed by Jesus through faith. And you can have your loved ones' spiritual sicknesses healed by Jesus if you trust Jesus enough that you are moved to intercessory action in bringing them to Jesus.

So, this would be a great place for the story to end, but it doesn't end at v.5. In fact, this is where the story just starts getting interesting. The Scribes are going to react, and then Jesus confronts them in front of everybody in very dramatic fashion. He drops one of his brilliant questions on them, leaving the Scribes speechless, teaching us a profound spiritual lesson, and sending everyone else in that house away glorifying God.

Everything we've seen so far in this passage is really just introductory – setting the scene. We haven't even gotten to the main point yet. But sadly, we're out of time for tonight, so I hope you can all make it back next time, so you can see the showdown with these religious leaders and understand the main point of this whole passage.