

JESUS FORGIVES AND CALLS SINNERS

Mark 2:1-17 (Key Verse 17)

“On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

In today’s passage we are going to witness Jesus’ encounter with two men, the paralytic, and a tax collector. With a world view these two men have nothing in common, but as we learn from Jesus, we will realize that their situation is very common, they both have a sin problem, yearning for the forgiveness of their sins, furthermore they were both yearning for a new life, a life of meaning and purpose. Just like them, our fundamental problem is sin, what we deeply yearn for is the forgiveness of our sins and a new life, a new life that follows Jesus Christ. Money, fame, pleasure, marriage are far from what our souls truly yearn for, what we truly need is the forgiveness of sin and a new life in Jesus. How can we get a hold of these?

Through today’s passage we will encounter Jesus who has power and authority to forgive our sins, also who is calling all sinners to come follow him. This is the purpose Jesus has come, in the key verse he said: *“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”* May God have mercy on us today, to receive one word and respond personally to forgiveness of our sins and Jesus’ call to follow him.

The passage today begins with Jesus who returned to Capernaum, this is the very place where Jesus went into the synagogues teaching the word of God with authority leaving all people amazed. While in Capernaum, Jesus also healed the sick, the demon posed, and many people brought their sick to him. With love and compassion Jesus took care of the people’s needs by healing them. And now today when the people heard that Jesus is in town again, they rushed in great numbers to Jesus. In **verse 2** it says: *“They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.”* As always, though the people might have come in numbers to Jesus to be healed from their sicknesses, Jesus prioritized preaching the word of God to them. Yes, they needed healing, and Jesus did not ignore this fact as we have seen previously. However, hearing the word of God was the most important, and so Jesus began preaching. In **Matthew 4:4** it says: *“Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”* Through the word of God, we can know who we are before God, we can know who God is, we can be convicted of our sins and be led to the path of righteousness.

While Jesus was preaching, some men came carrying a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. These men wanted to bring the paralytic to Jesus to be healed, when they came to the place where Jesus was, the place was very crowded, the entire yard where Jesus was, was filled with so many people, there was practically no chance that the men could bring the paralytic to Jesus, their only option was to come back the next day. However, the men did not take that, instead they did something rude, something that could bring them trouble. Let us look at verse 4: *“Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on.”* They damaged the property of the place where Jesus was, to get the man to Jesus, and this could get them into trouble. They jumped the line of people who were at Jesus’ place much earlier, they were rude, they interrupted Jesus’ teaching by breaking the roof where Jesus was, and they lowered the man on his mat to the place where Jesus was.

How then did Jesus respond when the men lowered the paralytic? Let us look at **verse 5**: *“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.””* When the men lowered the paralytic, Jesus was not upset that they were rude, in jumping to the front of the line before their turn, he was not upset that they damaged the roof of the place he was at. Instead, Jesus saw faith in the men, that they could bring their friend to him. The men were convinced that Jesus can heal the paralytic. The paralytic could not take himself to Jesus, but because he had good friends who loved him, he could have the opportunity to be taken to Jesus. In the same way, many students on campus want to come to Jesus, but do not know how. Some want to come, but because of pressure from friends and family are not able to come, this pressure is like the crowd that surrounded Jesus while at Capernaum. These students are in need of a friend to bring them to Jesus with persistence. Do you have the persistence of the men who brought the paralytic to Jesus? Do you encourage and do all you can to bring your friends to Jesus? When the men in Capernaum brought the paralytic, Jesus was moved by their faith. May God help us, grant us faith to bring our friends, family, colleagues who are in deep need to Jesus.

Furthermore, when the men lowered the paralytic, Jesus said to him: *"Son, your sins are forgiven."* Instead of healing the paralytic as everyone expected, including the man who lowered him, Jesus said to him your sins are forgiven. Why did Jesus say this? Jesus said this because physical paralysis was not the men's fundamental issue, but sin was his fundamental issue, sin is the fundamental issue that we need to be freed from. And Jesus was filled with love and compassion, he wanted to resolve the paralytic's fundamental issue, the paralytic was rather sin sick, people of the world are sin sick and that is what Jesus has come for, to heal us from through forgiveness of our sins. But how is the paralytic sin sick, how is this more urgent than his paralysis? The paralytic is sin sick, because thinking about him we can realize that he could not do anything by himself, he relied on others help and when he did not get it, he could be filled with bitterness and anger, and murdered many people in his heart. He could have taken the help that people gave to him for granted. He could have lived with anger and hatred for being a paralytic, that even if he wanted to kill himself, he could not, because of paralysis. Because of this sin, the paralytic was tormented daily, and led to commit even more sins. And so, to free him from this critical and fundamental issue, Jesus said: *"Son your sins are forgiven."*

Today, as well many people though they are not physically paralyzed are wondering around thinking money will resolve their problems, getting a degree will solve their problems, they are thinking love from their boyfriends or girlfriends will solve their problems. They live everyday with anger and bitterness daily, they are tormented by sin daily, like the paralytic they are not able to do anything, and as result some resort to alcohol and sexual sin to ease their torment. Taking away their money problem, getting love from their boyfriend and girlfriend will not solve their problem, what they need is the forgiveness of their sins.

I grew up in broken family situation, I had to live with my uncle, I was always in tears when I thought of my mother who was so poor working as a domestic worker. One time I was so heart broken when she told me she is working at a supermarket as a cleaner, that image just brought me so much discomfort especially when I remember how we used to have a better life when my parents were together, and we were one family. Since then, I promised myself to work very hard to change my mother's life. When I graduated, I had money to take care of my mother, however my heart was still not satisfied. Somehow, I found reason to complain, either about my bosses at work and to ease my torment I fell into sexual sin. Through this I could realize that my fundamental problem was not my broken family situation, poverty and the likes. My fundamental problem was sin, it controlled me, it tormented and convinced me that my life was a mess. What I needed was to know that sin has no power over me anymore, I needed to know that my sins are forgiven. Jesus said: *"Son your sins are forgiven."*

After Jesus said to the paralytic, Son your sins are forgiven some grumblings rose among the teachers of the law who were sitting there, and they said in **verse 7**: *"Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"* The teachers of the law grumbled for only God has power and authority to forgive sins, they grumbled for they thought Jesus was blaspheming. They were right that, only God has power and authority to forgive sins, what they did not know because of ignorance is that Jesus is God with power and authority forgive sin. Jesus has power and authority to forgive sin, that is why he has come. To make the teachers of the law see and acknowledge that indeed Jesus is God, he asked them a question in **verse 9** saying: *"9 Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'"* Both were very difficult and are only possible with God. To prove to the teachers of the law that indeed Jesus is the Son of God with authority to forgive sins, Jesus healed the paralytic. And he said to the paralytic in **verse 11-12**: *"I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." / He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"* By healing the paralytic, Jesus proved that indeed he is God, he proved that he can take away sin through the forgiveness of sin. Also, Jesus proved that forgiveness has power to enable a paralytic who was lying on the floor to get up and walk. Forgiveness of sins has power to restore campus students who are wondering around not able to do anything with their lives, but tormented by sin. It has power to restore men and women who are tormented by issues of the world issues such as broken marriages, poverty and the likes.

Once again after Jesus had healed the paralytic and was done teaching the words of God at the house, he went on and began teaching large crowds the words of God beside the lake. While he was there something very special took place. Let us look at **verse 14**: *"As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.* Because of his profession as a tax collector, Levi was labelled as a public sinner, he was viewed as the enemy of the people of God and on the side of the Romans collecting more

tax than required. Looking at the setup, we can see that Levi was probably assigned to collecting tax from fisherman, like Simon, James, and John. So, when Jesus went to him and said come follow me, his disciple might have not been happy about it. Furthermore, the teachers who were already not happy with Jesus were not pleased, especially when Jesus went on to have dinner with Levi's friends, the other tax collectors and sinners.

Why did Jesus go on to a public sinner like Levi who clearly had decided to defraud the people of God, who chose to do evil for the sake of making money? Jesus could go to Levi the tax collector, because he saw him differently, he did not see him as a troublemaker or a useless man, he did not judge him as a hopeless man. But rather he saw him with compassion, love, and hope. This is how Jesus sees us despite our sins, he sees us with compassion, hope and love. Levi was the worst kind of sinner, he deliberately chose to do evil for the sake of money, at the expense of God's people. Because of sin, Levi kept being entangled deeper and deeper into sin, he thought money will satisfy him. But instead, it drove him further and further away from society, he lived like a leper with no one wanting to associate with him and touch. Though he made money, his life was empty, it had no meaning and purpose. While many people excluded Levi and labeled him, Jesus saw his heart, his deep yearning for a life of meaning and purpose. Many people today are seen as troublemakers, even us we might think we are troublemakers, and that Jesus wants nothing to do with us, while deep down we are yearning for a life with meaning and purpose. If you are that person, if you know of anyone who is in that situation, know that Jesus sees us, Jesus sees you.

When Jesus saw Levi who deep down was yearning for a life with meaning and purpose, Jesus said to him: *"Follow me."* This invitation was for a new way of life, it meant Levi must leave his career as a tax collector, he must leave his career in pursuit of money through evil ways. It meant Levi must come follow Jesus as his disciple and be used for his world salvation plan. Jesus' invitation was to repurpose Levi's life into a instrument of God. Levi was a great sinner before God, before the people, he hurt many people, he was a public sinner. With a human eye, he was not the right person to be called as Jesus' disciple, but Jesus called him. In the same way, Jesus is calling me and you today to be his disciple, to be used by him. The only qualifier to be Jesus' disciple is grace, the grace of God. No matter what sin one might have committed, Jesus is calling you.

Furthermore, on our key **verse 17** it says: *"On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* Here Jesus emphasized his purpose for coming into this world, he came for sinners. First to save them from the power of sin, to grant them forgiveness. And we have seen that indeed Jesus has power and authority to forgive sins because he is God, Jesus commanded the paralytic to walk, and he could walk. Furthermore, Jesus came for sinners, to give them a new life, he came even for the worst sinners like Levi a public sinner, a tax collector. When Jesus called him, he gave him a new life, a life with meaning and purpose, through this new life, Levi could be transformed into great servant of God. God used him to write the book of Matthew which continues to bless many sinners and transforms them into great servants of God even today.

Jesus said, *I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*" Meaning to experience the power of the forgiveness of sin from Jesus, we need to acknowledge that we are sinners in need of God's forgiveness. In order to accept Jesus' call to a new life with meaning and purpose, we need to acknowledge that we are indeed sinners in need of Jesus's help. Even though you are very sick, when you do not acknowledge and tell the doctor that you are sick, the doctor is not able to heal you. In the same we need to acknowledge that we are sin sick and allow Jesus to heal us through the power of the forgiveness of our sins and accept Jesus' call to follow him. If we do not acknowledge that we are sinners, we cannot be healed from our sins, sin will continue to torment us, Jesus' call to follow him will be meaningless to us. May God have mercy on us, to realize that we are sin sick, that we are just like the paralytic and Levi the tax collector. So that we come to Jesus to be blessed to receive the forgiveness of our sins and a new life of meaning and purpose in Jesus.

Amen.

Key verse.