

## **MARK 2: 1-12 - WHATEVER IT TAKES.**

### **WORTH THE RISK.**

As we are looking each week at a theme, rather than a systematic study of a Bible book in this series, it might be helpful for our study this morning to briefly look at the background of Chapter 1 of Mark's Gospel. This is in order to appreciate the scenario that presents itself when the event in Chapter 2 is considered.

Jesus has been baptised in the Jordan River and then, after the Spirit of God descends upon Him and the voice of God declares "Thou art My Beloved Son, in Thee I am well - pleased", Jesus goes into the wilderness. When John the Baptist denounces Herod for his immorality he is imprisoned and eventually executed.

Jesus then commences preaching in Galilee. This of course was no accident. Matt. 4; v 12 - 17 read: *Now when He heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."*

Jesus was saying that God's hour had struck, the time to which all the Old Testament had looked forward. God's reign upon the earth, a concept familiar from the prophets, was about to begin. All were therefore called to a change of heart and for a belief in this good news, for which John had already prepared the way.

Simon and Andrew are told to follow Jesus and then James and John. Both pairs of brothers found that obedience to the call of Jesus was costly. They left all they held dear and all earthly security in simple committal to Jesus.

Towards the end of Chapter 1 we observe, as was His consistent

**practice, Jesus is found teaching in the Synagogues. His hearers were amazed, not only at the content of His teaching, but also at the assumption of His personal authority. He was nothing like the Scribes - the so called teachers of the Law.**

**The immediate response was one of division and strife. Now for the majority that strife lay concealed in their minds with the exception of the man with an unclean spirit who cried out V. 24 *“What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God!”***

**The news starts to spread about Jesus around Galilee. He enters Simon and Andrew’s house and heals Simon’s Mother in Law and then multitudes of people are healed. Jesus then travels around Galilee, healing the sick, casting out demons and preaching in the Synagogues. Eventually He returns to Capernaum and our story for today commences right there.**

**There are people everywhere in the house - all pushing and shoving. It’s easy to draw a crowd. Pop Stars, Film Stars, TV personalities, footballers and members of the Royal Family do it. Politicians and sometimes even Preachers do it. Jesus could have used this opportunity in Capernaum to increase His popularity - Just perform a few more miracles and the crowd would have been like putty in His hands. That’s probably why they were crammed into the house - they wanted to see some more of His miracles - see something spectacular - be impressed by His actions.**

**But Jesus thought differently. For Him the message He preached far out weighed the miracles He performed. His subject that day we don’t know but, almost certainly, He went back to the Old Testament Scriptures and presented to them the Kingdom of God, the Power of God and the Salvation of God. And while this is going on five people are desperate to reach Him. One man on a bed and his four friends struggling firstly to get him up to the roof and then tearing the roof apart to get him in front of Jesus. This was dangerous stuff. Tearing apart a roof made from timber and dried mud was no mean feat but also the destruction of private property to help their friend carried a huge risk.**

**What, I wonder, did the crowd think? Apart from the indignity of being showered in bits from the roof, no doubt their thoughts centred**

on the damage to someone's home and also the fact that the man on the bed was theologically very suspect.

Never mind the paralysed man lets, just for a moment, consider his four friends. They thought it worth the risk to carry out this dangerous task. It was not easy getting their friend on to that roof. Jesus saw their faith - v.5

Faith is a very large subject in the Scriptures and we cannot digress for too long. However, let's just read James 2: 17 - 18. *Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works".*

Friends at CBC this morning let me ask you about your faith. Is it sound? Or is it somewhat on shaky ground? Is it Biblical? Or is it something you have dreamed up? Does it energise you into service for Jesus? If it doesn't, then let me encourage you to examine your heart and your relationship with Jesus.

It was worth the risk to carry out this bizarre task of getting this man to Jesus. It was worth the risk to run up a costly bill for repairs - what wise investment! These men considered it worth the risk to do whatever it took to achieve their goal.

And friends, doesn't the Lord expect us to have a heart beat like theirs? To constantly be on our mettle, to consider things outside the box in order to bring people to Jesus.

Back to the man on the bed. Would you not consider that for him, for his four friends and for the crowd, now covered in rubble and dust, this man's greatest problem was the fact that he was paralysed?

Jesus behaves very differently in this story. He doesn't stretch out His hand, as He did to the Leper in Chapter 1, and say "Be clean" but instead in v.5 makes a statement that really winds up the Scribes. Here we have, as Mark proclaims in Chapter 1, the Son of God, invading this world and challenging our very strange ideas of what God is really like. Here we see the Jesus we need but not necessarily the Jesus we want.

If you were to gather together a group of children and ask them for their impression of their ideal mother or father, their answers might

go something like this:

**Someone who makes me happy.  
Someone who gives me what I want.  
Someone who doesn't keep making me have a bath.  
Someone who doesn't nag me about homework.  
Someone who lets me watch TV when I want.  
Someone who lets me play for hours on my X Box.  
Someone who lets me eat McDonalds on demand.**

**Little boy, asked for a McDonalds. Mother says "Yes, if you can spell it" "Mack"---- "No." "Macd," ---- "No." "Oh," says the boy, "I've changed my mind, I'll have a KFC!"**

**You and I know they need something different. Someone who does not give in to their every whim.**

**In our approach to God, don't we often make ridiculous demands? We want a Saviour who will give us what we want to meet our every need. We want a Saviour who is not going to interfere with our chosen lifestyle. We want a Saviour who will give us eternal happiness and satisfaction on the terms that we believe are fair.**

**But that's not the Jesus we need and that's far from the Jesus we see in this story.**

**When this man was lowered through the roof and arrived at the feet of Jesus, the Saviour reacts so differently to what was expected.**

**You see, Jesus looked down and saw way beyond a man paralysed by a crippling disease; rather, he saw a man paralysed by crippling guilt and a sense of unworthiness. He saw a man who had lost all of his self esteem because repeatedly he had been told that his physical condition was God's punishment upon him. And he believed it!**

**He believed that cruel, inept, lousy theology of divine retribution. He was flat on his back because he thought he deserved to be flat on his back.**

**Jesus knew exactly what he needed. He looked into the depth of this man's heart and soul and understood everything about him. And you will notice that although Jesus does bring about healing, that is not where He started.**

**Mark presents to us, in stark opposition to our way of thinking, the Saviour that we need, the Jesus we must turn to in faith and trust, the One who will correct and challenge and change your life.**

**This delightful account shows us three distinct features about Jesus:**

- 1. He knows you and your needs much better that you will ever know.**
- 2. He will, without a shadow of doubt, give you what you need.**
- 3. He, in His love and concern for you, may make you wait a while.**

**Those folks, in that house in Capernaum, could have told you in an instant what this man on a bed and his friends really wanted. They thought that, to get things moving, Jesus would just grab him by the hand, get him on his feet and pronounce him healed.**

**But Jesus makes that profound statement, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”**

**What Jesus was really saying to this man was “You think you know what your problem is. You think that if you could just walk, get rid of this prison of a bed, stand vertical instead of lying horizontal 24/7, then your life would change, you would be happy and everything in the garden would be lovely.” “But you my friend are wrong, totally misguided, because in a short space of time you would soon find something else that was wrong, that blighted your well being and your happiness.”**

**We think we know what’s best for us. We have an agenda, a list of things that will make life just perfect. We just need success in our relationships, our family, our marriage, our business. We’ll get to a certain level with our living standards and folks will look at us in admiration. And all will be well.**

**Jesus addresses this man on his bed and He is forthright enough to tell him; “your life is probably quite miserable. You feel unhappy, empty inside, unfulfilled, frustrated, angry, dejected. My friend do not run away with the idea that if I were to just stop all of that, if I were to heal your body, then your problems would vanish. You will again become unhappy, empty inside, frustrated and feel quite**

**miserable.**

**You see I know you better than you know yourself. I know you deep down with all your problems and all your needs.”**

**And this morning, Jesus has the same message for each one of us. He knows how we build our lives, how we trust in transient things. We’ve probably all been there, asking God to fix things to suit what we want, when in reality Jesus wants us to trust Him, for He knows us best. Trust Him to be our Saviour, to meet our needs rather than attempting to ‘Do it my Way.’**

**This leads us to our second feature about Jesus, He will give us what we need.**

**The man on the bed needed forgiveness, and that’s precisely what Jesus would say to us today. More than anything else we need His forgiveness. That’s why He rode on a donkey on Palm Sunday on the way to the cross, that’s part of the Easter message.**

**Paul, writing to the Ephesians, spells out that God’s heart beats for our reconciliation with Him, for us to be ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.**

**What Jesus saw when this man arrived at His feet was the faith, not only of the four friends, but that of the man himself. Jesus saw more than just a desire to walk. Certainly it was overshadowed by a desire to be healed from his paralysis, but deep down there was a cry for God’s mercy and grace that had resided in his soul for perhaps many years. And Jesus felt it and poured out His love and forgiveness.**

**That’s the way it is with Jesus. He hears our pleas, senses our sighs, knows our heartaches, sees our feeble attempts at faith, witnesses our tears and knows all of our desperate longings that have beleaguered us for years. And He just wants us to have that trust that He will give us what we need. You may be sitting here this morning and outwardly folks in the seats near you would never know that in**

reality you are crying inside, hoping for relief from a deep seated pain that will not go away. And Jesus hears that cry and feels that pain.

Thirdly, Jesus may well introduce His timescale and before He lifts you free from that bed of agony, whatever that may be, there might well be a work of grace and forgiveness that's needed first.

Just before we close, let's look briefly at the Saviour's credentials as Mark presents them to us in this story.

In v.10, Mark records these words: *“But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”*

There are two ways of understanding this and both lead to the same conclusion. Firstly, to paraphrase what is being said, we would read, *“You say that only God can forgive sins? But I will show you that there is a human who has the same power.”* Therefore the person who listens well would then equate the human Jesus, who was talking to them, with God.

Secondly, the phrase *Son of Man*, uses Jesus' self chosen title for Himself as He used it in Mark 8:31 regarding His suffering. What He is saying to them is literally that He has this power to forgive sins. The miracle of healing for the lame man gives evidence that He has the divine authority to do so.

The Scribes found their minds racing in overdrive. Who can forgive sins but God? Jesus authenticates His credentials because anyone can say “Your sins are forgiven” and nobody can argue either way as to whether or not that has happened. Where's the proof?

But if that same person goes on to say to a man who is clearly in a helpless and hopeless situation, “Rise, take up your bed and go home,” everyone, Scribes included, have to admit to what they have just witnessed. Jesus therefore used the miracle to verify and authenticate who He really was.

To the Scribes in particular He is right in their face with the proof that He is the Messiah, the Chosen One and the long awaited for Saviour. It was at that moment that Calvary, His suffering and His death on a cross loomed even greater.

Mark depicts for us so vividly the Lord Jesus in action and like the

**man on the bed we too can present ourselves to One who has love and compassion and who will be moved by our faith no matter how small or how feeble.**

**Pray for His forgiveness, pray for His grace, pray that He will enter your life and bring about those changes that He knows are needed. His delight is to answer in an instant.**

**Pray also “Lord get me of this bed,” whatever that bed may be, Lord bless my marriage, Lord mend the rifts in my family life, Lord bless my occupation, Lord help me in choosing my career, choosing my life’s partner.**

**And then appreciate, when perhaps there is some time to wait, He knows you, He knows what you need - His grace in abundance.**

**Jesus loves you, loves with an everlasting love, trust Him for His timing and enjoy the outpouring of all that He has for you.**