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Sermon Summary #6

In Need of Roof Repair: The Power of Persistent Faith Mark 2:1-12

Most **non-Christians** in our society at least **pretend to hold Jesus in high regard**. Rarely will you hear a non-Christian vilify Jesus or speak negatively of him. They will denounce the church and excoriate Christians. They will religion in general, especially if it is *organized*, but they are careful to speak in often glowing terms of Jesus: he is wise, he is loving, he is kind, he is good, he's an effective teacher, etc., etc.

It was not always this way. People in the first century were not nearly as reluctant as they are today to express their feelings about the carpenter from Nazareth. In our day, religious leaders and politicians, especially in an election year, together with Hollywood actors and actresses and athletes and public figures from all walks of life have found it **counter-productive to speak ill of Jesus**. Their first-century counterparts, on the other hand, **entertained no such scruples; they felt no such qualms**.

Here in Mark 2 open and public opposition to Jesus emerges for the first time, opposition that will culminate in his death by crucifixion. Jesus will be accused of *blasphemy*. . . . of *immorality* of *impiety* and of *working in cooperation with the Devil himself*.

We read in Mark 2:1 that after a few days of ministering in neighboring towns, **Jesus returned to Capernaum** where he most likely lived. Several things should be noted:

- Whose house was this?
- Observe that “**many** were gathered together (v. 2).
- **One man** who could neither push nor shove, neither run after Jesus nor walk up to him and launch a conversation, was a certain paralytic.
- Are you offended, as I am, by the insensitivity and selfishness of the crowds (v. 4a)?
- The **roof** . . .
- The **reaction** to their demolition job!

V. 5 is simply stunning, and for two primary reasons.

First, the fact that Jesus was willing to stop his message and engage with them is explained by the reference to their “faith” (v. 5a). He didn't interpret their destructive intrusion as a complete lack of courtesy. He didn't rebuke them for being rude or disrespectful. He interpreted their persistence and their refusal to take No or Wait for an answer as an expression of *love* and *faith*.

But faith in what? In whom? What did they believe or trust that captured our Lord's attention? First, let's note how faith functions in relation to healing.

- On occasion the faith of the person needing healing (Mt. 9:22) is instrumental.
- At other times it is the faith of a friend or family member (Mt. 15:28).
- Sometimes the focus is on the faith of the person praying for the one who needs healing (Mark 9:17-24).
- On certain occasions, faith apparently plays no part at all in the healing (John 5:1-9; indeed, in the gospel of John, faith is *never* mentioned as a condition for healing; see also Mt. 8:14).
- On some occasions, God simply heals by a sovereign act of his will unrelated to anything in us. However, in the vast majority of cases, Jesus healed because of *someone's* faith (see Mark 5; 10:52; Luke 17:11-19).

The Gospels present us with five levels or kinds of faith, each of which may result in healing:

(1) There is *faith that God is your sole source for blessing, that he alone is your hope* (see Pss. 33:18-22; 147:10-11). If neither Jesus nor the Father needs faith, why does it play such an important role?

(2) There is *faith in God's ability to heal* (cf. Mt. 9:28-29; Mk. 1:40-45).

(3) There is *faith in God's heart for healing*. This is *faith in God's goodness and his desire to bless his children* (see Ps. 103; Luke 11:11-13).

(4) There is *the faith not simply that God can heal, not simply that God delights to heal, but faith that God does heal*. This is *the faith that healing is part of God's purpose and plan for his people today*.

(5) There is *the faith that it is God's will to heal right now*.

Second, here's the stunning thing: *Jesus himself doesn't believe that paralysis is this man's greatest need!* Everyone present, especially the paralyzed man, had to have been shocked at what Jesus said. Everyone knew that he was there because he wanted to be healed. That's why his four friends risked everything and destroyed the roof! And yet the first words out of Jesus' mouth aren't, "Be healed." Rather, he says, "Your sins are forgiven!"

Quite simply, Jesus is telling the paralytic, he's telling his friends, he's telling everyone present, and he's telling you and me: *our greatest need goes deeper* than physical paralysis; it goes deeper than leprosy; it goes deeper than any other problem we're facing in life.

So, what is **the relationship between sin and sickness**? See especially James 5:15.

In some cases, sin is the cause of sickness. John 5:14; 1 Cor. 11: 27-30.

In other cases, it isn't. John 9:1-2; 2 Cor. 12:1-10.

The charge of blasphemy! See Psalm 103:3; Isaiah 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19.

Which is "easier" . . . ? How would you answer his question?

Conclusion:

(1) For the Jewish people, **the Temple in Jerusalem was the center of religious and spiritual life**. It was in the Temple that God drew near to his people. It was at the temple that they worshiped. But most important of all, it was only in the Temple where the sacrifice for sin was made and thus the place where forgiveness was found. But here is Jesus, saying to this paralyzed man, and to everyone else as well, ***I am the fulfillment of the Temple. I am here to be and do everything the Temple was and did.*** Jesus extended forgiveness of sins without sending the man to the Temple, without requiring that he perform the necessary worship or offer the blood sacrifices that were so much a part of Jewish life.

"I am the Temple," Jesus is saying. "Everything you formerly experienced there, everything you found there: whether the forgiveness of sins or the presence of God or the revelation of his glory, you now and forever after find in me!"

(2) As I've already stated, **this story is also about Jesus awakening in each of us the awareness of our greatest and most pressing and most fundamental need**. No matter how much of life goes well in other respects (physical health, financial security, marriage, friends, success, respect), until and unless our sins are forgiven and we are restored to intimacy and fellowship and union with God, we are hopelessly lost.

What's the answer? Simply this: Come to Jesus! Trust in Jesus! Believe in Jesus! Turn to Jesus! Embrace Jesus! Love Jesus! Honor Jesus! Receive from Jesus the redemption that he has provided. If you do, everything else in life may disintegrate, but you will have all you need. Everything else in life may go south, turn sour, disappoint and frustrate you. But you will have all you need. You will have Jesus, and in him you will have God and forgiveness and eternal life and joy.