

Mark 2:1-12 – "Authority to Forgive"

Text: Mark 2:1-12 (CSB)

1 When he entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that he was at home. **2** So many people gathered that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and he was speaking the word to them. **3** They came to him bringing a paralytic, carried by four men. **4** Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after digging through it, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic was lying. **5** Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." **6** But some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts: **7** "Why does he speak like this? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" **8** Right away Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were thinking like this within themselves and said to them, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? **9** Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your stretcher, and walk?' **10** But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he told the paralytic— **11** "I tell you: get up, take your stretcher, and go home." **12** Immediately he got up, took the stretcher, and went out in front of everyone. As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Key Background:

- **Capernaum:** A fishing town on the Sea of Galilee that became Jesus's ministry headquarters. The house was likely Peter's home, which Jesus used as his base of operations.
- **Palestinian Houses:** Typical homes had flat roofs made of wooden beams covered with branches, mud, and clay tiles. The roof was accessible by outside stairs and could support people's weight, but digging through required significant effort and would damage the roof.
- **Paralytic's Condition:** The Greek word suggests complete paralysis, making the man entirely dependent on others for mobility and care. In that culture, physical ailments were often viewed as punishment for sin.
- **The Scribes:** Religious experts in interpreting and teaching the Law of Moses. They were considered the ultimate authorities on religious matters and were highly respected for their knowledge of Scripture.
- **Blasphemy:** According to Jewish law, claiming divine prerogatives (like forgiving sins) was blasphemy punishable by death. The scribes correctly understood that only God could forgive sins, but they failed to recognize Jesus's true identity.
- **Son of Man:** Jesus's favorite title for himself, drawn from Daniel 7:13-14, which describes a divine figure receiving authority and dominion from God. This title emphasizes both his humanity and his divine authority.
- **Faith in Action:** The faith that Jesus observed was not merely belief but active, persistent faith demonstrated through extraordinary effort to reach him despite obstacles.

Questions from the Story:

- What was the scene like when Jesus was teaching in the house (vv. 1-2)? What does the crowd's response tell us about Jesus's growing popularity?
- Who brought the paralytic to Jesus and how many were involved (v. 3)? What does this show us about the importance of friends who care about someone's spiritual and physical needs?
- What obstacle did they encounter when trying to reach Jesus (v. 4)? How did they solve this seemingly impossible problem?
- What did the four men do to the roof (v. 4)? What does their willingness to damage someone's property reveal about their determination and faith?
- What did Jesus see in their actions (v. 5)? How did their behavior demonstrate faith that moved Jesus to act?
- What were the people expecting Jesus to say to the paralytic? Instead, what did Jesus say first (v. 5)? Why do you think Jesus addressed the man's sin before his physical condition?
- How did the scribes react to Jesus's words about forgiveness (vv. 6-7)? What does their response reveal about their understanding of who has the authority to forgive sins?
- Were the scribes correct in their theological reasoning about forgiveness (v. 7)? What was the fatal flaw in their conclusion about Jesus?
- How did Jesus know what the scribes were thinking (v. 8)? What does this supernatural knowledge reveal about Jesus's divine nature?
- What question did Jesus ask the scribes about what is "easier" to say (v. 9)? What point was Jesus making about the relationship between spiritual and physical healing?
- Why did Jesus heal the paralytic's physical condition (v. 10)? What was the greater purpose beyond the man's physical restoration?
- What title did Jesus use for himself when claiming authority to forgive sins (v. 10)? What does "Son of Man" tell us about Jesus's identity and authority?
- How complete and immediate was the paralytic's healing (vv. 11-12)? What does this demonstrate about the extent of Jesus's power?
- How did the crowd respond to this miracle (v. 12)? What did they recognize about what they had witnessed?
- What does this story teach us about the relationship between sin and our greatest need? How does it show that spiritual healing is more important than physical healing?
- How does Jesus's authority to forgive sins prove his divine identity? What does this mean for our own need for forgiveness?
- What can we learn from the faith and persistence of the four friends? How can we demonstrate similar faith when bringing others to Jesus?