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Mark 2:1-12

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English Standard Version

“Body and Soul”

The 4th Sermon in a series on The Gospel of Mark entitled
“The King and His Cross”

Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. We think we know what we need, but we doubt Your ability to give it to us. And we think know the state of our own spiritual lives, but we're not willing to admit it's worse than it looks. We need to know how to come to You empty-handed. We need to know how to trust You when we can't trust others ... and we don't trust ourselves. We need to know what it is in our lives that really needs healing. And we need to trust You to heal it. Lord, forgive us. Teach us to follow Christ and to hear Your Word. Thank You that today we're learning once again from John Mark, a follower of Jesus, as he brings us the earliest eyewitness account of the life of Christ. Help us to hear it, understand it, believe it, and obey it. And so we pray, speak through the Gospel of Mark this morning, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, in His name we pray, amen.

INTRODUCTION: *Once again, Just Another Healing*

Once again, we come to another story of Jesus healing somebody. And **once again**, it's an easy story to read over and move on, because most of us have read it before. Lots of times. Having preached through both **Matthew** and **Luke**, we've already covered this story ... twice. And it's a great story, but **once again**, it's just another story. However, it's been some time since

we've heard it, so let's listen to it again ... carefully ... because there's more here than meets the eye.

Turn with me to **Mark 2:1-12**, and hear God's Word ... *"And when He [Jesus] returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that He was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And He was preaching the word to them. ³ And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷ 'Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' ⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, 'Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — He said to the paralytic — ¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"*

The Word of the Lord. Thanks Be to God.

As a **paralytic** ... he stares a bleak future in the face. You see, there were no neurosurgeons back then ... No specialists ... No rehabilitation hospitals ... No physical therapists ... No medical breakthroughs on the horizon ... No miracle drugs in the cabinet. **Sympathy** ... is the only prescription the community can dispense. **And he's had enough of that.** He doesn't want sympathy. He wants his life back. The life he has now is a horizontal one, full of bedsores and blank stares at the ceiling. It is his **only priest** ... that ceiling. But it neither acknowledges his confessions nor hears his prayers.

His spindly legs and arms form the bars to the cell that imprisons him, isolating him from the rest of the world. And so he lays there ... alone ... on a 3 x 6 mat. Day after day ... Week after week ... Month after month ... When he runs, it's in his dreams, and his dreams always wake up to a **body** that can't roll over and can't go back to sleep for all the hurt the dream has brought. **He's never able** to rise and stretch with the morning sun. **He's never able** to socialize in the streets. **He's never able** to step out for a breath of fresh air. **He's never able** to walk off his frustrations. **He's never able** to have a change of scenery without inconveniencing a handful of other people.

He has to rely on others for everything. Every sip of water ... Every bite of food ... Every time he has to go to the bathroom ... Somebody else has to turn him, and bathe him, and clothe him. Dependency ... humiliation ... confinement ... boredom ... loneliness ... frustration ... shame ... despair. These are just a few of the entries in the thesaurus that defines life on a 3 x 6 mat.

But for all the hard words ... this man has **one positive word** that gives his life a syllable of meaning ... **friends**. He has **four faithful friends**. They've been his best friends since the days they played ball together. And even though those days are long gone, somehow, someway, they've stayed friends. They're his best friends **in the whole world**. And **he would do anything for them** ... **if he could do anything**. And now these four friends have heard some incredible

things that bring them to his mat. They have news of a miracle worker. Ever since Jesus cast out a demon from a man in the synagogue, the news has crested out from Capernaum in waves. It crashed into the shore cities on the Sea of Galilee. And now it's hitting the cities farther inland. It's even washing up as far south as Jerusalem. Then when a second story went out about the healing of a leper, it crashed into the villages like a tidal wave. The crowds swelled. People flooded into Capernaum from **everywhere**. They came to see the carpenter turned teacher turned miracle worker ... this phenomenon they called the Nazarene.

They were a catch-all collection of seekers, spectators, speculators, and spies. Some came with a hopeful eye, wanting to be healed. Others came with a curious eye, wanting to be convinced. Others came with a jaundiced eye, wanting to find out who was rocking the religious boat and stop him from making any more waves. But this as man listened to his friends, he remained silent. He couldn't go. He couldn't walk. So they did what friends do. They picked up his bed ... with him on it ... and they headed out to see Jesus. Because their friend had ...

v. 1-4: AN IMMEDIATE NEED ¹

“And when He [Jesus] returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that He was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And He was preaching the word to them. ³ And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.”

The place where Jesus is speaking today is packed. The latecomers are wedged into the entrance, standing on tiptoes, cupping their ears to catch a few of this teacher's words. The last one to arrive is this **paralytic**, carried by his **four faithful friends**, each one shouldering a corner of the mat. But the wall of people is impenetrable. And every time they try to get through, they're hushed and waved away by the impatient crowd straining to hear. Not to be denied, the determined friends back away and brainstorm another approach. “The stairs. What about the outside stairs to the roof?” Their enthusiasm mounts with every step they climb. By the time they reach the top, their hearts are pounding in their throats. The man on the mat is just looking at them, trying to figure out what's going on. The only thing he hears is them saying, “Man, you are heavy!”

Laying him down, the friends survey the flat roof to try and pinpoint where Jesus is standing. Then, with adrenalin pumping, they start pulling up clay tiles and tossing them aside. They burrow through dried clay and mud, laced with sturdy branches. And they're making a **mess**. The falling debris creates a billowy cloud of dust beneath them and the crowds push back, coughing and complaining while they cover their eyes and mouths with their hands and arms.

Their eyes all look up, and the first thing they see is a tangle of fingers clawing their way in ... to widen the hole. They see a shaft of sunlight, a pair of eyes searching for Jesus, “There He is,” and four pairs of hands widening the hole, and finally, they see the bottom of a bed mat, like those used by sick people.

¹ **The Introduction and Exposition of the text are largely adapted from my sermon, “Faith in Revealed Power”** preached at Potomac Hills on 3/11/04. **And the sermon, “The Healing of Forgiveness”** by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 3/12/06, *The Tim Keller Sermon Archive*, [Logos Bible Software 8.7](#). **And the books, Incredible Moments with the Savior** by Ken Gire, pages 21-28 and [He Still Moves Stones](#) by Max Lucado, pages 115-121.

“You know, like the one **that paralyzed guy** uses” ... as they watch **that paralyzed guy** come down on the mat. Several men stretch forward to catch the mat and help lower it to the floor, easing the strain on the four guys hanging over the edge of the hole. Jesus saw the **paralyzed** man. **Everyone** saw the **paralyzed** man. The immediate need was obvious. But only Jesus saw ...

v. 5: THE **DEEPER** NEED

“And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Jesus’ eyes are transfixed on the four heads circling the hole in the ceiling. The text says He “**saw their faith.**” **Their** faith. The faith of **the friends**. It is on the wings of **their** faith that mercy from heaven descends. There’s no record that they said anything. So it wasn’t what Jesus **heard** that captured His heart; it’s **what He saw**. And just what did He see?

He saw four, sweaty guys willing to put a shoulder to their faith ... Eight scraped hands willing to burrow through any obstacle ... Four dirty faces, hungering for a healing ... wide-eyed with anticipation ... like street children pressing their noses against a bakery window, famished for a taste of heaven.

These guys dared what no adults with any sense of responsibility would have done. They tore up somebody’s roof, interrupted somebody else while He was speaking, and inconvenienced all the rest who were listening, making them cough and getting them dirty at the same time. Just like little kids ... **mere children**. But the guy they came to see is the same guy who said, **Luke 18:16**, “Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” And He didn’t look at these guys as an interruption. He saw their faith. He also said, **Luke 18:17**, “Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

So Jesus looks up ... and He sees four dirty, sweaty faces. And His eyes glimmer with thank you. The friends want Him to heal their friend ... the **paralytic**. But Jesus doesn’t settle for a simple healing of the **body** ... He wants to heal the **soul**. He leapfrogs the physical and deals with the spiritual. To heal the **body** is temporary. To heal the **soul** is eternal. The friends’ request is valid ... but timid. The crowd’s expectations are high ... but not high enough. They expect Him to treat the physical, for that is what **they** see. He chooses to treat the spiritual, for that is what **He** sees. They want Jesus to give the man a new **body** so he can walk. Jesus wants to give the man grace so he can live. And so He looks down ... at this wrung-out dishrag of a man who lies plopped at His feet. He sees that the **paralysis** is **deeper** than it appears. Because within that emaciated **body** lies a crippled **soul**, **paralyzed** from sin, shrunken from shame. The man looks up at Jesus, squinting with his eyes to shield them from the sun shining through that stupid hole. But Jesus moves to him, blocking the sun and eclipsing the light. And the face of God **smiles** at this guy. And a sweet piece of manna from heaven falls to the man on the mat. Everyone is expecting to hear, “**You are healed.**” Instead, the words they hear are ... “**Son, your sins are forgiven.**”

What did the **paralytic** want from Jesus? Well, everybody knows. You know, I know, **everybody** knows ... but it doesn’t seem that Jesus knows. Jesus walks over to him and instead of saying, “Rise up, be healed,” He says, “**Son, your sins are forgiven.**”

Now if this guy was from Northern Virginia, he would have said something like, “Well, uhm, thanks. But everybody in the whole world, except for you Jesus, seems to realize that’s not what I asked for. **I’m paralyzed!** I have a more **immediate need** here!” And Jesus just smiles,

and says, “No, you don’t.” That’s the whole point. Jesus is saying, “No you don’t.” It’s amazing these men make no reference to guilt or sin or forgiveness. Jesus does. Jesus is saying to him, and to us, “You think you know the main problem of your life, **and you don’t.**”

Jesus is saying, “Look, I know you have problems. I know you’re suffering and I’m going to get to that. I know you’ve been the victim of terrible things that weren’t your fault, and I’m going to get to that.” But you need to realize the main problem in your life is never your suffering; it’s your sin.

But thankfully, Jesus is aggressive with His grace. He comes at you and pours His grace into you if you give Him even the **slightest** of openings. In fact, He actually creates His own openings. Faith is a gift. This man wasn’t trying to believe. This man wasn’t trying to find forgiveness. He wasn’t trying to find grace. But Jesus comes after him. And knows what he’s thinking. And knows his motivation. And knows his heart. And so He says, “**Son, your sins are forgiven.**”

How long has he waited to hear those words? How many tears has he cried to the ceiling that looked down on him, pleading for an answer to the enigma of his life? And he hears in Jesus’ words, and he sees in Jesus’ smile, as if to say, “my child, be of good cheer, God is not angry with you.” With quivering lips the **paralytic** smiles back. He fights back the tears, but it’s no use. He squeezes his eyes shut, and years of pent-up pain spill from his eyes to stream down the sides of his face. Because sometimes God is so touched by what He sees that **He gives us what we need ... and not simply what we want.** But the tender mercies stroking the face of the **paralytic** are received as a **slap** in the face of the religious leaders. What they don’t realize, but Jesus does, is that they have ...

v. 6-12: THE **GREAT**ER NEED

While heaven is rejoicing, the religious leaders are too busy making mental notes to join in the dance. They reason to themselves; ***Jesus claims the power to forgive sins. Only God can forgive sins. Therefore, Jesus claims to be God.*** Precisely. That’s the point. Their reasoning is correct. It brought them to the right conclusion ... **but it didn’t bring them to Christ!**

What does it mean to be **healed** by Jesus, I mean, **completely healed** by Jesus? It says here, starting in **verse 6**, “*Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,*”⁷ “*Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?*”

Now, again, they’re totally right. Do you know why they’re totally right? Do you know what Jesus is claiming?

Let’s pretend for a moment ... that Dave, Dave, and Frank walk into a room. Totally random names ... just **making** this up. Then Dave the younger punches Frank **smack** in the mouth, blood everywhere. Dave the older goes up to Dave the younger and says, “Dave the younger, I forgive you for punching Frank in the mouth. It’s all right. It’s over.” What is Frank going to say? “Hey, old man! You can’t forgive him! Only I can forgive him. He didn’t wrong you; he wronged me! You can only forgive a sin if it’s against you!” Common sense, right?

Now you know what Jesus is claiming when he looks at a man and says, “***Your sins are forgiven***’ ... I forgive them ... all of them.” He’s saying, “All your sins have been **against Me**. Every sinful thing you’ve ever done has been **against Me**.” The only person who could possibly say to another person that everything you’ve ever done wrong has been **against Me**... would be your Creator, the Person who made you, the One who says, “I made you for a purpose and when

you violate that purpose, you're violating the very thing I made you for." Only your Creator, your Lord, could say that.

Jesus Christ, by forgiving the man, is claiming to be God Almighty ... **and they knew it**. The religious leaders realize this man is not just claiming to be a miracle worker. He's claiming to be the Lord of the universe. How does Jesus respond? This is what's so interesting. It says, **verse 8**, "*And immediately Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts?"*"

If that hole in the roof teaches us anything, it's that faith is what brings a person to Jesus, not mere intellectual reasoning. Curiosity crowded the classroom, but it was faith that dug a hole through the roof to bring the **paralytic** to the feet of Christ. Jesus reads his critics' minds as if to offer further proof that He is who He says He is. And so now He looks at the critics, starting at verse 9, "*Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?*" ¹⁰ **But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**" — *He said to the paralytic —* ¹¹ "*I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.*" ¹² *And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"*

On the one hand, what Jesus does **is**, in a sense, the answer to the question. Of course, anybody can say, "Your sins are forgiven, but to prove to you I'm the Lord of Heaven and Earth, I say, take up your mat and walk." Now listen ... look carefully. In this question, the verb **say** is a synonym with **do**. When Jesus says, take up your bed and walk, He's **carrying out** that healing. He's making it happen. **The Word ... carries out** the healing. Therefore, when He **says**, "*Your sins are forgiven,*" He also has to **carry it out**. I think he's saying, "friends, it's infinitely, infinitely, infinitely harder to **carry out** the forgiveness of sins. I'm not just a miracle worker. I'm the Savior ... the Messiah ... the Lord ... the King."

Any miracle worker can say, "Take up your bed and walk." But only the Savior of the World will be able to say, "*Your sins are forgiven.*" In other words, He's pointing to **the cross** when He **says** it's going to be so much harder to forgive your sins than to heal your **body**. Many commentators say it is at **this spot**, in the beginning of **chapter 2**, that the shadow of the cross falls across the path of Jesus.

Why? Because **Jesus knows** if He heals this man and shows He's not just a miracle worker who can heal the **body** but He's also the Savior of the World who can heal the **soul** ... **He knows** that if He heals that man, they're going to kill Him. **He knows** that if He heals that man, He's taking the first step down the inevitable path to His own death. So He looks around and **sees** half the people wanting to kill Him ... and half the people wanting to use Him ... and He forgives the **paralytic**. The great irony here is, by doing the healing and taking the first step down the road to His own death, He's **carrying out** our forgiveness.

Jesus knows the only way He's ever going to make the legs of that man mobile ... is if His own legs are nailed immobile to the cross. They go together; **they have** to go together. The only way He's going to make that man dance is if He dies. And, you know, **He sees** them. **He sees** them at their worst. **He sees** us at our worst. **He sees** those who are trying to kill Him, and **He sees** those who are trying to use Him ... and He loves us.

Two needs ... **Body** and **Soul**. Two sayings ... '*Your sins are forgiven,*' and '*Rise, take up your bed and walk.*' Both are relatively easy to **say**. Both are relatively impossible to **do**. Unless, of course, you're God. In that case, one is as easy as the other, which explains Jesus'

lack of anxiety about this. But so the religious leaders won't write Him off as **just** another faith healer, Jesus does what no mere mortal would be presumptuous enough to do ... He forgives this man his sins against God. And then He puts the final exclamation point on the debate and looks **once again** to the man on the mat.

"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."

Even with the **paralysis** healed, the atrophied muscles would have made the man wobble like a toddler. But the **paralytic** receives grace upon grace. Not only is he given forgiveness **and** healing, he's given back his strength. Getting up, he heaves his mat over his shoulder, and praises God all the way out the door. And the crowd that wouldn't move out of the way to let him in ... reverently steps aside to let him out. And as he walks by, you hear the crowd murmur, ***"We never saw anything like this!"***

It was a bright, shining moment for the Kingdom of God. It was an incredible moment for the people in that room. For through that hole in the roof, came the glory of a far Kingdom, reflecting off the face of its King.

And outside, dancing in the street to the praise of that King, are five best friends who have the joy of heaven streaming down their cheeks. And they're whooping and hollering and carrying on ... just like children.

But the story isn't over. Because the stories of Jesus aren't just good stories, and they're not just happy-ending miracles, or merely parables in action. These stories are written for us, that we might know and believe that ...

CONCLUSION: *These Stories Are Our Stories.* ²

Our world is full of **paralytics** today. In fact, they're a lot like paralytics. Oh, they can walk all right. **They just don't want to.**

Some people are **paralyzed by apathy.** They can't do anything because they just don't care anymore. They've given up. **Nothing** good is going to happen to them. **Nobody** nice is going to show up in their life. There is **nowhere** fun for them to go. They have **no friends**. And so they've quit. They go to work, they pay their bills, they do their stuff, but they're alone and tired and numb and unfeeling. Their tombstone will read, "died at 31, buried at 81" ... **paralytics.**

Others are **paralyzed by fear.** Fear of the past. They tried to build a relationship, but they got burned. And they're not going to make **that** mistake again. Or maybe it's fear of the future. How are they going to pay for the house and their aging parents and their kid's college and their own retirement? They have **no idea**, and it scares the life out of them. A lot of people fear the present. He got laid off, I could too. She got divorced, I could too. He got in a bad accident, I could too. She got left back, I could too. And so they work harder, and strive harder, and excel more ... out of fear ... **paralytics.**

Many are **paralyzed by shame.** If you only knew what I've done. I could never make up for it. I could never earn your respect. I've been addicted ... to drugs. I knew it was wrong, but I couldn't stop. I've been addicted ... to pleasure. It's too easy today, what with the Internet and all. I've been addicted ... to control. I'm in charge ... of everything, everyone, everywhere,

² Parts of the conclusion are adapted from Preaching the Word: Luke, Vol. 1 by R. Kent Hughes, pages 165-172.

and I hurt people, but I don't know how to stop. If you only knew what I've done. I could never make up for it. I could never earn your respect ... **paralytic**. And they all need Jesus.

There are other **paralytic**s among us. **Very** close to us. Because **once again**, as Pogo said, "We have met the enemy. And He is us." Do you understand that spiritually, you're a **paralytic**? You **can't** be good enough! You **can't** save yourself! You **can't** save anybody else, either! It's not up to you, because you're **weak**. You're **helpless**. You're a **paralytic**. You're a **sinner**. But the Good News is this, **Romans 5:6, 8**, "*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ... ⁸ but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

The very heart of the gospel is the supreme truth that God accepts us with **no conditions whatsoever** when we put our trust in the atoning sacrifice of His incarnate Son. Although we're **helplessly weak and sinful**, God, in His grace, forgives us completely. It's by His infinite grace that we're saved, not by moral character, works of righteousness, commandment-keeping, or churchgoing. When we do nothing but accept God's total pardon, we receive the guarantee of eternal life. **Titus 3:4-7** says, "*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*" That is Good news indeed. Beloved, **that's the Gospel**. And in this story of the **paralytic**, we just get to see it in action.

The look of Christ ... and the power of His Word ... given to the **paralytic** is a parable of the Incarnation and the Cross. Jesus took on flesh, became sin for us, and gave us His strength. **2 Corinthians 5:21** says, "*For our sake He [God] made Him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him [Christ] we might become the righteousness of God.*" Jesus looked at us when we were utterly helpless. He forgave us and healed us. And as we see what Jesus did for this **paralytic**, lying immobile in the dust, His radiant smile and gentle words washing over a man who can't do anything for himself, we see what He did for us. That's the lesson of the **paralytic**. We just need a mat.

1 Peter 2:24 tells us that, "*He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.*" You get His strength. He took your **paralysis**. **Ephesians 2:4-5** reminds us, "*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved...*" Because remember, Jesus didn't come to make bad people good. He came to make dead people live.

Who among us would have ever thought to ask God for what He really gives? Which one of us would have **dared** say, "God, would You please hang Yourself on a tool of torture as a substitute for every sin, every mistake, and every stupid thing I've ever done?" And **then** have the audacity to add, "And after You forgive me, could You prepare a place for me in Your house to live forever." And as if that wasn't enough, "And would you please live within me and protect me and guide me and bless me with more than I could ever deserve?"

Are we totally aware of our sinfulness and separation from God, acknowledging that we're sinners who have nothing in ourselves to commend us to God? We must lay down before the Lord Christ in humility and reverence — submitting to Him as our only hope and telling Him

that if He doesn't save us, we'll be lost. And asking Him to heal us of the sin that lives deep in our **souls**.

Or are we only asking for the small stuff? Are we only asking for the little things ... like a long life and a healthy **body** and a good job? Not bad from our perspective, but from God's perspective, it's flying a kite when He offers us wings.

Jesus asked the doubters, "***Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?***" Well, how would **you** answer that question? Which is easier for Jesus? To forgive a **soul** or heal a **body**? Which caused Jesus less pain ... **providing this man with healing ... or providing this man with Heaven?** **To heal the man's body took a simple command; to forgive the man's sins took Jesus' blood.** The first was done in a house of friends; the second on a hill with thieves. One took His words; the other took His **body**. One took a moment; the other took His life. Which was easier?

So strong was His love for this motley crew of faith that He went way beyond their appeal and went straight to the cross. Jesus already knows the cost of grace. He already knows the price of forgiveness. But He offers it anyway. By the way ... He hasn't changed. What happened then can happen now. The face that smiled at a **paralytic** then can smile at a **paralytic** now. The word that heals **body** and **soul** then can heal **body** and **soul** now. Because, as Jesus is about to tell them, **Mark 2:17**, "*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.*"

Mark wants us to see that the Jesus story is not only about Him, but also about us. This text shows us how God **reveals His power** in order to call people who live with **paralysis**, people who think they're **not good enough** to follow Christ. God takes people who are "outsiders," **and who can't get in on their own**, and makes them "insiders" ... people who are involved in a relationship with the God of the universe. People who are called to live a life that looks to God because He has **poured out His grace** on those of us who realize that without Christ, we really are **paralytics** who are utterly **helpless** to do anything **at all** to deserve His grace. But that's the essence of grace ... getting what you don't deserve.

Mark tells the story of how **Jesus revealed that grace**, died to provide it, rose again to bestow it, and will return to establish its presence over all of creation. The church **must show what such grace looks like** ... starting by bringing that grace to those who are **paralyzed** and who need **a few faithful friends**, who will bear their burden, and bring them to Christ, who is, after all, the King.

And all those who willing to pick up a mat can now say, "Amen."

Take a moment to pray, and then I'll close.

*Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Lord Jesus, we don't know how bad off we really are. We're **paralyzed** people. Through apathy, fear, and shame, we're bound to mats of our own making. Father, we thank You for giving us a healer, a real healer, a healer who can heal our immediate needs, our deepest needs, and our greatest needs. We thank You that the healing never comes the way we expect. We always go about thinking this is the main place we hurt, and You always take us some other place. We thank You that You're the One we can trust, however, because by Your wounds, we are healed. Our wounds close up because Your wounds were opened. You see our hearts, You call our names, You forgive our sins. Help us to come to*

You as Savior, submit to You as Lord, and follow You as King. Give us strength to follow you for the rest of our lives. And so work in each of us this year as we live with Mark, a follower of Jesus, as we hear what he hears, given to him by eyewitnesses of Christ. Thank You for this extraordinary story. Thank You for the glimpses we get of Jesus in all of His wisdom, power, and compassion. Give us, we pray, the faith to believe that we can do whatever Jesus asks us to do. Teach us to respond with a greater trust in You, and in Your Word, and in this Gospel, to draw us ever closer to Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

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Colossians 1:13-14

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”