

HEALING AND FORGIVENESS

Mark 1:40-2:12

Introduction:

Why do you go to a hospital? It's not for the magazines, coffee in the cafe, flowers from the shop or fine hospital cuisine. It's because you have a physical need. When we are sick, we look to those who can determine the problem and bring about healing.

That is the same reason that people 2000 years ago came to Jesus. As he began his ministry, it wasn't long before people were seeking him out, looking for the healing, either for themselves or for a friend.

Last week – several individuals who had encounters with Jesus. Their lives were changed forever:

- Simon, Andrew, James, John – called to follow Jesus. They were changed, everything in this life became secondary to the important task Jesus had for them – they left vocation, livelihood, family behind to follow Jesus.
- A demon possessed man – cleansed, healed. Note the reaction of those around Jesus – amazed at his teaching and authority.
- Simon's mother-in-law – healed, many others brought for healing and deliverance.
- The disciples – challenged regarding ministry and prayer.

Then we looked briefly at the healing of the leper in the final verses of chapter 1. He was an outcast of society, one who was avoided at all costs. People would not go near him; he was required to call out, "Unclean, unclean" as he walked along the street. Yet Jesus touched him and made him well again.

I would like to pick up our study at that point this morning. As we continue in our study of the book of Mark, we are hurried along as Jesus moves from person to person, from event to event, from one challenge to another. We are looking primarily at Mark 2:1-12 this morning, but I do want to include those closing verses of chapter 1 as well.

A Plea of Desperation

It is hard to imagine the life of a leper in Jesus' day. His life was one of desperation – trying to survive, ignored or avoided by the crowds, by former friends, even family. His appearance was probably grotesque, he was unclean and probably smelled awful.

But he came to Jesus, pleading, imploring him, kneeling down in front of him, saying, "**If you will, you can make me clean.**" If you will – not my will but yours...

A Miracle Response

Jesus responded – he reached out and touched him with a simple response to the man's desperate plea, "**I will; be clean.**" And just that quickly, his leprosy was gone. He was healed. He was clean, his skin was restored.

Jesus sent him away, with instructions to go to the priest with the appropriate offerings – see Leviticus 14 – laws concerning offerings for one whose leprosy is healed.

Why would Jesus tell him not to say anything to anyone? This is not the only time Jesus gave this command to someone after he was healed. One commentary says:

"But why should Jesus try to preserve this secrecy about his miracles? Evidently, his thought about them was different from the ordinary thought of the Church, as it was different from that of his own time. But the reason is very simple. The miracles were sure to be treated as external signs, whereas Jesus relied on internal signs. As external, moreover, exhibitions of a supernatural power, they confirmed the people in their expectation of a national, worldly Messiah, and raised in them just the false hopes which Jesus was seeking to allay. And finally, by the excitement which they created, they interfered with the quiet methods of Jesus' spiritual work."

I don't know if that adequately explains it, but I will leave it at that. It is clear that when the man did spread abroad the story of what Jesus had done, it brought even greater multitudes of people seeking Jesus and drove him away into the wilderness.

The Faith of Four Friends

In chapter 2 we come to another remarkable demonstration of both desperation and faith.

First we must note that Mark tells us – Jesus is back “home” – he has returned from the desolate places to Capernaum.

Once again his life is filled with busyness. He is surrounded by people looking for something from him. They are there to listen to his teaching, to see the miracles, perhaps to experience a miracle. The house is crowded with people, listening intently to his message – v. 2.

In the meantime – there is a man needing a miracle. A man who was paralyzed – helpless, totally dependent on others. He could not even come to see Jesus on his own. He was carried on a bed or pallet by four friends. It is amazing to see the faith and the determination of these individuals. Everything about this situation points to the faith that they had, believing that if they could just get to Jesus their friend would be healed.

One speaker made these observations about how they didn’t let anything keep them from their mission:

- The fact that their friend couldn’t walk didn’t stop them from getting him to Jesus—they carried him.
- The fact that the crowd blocked their access to Jesus didn’t stop them—they went around them.
- The fact that the roof of the house lay between their friend and Jesus didn’t stop them—they removed it.

They did not let anything stop them from bringing their friend and getting him to Jesus.

A Life Changed

When they finally got to Jesus, something unexpected happened. Jesus could see their hearts and the heart of the paralyzed man and saw the depth of their faith. He said to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven.” He did not deal immediately with the physical problem. He went straight to the spiritual issue.

Ray Stedman suggests that Jesus understood that what was really wrong with this man was a spiritual problem. He needed to deal with the spiritual issue in order for the man to be healed physically. So he dealt with the man’s most pressing need – his sin.

This caused a great deal of angst and frustration to the scribes who were there in the crowd. The text does not indicate that they said anything, not even among themselves. But Jesus knew what they were thinking – note vv. 6-7.

His response to them showed his authority over sin as well as sickness. He proceeded to heal the paralyzed man in order to prove His deity, and His authority to forgive sin.

Look at vv. 10-11 – read them. As one speaker said,

“In one powerful, authoritative stroke, Jesus not only healed this man of his paralysis, but also literally and figuratively caused him to “walk in newness of life” (Rom.6: 4). So complete was the transaction that the man was able to carry his own bed to his house.”

I can just imagine the crowd opening up, parting like the Red Sea, to let this man, with his bedroll, to walk out of that house. And notice the reaction of the crowd to what they had just witnessed – read v. 12.

It is interesting to note that the word that is translated “amazed” literally means *“to be out of one’s mind, besides one’s self, insane.”* The people there were beside themselves with astonishment.

Why do you suppose that was? It’s not like they had never seen miracles. The whole reason many or most of them were there was because of the miracles Jesus was doing. Look back to chapter 1:22,27. It was the authority that was demonstrated both by what he said and what he did.

They were amazed at the authority of his teaching (1:22). They could hardly believe that he had such authority that even the demons obeyed him (1:27). And now they just saw him claim to be able to forgive a man’s sin and then backed it up by showing again his power to heal that man’s paralysis. He not only healed his body, but healed his soul as well. Never had they seen such power and authority.

Conclusion

Well, as we wrap this up, we need to see some application. What difference does all of this make to us. There are a number of way in which we can apply the accounts we have just looked at.

Besides Jesus himself, there are four key people or groups of people who appear in these two accounts: the leper, the paralyzed man, his four friends, and the group of scribes. I believe there are things we can learn from each of them.

The leper – came to Jesus pleading for healing, yet submitting to Jesus' will for him.

The paralyzed man – dependent on others for help, trusting – not much is really said about him.

The four friends – filled with faith, determined to bring their friend to Jesus, unwilling to be turned away. "Who are you bringing to Jesus?"

The scribes – what can we say about them – doubting, questioning, opposing Jesus

Don't be like the scribes. Be like the four friends.