

Raze The Roof

Mark 2:1-12 April 2, 2025

What do you do when someone shows up claiming to be God? A fellow came here once and after we talked for awhile he let me know that he was both Elijah *and* Jesus Himself. I wasn't too concerned - I was confident Jesus wouldn't be actively smoking meth the way this guy was.

Recently, a church in Indiana was performing a baptism at one of their services and after being asked, "Have you played your trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior," the man in the water said, "I *am* Jesus Christ. I'm back, boys." The stunned elder simply responded, "...What?" Then after a moment of thought very *wisely* said, "Well, we're gonna pause right now and have a conversation with Jared a little bit more."¹

There is a profound, stunned confusion at the end of our text tonight. In a dramatic scene packed full of supernatural power, Jesus demonstrates that He is not just a teacher, He's not just a religious leader, in fact, He's not just a man. At *very least*, He claims to be a spokesperson for God with the full authority of heaven, and at *most*, He claims to be God Himself. The crowd watching it all unfold are shocked. They don't know *what* to think, but it's clear that something supernatural is going on.

By the way - two little things I'd like us all to tuck away: First, you don't have to worry about Jesus returning and us not realizing it. In Matthew 24, Jesus said lots of *false* messiahs will show up and claim to be Him, but when He *really* comes back, it will be like lightning flashing from east to west.²

Second, be very careful when a pastor or a Bible teacher or a religious leader claims or suggests or implies that they are speaking "for" God - as if they have a direct line or connection that you *do not have*. Be careful. God's *Word* speaks for God. God can speak through His messengers, but when someone presents themselves as authoritative on spiritual things, it is absolutely essential that we evaluate their message, their methods, and the fruit in their lives.

But here in Mark 2, Jesus makes a claim to authority that no one saw coming. As a result, they didn't know what to do. Was Jesus a criminal worthy of death or was He...*what was He?*

We remember this story because of the inspiring story of the men who stop at nothing to help their paralyzed friend. It's a *great* account. But this is *not* a story about healing. This is about *Who Jesus is*, how His work goes deeper than what we prioritize, and how our human understanding of the Messiah is often *not* quite right.

Mark 2:1 - When he entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that he was at home.

¹ <https://protestia.com/2025/01/24/man-claims-to-be-jesus-christ-seconds-before-being-baptized-stunned-pastor-wisely-postpones/>

² Matthew 24:27

This may have been Peter's home or Mary's home. At the time, Capernaum was Jesus' ministry headquarters. In chapter 1, He left to visit other towns throughout Galilee, but now He's back in this little fishing village.

His willingness to return demonstrates His patience and His grace and His compassion. Capernaum was a place where people *did not understand Him, did not believe His message, and, in some cases, would not obey Him*. But Christ is a long-suffering Savior.

Mark 2:2 - ²So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and he was speaking the word to them.

Sometimes *thousands* of people surrounded Jesus. With that said, the population of Capernaum at the time was around 1,500 people.³ It wouldn't take much to fill up the space of this house. The largest excavated homes in that area are like 18 feet wide.⁴ Still, there were a lot of people.

For once, Jesus was able to do what He wanted to do: Teach the Word. No long line of people needing healing, just a crowd hearing the preaching of the Gospel. The Lord must've been excited.

Mark 2:3-4 - ³They came to him bringing a paralytic, carried by four of them. ⁴Since 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 mat on which the paralytic was lying.

The digging through the roof is one of the most theatrical moments in all the Gospels. What must it have been like? How long did it take? Were people frightened or laughing or upset?

It was probably not as difficult to make this hole as we might imagine.⁵ The roofs had wood beams covered with thatch and compacted mud. *Sometimes* they had some tiles, but not always.⁶ "One authority states that the roof could easily be broken up...and easily repaired, and that it was often done for the purpose of letting down [things like] grain [or] straw. Writing in the mid-1800s, [he said]: *'I have often seen it done, and done it myself to houses in Lebanon, but there is always more dust made than is agreeable.'*"⁷

On the other hand, we shouldn't have a topical, palm frond covering in mind. The roofs of these houses weren't just to cover. They did stuff up there. There would be an external staircase or ladder and the roof would be used for work or drying laundry, prayer, or even sleeping.⁸ In Acts chapter 10 we see Peter hanging out on a roof like this, praying.⁹

³ Richard Horsley *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis*

⁴ Craig Keener *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, 2nd Ed.*

⁵ James Brooks *The New American Commentary: Mark*

⁶ Frank Gaebelien, D. A. Carson, Walter Wessel, and Walter Liefeld *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8: Matthew, Mark, Luke*

⁷ James Freeman and Harold Chadwick *Manners & Customs of the Bible*

⁸ *CSB Study Bible Notes*

⁹ Acts 10:9

They wouldn't have needed to jackhammer, but that doesn't mean this happened quickly. And there would have been a *tremendous* amount of dust and debris falling on the crowd below, including Jesus.¹⁰ This is not a high-ceilinged home.

For their part, the four friends show a wonderful, active love and compassion. It's not easy to carry this kind of dead weight across town, let alone up a staircase *or maybe a ladder!* Then to keep pushing past obstacles, even the physical impediment of a roof. These guys are great examples of love in action. When Paul tells us to "carry one another's burdens" in Galatians 6, we would do well to consider this illustration of a faith that can be seen.

Mark 2:5 - ⁵Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Let's imagine the strangeness and the realness of this scene. The house is absolutely full - standing room only. For a significant amount of time, some dudes have been digging through the roof. Undoubtedly people had shouted things at them. Finally, this frail body is awkwardly lowered down. I'm guessing there was a close call or two where they almost dropped the guy.

Jesus *finally* gets to teach the people of Capernaum but He's interrupted yet again. He's got dust and mud chunks in His hair and beard. Everything is bedlam. But in that moment, the Lord is not annoyed, He doesn't rebuke anyone or storm off saying, "I can't work like this." Instead He fixes His attention on this helpless man and uses a term of endearment, calling him "Son."¹¹

And *then* He says something amazing: *Your sins are forgiven!* They're dismissed. Gone away. Left behind.¹² Immediately and *freely*. This forgiveness required no sacrifice or ritual. He didn't have to wait for the Day of Atonement. He didn't have to bring a lamb. He had been *pardoned*.

That's the difference Jesus makes. He *pardons* our sin. Pardons are in the news a lot these days. People get very upset and say, "That person is *guilty*, they shouldn't be let off the hook." But *that's what a pardon is! We are guilty*. Guilty of a lifetime of sin against our Holy Creator. And He offers us a full pardon, not based on what we do, but based on what *He* has done, by His love and grace.

To the people in the audience, *free* forgiveness was totally outside how they understood a relationship with God.¹³ Jesus' statement would've been absolutely shocking.

But of course, the paralytic and his friends didn't bring him that day with the goal of having his *sins* forgiven. They came to have his body healed. But the Messiah, Who loves *best* knew that forgiveness was the most important issue. *That* was what this man needed. Of course, Jesus *never* turned away someone who asked for healing in the Gospels. He knew He was going to also *physically* heal this man, but He wanted to take this opportunity to teach the people and some special guests in the audience *and us* about what is more important.

¹⁰ Morna Hooker *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*

¹¹ Brooks

¹² *Dictionary Of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*

¹³ Hooker

Mark 2:6-7 - ⁶But 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?”

The story changes focus to this group of scribes. Actually, Luke lets us know that this was not only a group of Pharisees and scribes, but that they had come from “every village of Galilee and Judea, and also from Jerusalem” to scrutinize this Jesus people were talking about.¹⁴

Already they are in sharp contrast to the faith-filled friends of the paralytic. They are shown sitting. Not only are they not helping others get to Jesus, they’re taking up extra space in this standing-room only meeting. They refused to make way for those in need. And rather than faith or humility, their hearts are full of criticism and dismissal at the words of Jesus.

This story is the first of five in a row that involve conflict between Jesus and the Jews. More and more they did not like what He said or did and their opposition against Him became more formal and more sinister.

Blasphemy was a capital offense in Judaism. So, why didn’t they pick up stones in this scene? They were totally confused about what was happening. Some linguists think they were asking themselves, “Wait, is He blaspheming?”¹⁵ You see, blasphemy laws were very specific. And Jesus *hadn’t* used the Divine Name. He was somewhat vague in what He said. At very least He was claiming to speak for God or to know what God had and hadn’t done. And that was very close to the line, if not over it in their minds.

Because, they were right: Only God can forgive sin. You can’t buy it, you can’t merit it, you can’t borrow it or steal it. Only God Himself can pardon you for your sin. At the time, the Jews did not believe *even the Messiah* could forgive sins.¹⁶

Mark 2:8 - ⁸Right 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?”

Jesus is omniscient. He knows everything. He knew everything about the physical malady of the crippled man and knew everything about his past and knew everything going on in the hearts of the scribes. He knows everything going on in *your* heart and life, too.

Often the Lord will ask people questions like this. It’s not because He doesn’t know. He asks for *our* benefit. He asks so that, perhaps, we will realize we’ve been missing something.

Where are you, Adam and Eve? Sarah, why did you laugh? What are you doing here, Elijah? Where were you when I established the earth, Job? Hagar, where have you come from and where are you

¹⁴ Luke 5:17

¹⁵ R.T. France *The Gospel Of Mark*

¹⁶ William Lane *The Gospel Of Mark*

going? Do you have any right to be angry, Jonah? Why are you crying, Mary? Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? These are questions meant to lead people to deep truth and restoration.

Why were they thinking these things in their hearts? Because their hearts were closed to the idea of a Suffering Savior Who forgives freely out of His mercy and grace.

Mark 2:9 - ⁹Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat, and walk'?

It's easier to say "your sins are forgiven," because there's no way to prove or disprove whether it happened. If you say to a paralytic, "Get up and walk," your legitimacy is immediately audited.

Mark 2:10-11 - ¹⁰But 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 mat, and go home."

Normally Jesus was very upset when people said, "Show us a sign to prove why we should believe you." No one asked for a sign here, but Jesus says "I'm gonna give you one." He was proving He was the real deal. He wasn't unsure about His mission or Who He was. He has made it abundantly clear that He is the Christ.

But He doesn't use the title "Christ," or "Anointed One" in this scene. He uses a different name: *Son of Man*. This was Jesus' favorite self-designation in the Gospels.¹⁷ It's used 14 times in Mark.

This title comes from Daniel, chapter 7. There we read:

Daniel 7:13-14 - ¹³I continued watching in the night visions, and suddenly one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him. ¹⁴He was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.

This title was not one the Jews commonly used for the Messiah. They would more often use titles like, "Son of David," which were culturally wrapped up in a nationalistic or militaristic context.¹⁸ But Jesus did not let culture define Who He is or what He does. He doesn't conform to our ideas.

This title should make a listener go back and say, "What does *that* name mean?" Well, He is the One Who comes with clouds - that's God. He is the One Who will rule and reign forever - that's the Messiah. He is Human and Divine. Not only is He allowed to speak for God, He *is* God, and He is in charge, with all authority, all dominion, all glory, and all power.

¹⁷ Brooks

¹⁸ Robert Utley, Robert James *The Gospel According To Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*

Mark 2:12 - ¹²Immediately he got up, took the mat, 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!"

Luke tells us the man not only got up and left, but he went out glorifying God.¹⁹ Jesus, still with dust in His hair, probably got to work fixing the roof. Do you think He told the other guys, "Hey, fix that?"

The people didn't know what to think. Mark uses a very strong verb - that people were beside themselves.²⁰ They didn't know what to think about Jesus, *even after what He just said and did!*

So, Who is He? He's the King of kings. He's the Savior. He's the Lord of all, including our lives. He's the GodMan Who has commanded us just as He commanded this previously crippled man.

So, what has the Lord commanded you to do? Notice, that *no matter what* Jesus asks of us, we can do - even the *impossible* things. Jesus told the paralytic to do something that was *impossible*. But God enables us to do anything He commands us to do. Anything. And as we obey Him and walk in His new life, we get to go wherever He sends us glorifying God and *enjoying* the new creation He's made us to be. Living out a living faith in front of everyone.

¹⁹ Luke 5:25

²⁰ Clifton Allen *Matthew-Mark*