

Audio file

[Gospel Service Mr Michael Steedman 02_08_26 6226ms_mark_2_v1-8.mp3](#)

Transcript

00:00:00

Our second reading is in the Gospel of Mark and chapter 2.

00:00:06

Mark's Gospel chapter 2, beginning to read at the first verse.

00:00:13

And again Jesus entered into Capernaum after some days.

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And it was noised that he was in the house.

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And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them.

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No, not so much as about the door.

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And he preached the word unto them.

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And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was born of four.

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And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was.

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And when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy, the paralyzed man, lay.

00:01:00

When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

00:01:08

But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies?

00:01:17

Who can forgive sins but God only?

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And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them,

00:01:29

Why reason ye these things in your hearts, whether it is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk?

00:01:44

But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise and take up thy bed,

00:01:57

and go thy way into thine house.

00:02:01

And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

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And he went forth again by the seaside and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

00:02:23

And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me.

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And he arose and followed him.

00:02:33

And it came to pass that as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many, and they followed him.

00:02:46

And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners,

00:02:51

They said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

00:02:58

When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.

00:03:08

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

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May the Lord bless that reading of his holy word.

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As we probably all know, Jesus was born in the small town of Bethlehem.

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Then when he was still very young, his family moved to Nazareth, where he grew up.

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So he became known as Jesus of Nazareth.

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And he stayed there in Nazareth throughout his youth, learning his father's trade of a carpenter.

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It was at the age of 30 that his public ministry began, but he wasn't appreciated by the people of Nazareth and they rejected him.

00:04:01

At one point they became so enraged that they wanted to throw him off a cliff, but he escaped from their hands.

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From then on, he made his headquarters in the town of Capernaum, where he did many of his miracles.

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We're going to look at one of these miracles today.

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But before we do so, I need to say something about typical housing of those days.

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That'll help us to get a better picture of what's happening here in our passage.

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It seems that most houses would have an unroofed courtyard surrounded by rooms.

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one of which may have been larger than all the others.

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This served, if you like, as a kind of living room.

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Houses typically had flat roofs which were used for domestic purposes.

00:05:01

For example, weaving, washing and drying dates, figs and flax, even for praying.

00:05:11

Since houses were built close together,

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It was even possible to pass from one roof to another, which was very helpful, especially in an emergency.

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How did you get up on the roof?

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By means of an outside staircase.

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Now to the account of what happened on that very special day in Capernaum.

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Now by this time Jesus had become well known in the town.

00:05:43

as a miracle worker and a great teacher.

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He'd been away for a while, and when the people heard that he was back again, they flocked to see him.

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Many of them were no doubt hoping to see a miracle or two, or perhaps they had even brought a loved one who was sick or disabled in the hope that Jesus of Nazareth would heal them.

00:06:13

So the house was bursting at the seams and people were spilling out into the courtyard.

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Along came four men bearing their friend on a kind of stretcher because he was paralyzed.

00:06:31

When they arrived they were faced with a dilemma.

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How could they possibly get anywhere near Jesus with all those people around?

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I expect Jesus' voice would have carried to the very edge of the crowd, but he himself probably couldn't even see that they were there.

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No, they needed to have a personal encounter with Jesus.

00:07:02

And so it must be with the earnest seeker.

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The person who knows about Jesus

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He or she may have received teaching about him from friends and perhaps heard preachers preach sermons about him.

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Perhaps he's read about him in the scriptures.

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But all of that is not enough.

00:07:28

He knows he needs to have a personal one-to-one encounter with the Lord Jesus.

00:07:37

He must spare no effort

00:07:40

to get to meet him face to face.

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But he's paralyzed, not physically, but spiritually.

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How can he get through?

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So there are those four men with their paralyzed friend.

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And that friend can't do anything to help himself.

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He knows he can't reach Jesus on his own.

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But he has friends, friends who know Jesus personally and friends who want to help him all they can.

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They can advise him, they can direct him, they can teach him everything they know from the scriptures, but they know that they can't heal him.

00:08:33

They can't heal this man's spiritual paralysis.

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those four men knew that their friend must meet Jesus personally.

00:08:46

But how?

00:08:48

They feel helpless.

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But then they come up with an ingenious solution.

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They'll get up on the roof, make a hole in it, and lower their friend down to where Jesus is standing.

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So they walk round to the back of the house

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and climb up the staircase taking care not to tip their friend off the stretcher and then they start digging a hole in the roof.

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And they dig it just above where Jesus is standing.

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It has to be pretty big to be able to fit the whole stretcher through the gap.

00:09:34

Well,

00:09:36

There comes a point when the people below notice what's going on.

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Something extraordinary is happening above their heads.

00:09:47

I imagine that Jesus stopped talking and looked up.

00:09:54

Does Jesus resent this intrusion, this interruption, while he's addressing the crowd?

00:10:04

Does he tell them they'll need to pay for the damage, the damage done to the roof?

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Does he call the owner?

00:10:13

No.

00:10:14

He watches as the friends gently lower the paralyzed man down.

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He doesn't just stand back and admire their ingenuity.

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When the paralytic eventually reaches the floor, Jesus speaks to him.

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What does he say?

00:10:36

Here's what we read.

00:10:38

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven.

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Now I expect many people in the crowd knew that man.

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They may have known his family.

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They may have told them about the circumstances.

00:11:00

Perhaps he'd had an accident.

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and the doctors had told them there was nothing they could do for him.

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He may have been laid out on the street with a begging bowl, which would have been typical in those days.

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But all the time they probably had no idea what was going on in his heart.

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All they could see

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was this desperate attempt of those men to bring their friend to Jesus.

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The scribes, the Jewish leaders who were present, they didn't understand what was going on either.

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They didn't know what was going on deep inside the heart of that paralyzed man.

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They took exception

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to the fact that Jesus was claiming to do what only God can do, namely forgive sins.

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To them that was blasphemy.

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Here's a question to true Christians this evening.

00:12:16

Notice that we read in our text when Jesus saw their faith.

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So it wasn't just the paralyzed man who had faith, but all five of them.

00:12:30

When we pray for the lost, whether it's a family member, a friend or whoever, do we have the faith of those four men?

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They were able-bodied, a picture of the true believer's spiritual condition, while their friend was paralysed, a picture of the lost.

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Although their faith was a gift of God, in God's plan their prayers played a vital part in the healing of their friend.

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How do we pray for unbelievers?

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Do we think, well, it won't do any harm and God might answer it?

00:13:19

Who knows?

00:13:21

Humanly speaking, those four men ran a risk.

00:13:27

They ran the risk of being made to look ridiculous.

00:13:31

But they believed in the power of Jesus Christ to do the impossible.

00:13:37

What beautiful words Jesus pronounced.

00:13:41

Son,

00:13:42

Your sins are forgiven you.

00:13:46

The same Jesus who could read the paralytic's heart could tell what thoughts were running through the minds of those proud scribes.

00:13:58

They were the blasphemers, not Jesus.

00:14:02

They were questioning the Son of God.

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Which is easier, Jesus asks, to forgive a man's sins

00:14:12

or to heal a paralytic.

00:14:15

We could argue that for the Almighty Son of God, neither was difficult at all.

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On the other hand, while the physical healing required just a word, what did the healing of the man's soul require?

00:14:33

It required the death of the Saviour on the cross with all that involved.

00:14:40

bearing that man's sins, suffering the agony of the wrath of his Father in heaven, and that desertion when he cried out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

00:14:56

Compared with that, the physical suffering of the crucifixion was nothing.

00:15:04

The scribes were probably thinking, they were probably thinking that words are cheap.

00:15:10

and easy to say.

00:15:13

They have to be backed up by deeds.

00:15:17

The deed was done for this man at Calvary.

00:15:21

It was that sacrifice that gave Jesus the authority to forgive the paralytic sins.

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Without Calvary, those words of forgiveness would have been vain and worthless.

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But thanks to Calvary,

00:15:40

The dead can rise to new life, the blind can see, the paralyzed can walk again.

00:15:49

That physical healing was a miracle, but it was also a symbolic testimony and confirmation of what Jesus had done for that man's soul.

00:16:04

Incidentally, the same is true of baptism.

00:16:09

Although in itself baptism is not a miracle, it is a testimony of what the Lord has done in the soul of the individual.

00:16:22

So Christian believer, look what the Lord has done in your heart.

00:16:27

You were once completely paralyzed, paralyzed because of the sin in your life, but the Lord forgave you

00:16:38

He raised you up to new life.

00:16:42

Now you're alive and can walk the Christian path.

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Baptism may not be as dramatic as a paralytic beginning to walk, but it is testimony to just as great a miracle.

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Every true Christian was once spiritually paralyzed.

00:17:04

incapable of living and walking and serving God.

00:17:11

Have you ever thought that before conversion we were not able to do a single thing that pleased the Lord?

00:17:19

Because without faith it's impossible.

00:17:24

So Jesus spoke to the paralyzed man and he said, Arise, take up your bed and go to your house.

00:17:34

and immediately he arose, took up the bed and went out in the presence of them all.

00:17:42

Now everyone gathered there could see that Jesus was not just spouting words when he told him that his sins were forgiven.

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The miracle of healing proved that his sins really had been forgiven.

00:18:00

Very soon

00:18:01

those sins would be carried by the Saviour on the cross.

00:18:07

And his power and authority to forgive will be proved even more clearly three days later when he rose from the dead.

00:18:19

Jesus never uses empty words.

00:18:22

He never makes vain promises.

00:18:25

What he says, he does.

00:18:27

What he promises, he fulfils.

00:18:32

And if you are an unbeliever or a lost sinner this evening, you come to Jesus Christ this very evening, repenting of your sins, trusting in the Saviour, you will be saved.

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How will it become clear that the miracle has taken place?

00:18:58

By the fact that you'll begin

00:19:00

to live a new life.

00:19:02

You will walk in newness of life.

00:19:07

But what about all those people crowded into that room in Capernaum?

00:19:13

Here's what we read in our text.

00:19:16

All were amazed and glorified God, saying, we never saw anything like this.

00:19:24

It couldn't be otherwise, could it?

00:19:26

They'd seen a miracle performed before their very eyes.

00:19:30

That man had appeared lying helpless on a stretcher.

00:19:36

But after a few words from Jesus, he'd stood up, picked up his stretcher, which served as a bed, and walked home.

00:19:47

The town would have been all abuzz with the news for a long, time to come.

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Well, that sounds like a happy end to the story, doesn't it?

00:19:58

I look forward to meeting that man in heaven.

00:20:02

But not long afterwards we find Jesus saying this.

00:20:08

Then he began to rebuke the cities in which most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.

00:20:17

You, Capernaum, who are exalted in heaven, will be brought down to Hades.

00:20:24

For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom,

00:20:29

It would have remained until this day.

00:20:32

But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement than for you.

00:20:42

Sodom, as you may know, was one of the most wicked and immoral cities in the whole of scripture.

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In Genesis we read, the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.

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It was so wicked that God decided to destroy it, and he did.

00:21:06

No one was spared except Abraham's nephew Lot and his family.

00:21:13

The fate of the people of Sodom was to go down to Hades, which in the context clearly refers to hell.

00:21:22

the place of everlasting torment.

00:21:26

And perhaps we think to ourselves, well if anyone deserves to go down to hell it was those people in Sodom.

00:21:34

But Jesus says that the sins of Capernaum were even worse than the vile sins of Sodom.

00:21:44

What do you think is the worst possible sin in God's sight?

00:21:52

In our day and age we hear about unimaginably horrible sins.

00:21:58

I don't need to tell you what they are.

00:22:01

We've all heard about them.

00:22:02

But there's one sin which is worse than all the others.

00:22:07

What is it?

00:22:09

is unbelief.

00:22:12

Refusing to repent and believe in God, in God's dearly beloved Son.

00:22:19

The people of Capernaum had witnessed mighty works, miracle after miracle performed by the Son of God, and yet for the most part they had turned their backs on the Saviour.

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And this is a warning to us all, especially to those who have heard the gospel, perhaps many times.

00:22:42

Jesus warns them that they won't get away with it.

00:22:47

One day

00:22:49

They will have to face the Son of God on the Day of Judgment, and they'll have no answer.

00:22:59

They will have to answer, rather, for their refusal to believe.

00:23:05

Well, my prayer is that no one sitting here this evening will suffer the fate of the people of Capernaum, and so I invite you

00:23:15

to come to the Lord Jesus to repent of your sins and to believe in him.

00:23:21

He is more ready to save you than you are to be saved.

00:23:27

Shall we pray together?

00:23:32

Lord, we thank you for this wonderful example of the love and compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Compassion shown to a paralyzed man, yes,

00:23:45

but compassion shown to a sinner who was in need of salvation.

00:23:51

And Lord, we thank you that that meeting with Jesus was not in vain, that his sins were forgiven.

00:24:03

We thank you that there is forgiveness for all who will turn from their sins and look to the Saviour, believe in him,

00:24:13

and they will be saved.

00:24:15

Thank you Lord for that wonderful Saviour.

00:24:19

In his name we pray.

00:24:21

Amen.