# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“What Jesus Sees”**

**Mark 2:1-12**

 **January 17, 2021**

Last Sunday we began our sermon series in Mark’s Gospel with chapter one, verses fourteen and fifteen, where we are told that Jesus’ mission was to preach God’s Good News. Jesus declared that the time promised by God had come at last, that the Kingdom of God was near, and that people need to repent of their sins and believe this Good News. The Gospel of Mark will expand on these elements of God’s Good News, with today’s passage focusing in particular on Jesus’ authority to forgive sin. Please turn with me to Mark 2:1-12

When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God’s word to them, four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They couldn’t bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “My child, your sins are forgiven.” But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, “What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!” Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts? Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk’? So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!” And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, “We’ve never seen anything like this before!”

While Jesus is preaching God’s word to a large crowd of people packed into and around the home where he was staying, a hole is dug in the roof of the home and a paralyzed man is lowered on a mat in front of Jesus. This is a silent, dramatic plea for healing, and Jesus recognizes that only a very determined faith in his healing power would have motivated these men to seek his help in this way. The paralyzed man was looking for just one touch from the Lord Jesus, and he humbly allowed himself to be let down through the roof of the house in full sight of the entire crowd, publicly exposing his helplessness.

There are times when you and I find ourselves flat on our back, so to speak, with a need that we know only God can meet. It is not easy for us to acknowledge our need, thinking that self-reliance is the better way and, besides, doesn’t the Bible say that God helps those who help themselves? Not only does the Bible not say that, but it in fact says the very opposite: “Come to me all who are weary and heavy ladened and I will give you rest.” It isn’t because we don’t need Jesus that we don’t go to him for help; it is because we’re too proud to admit our need.

What the man needed was obvious to everyone there, including Jesus. He needed to be healed of his paralysis. But Jesus knew his deepest need, which is the same as your deepest need and my deepest need, the need for forgiveness. Are we humble enough to come to Jesus and admit our sin, and is our faith real enough to believe that he forgives us?

The focus of the story turns from Jesus and the paralyzed man to Jesus and the teachers of religious law. Jesus sees that the man needs forgiveness and, by faith, is open to it. Jesus also sees the hearts and minds of the teachers and he knows that they are closed to his offer of forgiveness. But they need it just as much as does the man on the mat. So, he speaks to them, seeking to win them over to the reality of who he is. He knows that, for them, the forgiveness of God is centered in the temple, in the sacrificial system and the work of the priests. That is how it has always been, but now Jesus is here. The time has come, the Kingdom is near, where people are forgiven not through animal sacrifice but through the sacrifice of the Son of God on a cross.

But, let’s not forget the man on the mat. While Jesus is speaking with the teachers of the law, he is still lying on his mat, no doubt wondering about Jesus’ words: “My child, your sins are forgiven.” Then Jesus turns to him and says, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home.” And, while the teachers continue to sit there unbelieving, the man of faith jumps up, grabs his mat, and walks out through the door.

Jesus sees all the things that bring paralysis to our lives, and he especially sees our sin. And he says, “My child, your sins are forgiven,” and he says, “Stand up from whatever paralyzes you and live the abundant life I offer in my Father’s Kingdom.”

There may be a voice in your head that has been telling you that you are not quite good enough. That you need to do just a little more, that you need to be just a little better, before Jesus will forgive you. The voice may even pose as the voice of God. But, if what Jesus says in our text today is true, then that voice is a liar. There is nothing more you need to do, no better way that you next to act, in order for Jesus to forgive you. He sees your faith in him, weak and imperfect as it may be, and he declares, “Believe the Good News: your sins are forgiven.”