

VBC
Pastor John Johnson
Mark 2:1-12
Series: Mark #2
January 10-11, 2004

“So Who Are You In This Story?”

INTRO

This week gave new definition to the word -- confinement

- By late in the week, most of us were ready to make a break for it
- You can watch "First Alert Storm Team Coverage" just so many days
- If I hear the words Doplar Radar one more time, I will go crazy

But imagine being confined to a much smaller space for a much longer time

- It is a space about 3'X6'
- And there you are -- no matter what the weather does
- With no hope conditions will ever change

That's the situation in Mark 2 --

Mark tells us the story of a man who is restricted by his paralysis -- confined to his mat -- no rehab, no treatment centers, no social security

- But amazingly freed (read vss.1-12)

Unexpectedly, Jesus returns to Capernaum

- He had departed out of a desire to focus on His calling -- to preach
- But now He has come back -- presumably, “home” was Peter's home
- Where He now shifts His focus from healing to preaching

It is a story with several characters -- each like concentric rings

Out from center --

1 - **THE CROWD** – vs.2

- In most every story of Mark's, the curious are part of the landscape, forming the audience
- Generally passive, they stand and observe -- trying to figure Jesus out
- Fickle -- here until there is a better attraction down the street -- or until things might demand a cost
- Jesus did not ignore them -- but neither did He cater to them

- At best -- they are background -- like wallpaper to the story
- At worst -- a barrier

Here, it is a bit of both -- they provide scenery to the story

- But they also are an obstruction - they are getting in the way of the next group

2 - THE SEEKERS – vss.3-4

- These men have come to find Jesus
- They are unable to break through the crowd -- but they will not be dissuaded
- They are intent upon removing the obstacles to nearness to Jesus
- They are willing to take the "necessary steps" rather than accept the encumbrances
 - In this case - up to the roof
 - Where they climb, they dig, they lower
 - Knowing they will interrupt the teaching

ILLUSTRATION

Wed night -- a sound in the garage. A pipe had burst and water had busted its way through the sheetrock and hitting things in the garage full blast

- It was not a great moment in the Johnson home
- It must not have been in Peter's either -- as his "sheetrock" was broken into by hands
- He had not sought a remodel job, ordered a new skylight

One thinks of the crowd, with debris falling on their heads

- and Jesus, right in the middle of His teaching

Closest of all --

3 - THE PERSON IN NEED – vs.5

- We do not know hardly anything about him - his name, his background
- We know this -- he has a paralysis of some sort that has imprisoned him
 - Made him completely dependent
- There is no money, no work, no influence, no future
- Only hope -- here in this situation -- Jesus is the first hope he has had
 - But it's risky
 - What if nothing happens?
 - What if Jesus gets upset?

ILLUSTRATION

Buffe Karaker -- what he taught -- it was really good -- but none of us who knew Buffe moved when he taught

Here in the story, Jesus did what Jesus always does -- the unexpected

- Jesus makes a startling pronouncement that seemed, on the surface, both irrelevant and inappropriate - read vs.5 again

No one came seeking forgiveness

- One can begin to hear the murmuring in the crowd
 - the confusion of his friends - the surprise of this man -- he hadn't signed up to have his sins talked about
- What sins can a paralytic do, anyway?
- It sets up the final group in the story

Those furthest out --

4 - THE OFFENDED – vss.6-7

- In almost every story, they have some part
- Almost always, they are the religious types
- They show no compassion - they've brought no friends

- They bring little to the story
 - only their self-righteousness
 - and their preconceived notions of who Jesus should be -- what Jesus should do

- And they have been scandalized
 - How can you forgive someone you have never met?
 - And how can you do something only God can do?
 - And they are right -- forgiveness is God's prerogative
 - Ps 103:12 -- It is God who removes our sins as far as east is from the west
 - It is His exclusive right -- for in every sin, God is the One most offended - Ps 51:4

And so -- there is tension

- Jesus has raised the stakes -- He says He can forgive. Can He?

Jesus answers their challenge

- Demonstrating His deity by knowing what is in their hearts – vs.8
 - just as He knew what was in the heart of the paralytic – vs.5
- And demonstrating His authority to forgive sins by demonstrating His authority over the consequences of sin – vss.9-11
- Suddenly, this man is transformed. From the weakest, he is now the healthiest person in the room -- forgiven, healed
 - This man's world expanded from 3'X6' to as far as his feet could carry him

So what are we to take from this? -- What's the point of the story?

- Maybe God is asking us to look closely and ask this...

WHO ARE WE IN THIS STORY?

A- THE CROWD?

- Maybe -- more than we might like to think -- some of us are here out of curiosity, out of habit, out of a main desire to be with others
- Here until something better comes along or until a call for commitment makes it too uncomfortable to stay
- Here -- but with no thought of taking the teaching and turning it into discipleship
- Here -- but with no thought of bringing someone who needs Jesus

B- THE SEEKER?

- Here, hoping Jesus can do something to heal life's hurts
 - Not sure what will happen if I become a roof crasher
- Here, even if it requires some price
 - Willing to bring others -- if that means their pain can be alleviated

C- THE PERSON IN HOPE OF HEALING?

- Perhaps you identify with the man confined to a pallet
 - It is not quite that graphic -- you have walked in on your own two feet
 - Yet you find yourself broken, almost helpless -- in need of healing, in need of friends, in need of hope
- It might be fair to say that if we are honest, all of us are this person
 - As Ortberg notes -- All of us carry a mat. All of us are imperfect, broken
 - Paralyzed -- confined by issues directly related to sin
 - Paralyzed by anger -- and we can't get on with our lives as a result
 - Imprisoned by fear, worry, anxiety -- that is keeping us on our mat
 - Confined by addictions
 - Restricted by our pride, our ego, our judgmentalism

D- THE OFFENDED?

- Perhaps their behavior is closer to home than you would like to admit
- Religious -- more concerned with form than function -- critical, suspecting
- More known for what you disapprove than approve -- watching for missteps
- Easily upset by something new -- you find yourself easily offended by those who do not keep traditions
- Oblivious to those who need to be brought to Jesus
 - in the way actually of people hoping to find Jesus

CONCLUSION

So where are you? Who are you in this story?

STUDY QUESTIONS:

- 1 - What does Jesus' response to "seeing" their faith (vs.5) say about faith?
- 2 - Jesus seems to connect the paralytic's paralysis to sin. Does sin always have a direct link to illness (cf John 9; James 5)?
- 3 - Why did Jesus send the paralytic home?
- 4 - So who are you in the story?