

Structure For: Mark 2:8-12 “The Advent of Jesus’ Rule Over Sin”

Midweek Advent #3

Wednesday, December 18th, 2024

Text: Mark 2:8-12

⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"---he said to the paralytic---¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

The text’s intent

Jesus shows Himself to be the Son of Man who has been given the dominion and authority to not only heal all disease with a command from His lips, but to pronounce spiritual healing and restoration through immediate and complete forgiveness of sins. The scribes charge Him with blasphemy because they refuse to believe in His power and authority, even though He has clearly demonstrated it. They are the ones who are blaspheming by their continued faithlessness. Jesus, in response to the friend’s faith first heals the man’s spiritual maladies, and then his physical healing confirms it. He further shows His power and authority in calling Levi to faith and to discipleship. He calls others who the religious leaders see as beyond the worthiness of God’s attention, but their acknowledgment of their soul sickness means they are the ones Jesus has come for, and not for the Scribes who refuse to admit they need His healing power.

Focus Statement:

Through the authority given to Him as the Son of Man Jesus calls us into His reign and rule whereby the power and authority bestowed upon Him by the Heavenly Father He declares us to be forgiven of all our sins, guilt taken away, by His life, death, and resurrection. He remembers our sins no more because they are atoned for, gone forever. He does this even though we are not looking for His help as He changes our hearts and minds through the Holy Spirit working in the Gospel. He came not for those who believe they are good enough on their own, but those that cling to Him alone as their Savior. He refreshes us through His gift of grace, life with Him now and eternal life to come.

Function Statement:

Why it’s important to know:

We, just like the scribes, once upon a time refused to recognize and confess our need for Jesus’ healing of body and soul. Even now we look for physical restoration when what we need is the spiritual that lasts forever.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Look to Christ for the spiritual healing first, through which comes partial healing of the body now, to be completed in restoration of all things on the Last Day.

Subject Sentence: God the Son has dominion over our sinful hearts

Introduction

Do you ever wonder what other people are thinking? I was pondering this as I read through our Gospel Lesson. We know what the scribes are thinking. These are the professional learned teachers of the Jewish Law. They are incredulous about what Jesus is saying and doing, they are thinking that He is a blasphemer, someone who has spoken evil against God and deserves to be stoned to death. We can make educated guesses about what Levi, the tax collectors, and sinners are thinking, they are thinking the opposite of the Scribes. They are believing He is the Messiah promised long ago. But what about the paralytic man and his four friends who bring him to Jesus? What are they thinking?

When you look at the lengths these friends are willing to go to for the paralytic man, you can tell they are great friends. We are not told how far they carried him to bring him to Jesus, or how much the paralytic weighed, but it took four of them to do so. Then what happens when they get to the house where Jesus is and find that, not only can't they bring him into the room, but they also can't even get to the door. How many others would have said, "Well, there's no way we can get to Jesus today" and just give up and go home. Problem is if they give up on today, who is to say Jesus will be around tomorrow, as He comes and goes all the time without always publicly announcing his itinerary.

These friends care about this man enough to climb up on the roof and disassemble it in order to lower their friend down to Jesus. In doing this they risk the anger and possible retribution of the homeowner for digging up his roof. And would anyone in his right mind go to all this trouble unless they thought Jesus could and would help. This is the evidence of the great faith that Jesus knows these four friends have. They have great faith that Jesus can heal. But do they have faith in anything beyond that?

And what about the paralytic himself? What was he thinking? What was he hoping for? Certainly, to be healed physically, so that he might walk again and resume a normal life. But what about his faith? Does he have any? We don't know. Whether or not he has faith, or is lacking, that's not going to stop Jesus from changing this paralyzed man's life.

Spiritual and then Physical Healing

Jesus knows why they brought him. Jesus also knows the desire of the paralyzed man to walk again. But strangely enough it must seem to many, that's not the issue Jesus addresses first. He certainly could've. Instead, what Jesus addresses is the much greater malady. Healing this man's body without healing the sickness in his soul would be a useless and heartless thing indeed, because no matter how great the physical healing, the man would be destined to die one day and suffer a fate much greater than lameness forever, eternal damnation.

Jesus came into this world to deal with the real problem in this man's life, as well as in yours and mine, the problem of sin. Sin is the infection all of us suffer from. It spoiled the perfection of God's original Creation. And the consequence of sinful disobedience that God warned Adam about is what plagues all of us: death. Because we have sinful hearts that refuse to obey God our bodies suffer from imperfection that was never intended to be a part of God's created order: we have birth defects, we get sick, we develop cancer and all the other problems that plague the human race. Even the healthiest among us who eat right and care for their bodies will, in the end, face death. And on our own there is nothing we can do about it.

But Jesus can, and Jesus did. He is the only one that has the power and authority to do so. He was given this power and authority from the Father Himself. **Daniel 7:13-14** ¹³ **I kept watching the night visions, and there, in the clouds of heaven, I saw one like a son of man coming. He came to the Ancient of Days, and he was brought before him.** ¹⁴ **To him was given dominion, honor, and a kingdom. All peoples, nations, and languages will worship him. His dominion is an eternal dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.** Son of Man literally means in Hebrew "a son of Adam", meaning a descendent of Adam, meaning a human being. But when Jesus uses this title for Himself, He is referring to this prophetic vision, to this human being who is standing where no other human being should or could, in the presence of the Holy God. Instead of being destroyed on the spot, since sin cannot stand in the presence of Almighty God, or being sent into eternal suffering, this Son of Man receives a gift that is beyond anything else we could ever desire. He receives the honor and authority that belong only to God, the power to rule and have dominion, or control over all the things of God's Creation. And this is His not just for a day. But forever. Unlike you and I, He is worthy to receive this because this Son of Man is also the Son of God. That is who Jesus is claiming to be.

This is the power and authority that Jesus came to earth to bring among us. The scribes don't recognize it or accept it. This paralyzed man may not have accepted it before he encountered Jesus. But that didn't stop Jesus from proclaim His authoritative word **Mark 2:5 he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."** Now keep in mind this is not some future promise. This is not contingent upon the paralyzed man doing anything of saying anything. This is the declaration of the powerful words of Jesus Christ that not only inform us as to what reality is, His words have the authority to create reality. Jesus words do what they say. Jesus declares this man right now forgiven of his sins, not just some of them, but all of them. And He can do that because He is the One who will make it all possible.

Now Jesus is not just dismissing this man's sin by sweeping them under the rug, or saying they don't matter. Our God is a just God, and our sense and desire for justice when we've been wronged comes from Him. Sin must be punished. This paralyzed man's sins must be punished. My sins and your sins must be punished. But Jesus came to prevent any human being from having to suffer the punishment for their sins eternally. Jesus is God in human form who came to bring His reign and rule among us. But He does this not by sitting on a throne, but by becoming the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. He comes to receive the punishment due you and I for our sin, so they are no longer credited to us. As Jeremiah tells us, because of all Jesus has done for us and gives to us by faith, the God who knows all things chooses to remember our sins no more on behalf of Jesus life, death, and resurrection given as the gift of faith. It's because of the gift of faith that clings to Jesus as your atoning sacrifice that God chooses to remember your sins no more.

Did it matter that this paralyzed man wasn't looking for spiritual healing? Not at all. It didn't matter in your life or my life either. Christ enacted His reign and rule upon our hearts and minds when we wanted to have nothing to do with Him, when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. In your baptism and through the Gospel Message Jesus sent the Holy Spirit who did the supernatural and miraculous work of Conversion. He changed your heart and mind from a place that was just like the Scribes, one that had no need for a Savior, to a heart and mind that cried out for the spiritual healing of faith that only Jesus Christ can provide: complete forgiveness of sins right now, salvation from eternal damnation and the control of the devil, and your place in eternal life to come. In your baptism what Jesus said to the paralyzed man He said to you too: **"Son/Daughter, your sins are forgiven."** That declaration is the reign and rule of God coming into your life and changing it forever, just as it did that paralyzed man.

Notice the scribes were in the same room, witnessing the same thing, yet it was a different scene in their hearts. Their hearts remained hard and unbelieving, so much so that instead of turning to Jesus as their Savior, they accused Him of something worthy of death. Was that because Jesus' reign and rule wasn't powerful enough to save them? Not at all. Jesus has been given authority from the Father over all things and all people. The reason why some come to faith in Jesus and others don't is not because one person is better than another. All of us are in the same boat, dead in our trespasses and sins. All are in need of His spiritual healing and care. Why some and not others is a mystery that God has not explained to us.

But what we can say and hold fast to is that in order to be welcomed into the reign and rule of Christ, in order to be saved, we must see ourselves as the tax collectors and sinners saw themselves, as unworthy of the grace of God. We must be shown who we really are without Him: poor miserable sinners who cannot save ourselves no matter how hard we try. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, we would be just like those Scribes, with the truth being proclaimed before us and we are scoffing in unbelief. As Paul reminds us in **Ephesians 2:8-9** ⁸ **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,** ⁹ **not a result of works, so that no one may boast.** It is only the work of Christ applied to your life by the Holy Spirit that brings the reign and rule of God to your heart and life. And He has done that for you and for me.

Perhaps you know someone that is like those Scribes, who doesn't see the need for Christ and His work of salvation because they are all set in this world, because they believe they have everything they need by the works of their hands. As long as they are on this earth breathing air they are not beyond the powerful reign and rule of Jesus Christ. Just as the authority of His Word changed the life of that paralytic, the life of Levi, and the other tax collectors and sinners, it can change their life too. All according to the will and timing of the One who reigns and rules over all things.

Conclusion

Jesus came into the life of that paralyzed man, Levi and his fellow tax collectors, and the other people called sinners by the religious establishment when they were not looking for Him or His reign and rule. He came into this world that was looking for a military leader as the baby born not to rule on a human throne but give His life on the cross for the ransom of all men. He came to you when you wanted nothing to do with Him through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. And He continues to come to and continues to point out how you still need His forgiveness every day. He does this whenever God's word is proclaimed by pastors like me, as well as shared with others by you. He continues to come bringing His reign and rule, His forgiveness of sins, to prepare hearts and minds of unbelievers and keep us prepared for His final coming in all His glory on the Last Day. Come Lord Jesus. Amen