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Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
Bringing People to Jesus
Mark 2:1-12
May 13, 2018, Jeff Germo

This is number thirty-eight in our sermon series called *Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is*. For those of you who have just joined us, what we have been doing is going through the entire Bible, hitting on some major themes along the way. We started last September at the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis and we are going to end the series next fall in Revelations, the last book of the Bible. What we have been doing is attempting to get a bird's eye view of what God is up to so we can join him.

We've seen that there are three threads running through history and even through our lives. We have been reminding you of that almost every Sunday.

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1. **God is up to something.** He is restoring the *shalom* that was lost in the Garden of Eden.
 2. **Satan is up to something.** He is working to destroy God's *shalom*.
 3. **Left to our own devices, without the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, we most naturally move away from God.**

How many of you have see these three dynamics playing out in your life since we've been talking about this? I certainly have. I see them all very clearly and, unfortunately, the last one is sometimes most evident. Unless I am very purposeful about my walk with Jesus, I am a very selfish, self-centred, self-aggrandizing, self-absorbed, self-defensive, self-delusional, self-destructive, self-defeating, self-despairing, and self-loathing person. I could go on and on. I sound like the kind of person you would want to get to know, don't I?

If I do what comes naturally, without listening to the gentle promptings of the Holy Spirit, I am all about me and I'm not a very nice person. You might be different, but that's me. I so need Jesus in my life, not just to save me for eternity, but to save me from myself, now and every day. I need him to continue to transform my character so I can love like he loves. In order for that to happen I need to daily, minute by minute, allow him to penetrate my self-centred hard heart that so often doesn't want to change.

We are continuing our walk through the Gospels this morning. We are going to take a look at a passage of Scripture that will be quite well known to those of you who grew up in the church. In the passages that are most familiar to us it's easy to miss the main point, because we can gloss over them and think, "Yeah, I've heard that before," and move on.

Let's take a careful look at this account where Jesus heals a paralytic man. It is told in Matthew 9:1-8, Luke 5:17-26, and Mark 2:1-12, the one we are going to use this morning. Each of the Gospel writers tell the story in their own way with some giving details that the others don't.

It's important to look at the context of what happened preceding this event so we get a better picture of what was happening. We are going to mostly look at Mark this morning, but we need to see what details the other writers include.

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Preceding the account in Mark 2, Jesus had ***"traveled throughout the region of Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and casting out demons"*** (Mark 1:39). In one of the towns a man with leprosy came up to Jesus begging him to heal him of the dreaded disease. The Bible says that Jesus was moved with compassion for the man and reached out and touched him and he was completely healed. He told the man to not tell anyone, but to take a thank offering and present it to the priests as a testimony of his healing.

Then the Bible says,

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Mark 1:45 (NLT)

⁴⁵ But the man went and spread the word, proclaiming to everyone what had happened. As a result, large crowds soon surrounded Jesus, and he couldn't publicly enter a town anywhere. He had to stay out in the secluded places, but people from everywhere kept coming to him.

Both Mark and Luke have this same account as happening just before the passage we are going to look at this morning. So, Jesus was getting very famous. He had a hard time finding any solitude. People were clamouring around him trying to get healing from all kinds of things.

Matthew's Gospel includes another story preceding the text we are going to look at. It's the account of two men who were severely demon possessed. Jesus cast the demons out of the men and into a herd of pigs which consequently ran over a cliff to their deaths. After that the whole town came out to Jesus and begged him to leave. None of the townspeople celebrated the fact that these men who had been bound by Satan for years had finally been freed through their encounter with Jesus. They were more concerned about their pigs than they were about these two men.

So, Jesus climbed back into the boat with his apprentices and headed off across the lake again to Capernaum. Jesus' fame was spreading virally.

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Mark 2:1–12 (NLT)

¹ When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home.

As many of you know, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He was raised in Nazareth and when he began his ministry at about the age of thirty, he made Capernaum his ministry centre. When we go to Israel, Capernaum is one of our stops where we spend considerable time at the synagogue and at what is said to be Peter's house, just a stone's throw from the synagogue. It may have been Peter's home, or some say his mother-in-law's home, where Jesus was in this bit of narrative.

² Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door.

You need to picture this in your mind. How many of you have seen videos of screaming girls chasing the Beatles back in the sixties and early seventies? They couldn't go anywhere without being mobbed by admiring fans. That is what it was like for Jesus, except they weren't starry-eyed girls mobbing him because he was cute and sang popular music.

Jesus' popularity was because he healed the sick, cast out demons, gave hope to the brokenhearted, and taught words of truth from God with authority, as the author of life. So, news got out that he was back in his ministry centre of Capernaum and people came from miles around to hear him.

It wasn't just his adoring fans who followed him from place to place. There were others who followed with rather nefarious motivations. In Luke's Gospel account, he begins his narrative of this event by giving us a clue as to how we might interpret this act of Jesus.

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Luke 5:17 (NLT)

17 One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.)

Jesus was followed by adoring fans, desperate people who wanted to be healed from all kinds of physical ailments, as well as those who wanted to know how to find peace with God. But, there was another group of people who followed him and watched his every move. They continually tried to trap him in his words and turn the crowds against him. They were the elite religious teachers and leaders.

So, Jesus was in this house teaching the people about the kingdom of God. The house was packed. It was standing room only. People were crowding around outside the house as well, pushing in close enough to get within ear shot of Jesus.

Have you ever seen videos of the trains in Japan where there are people hired to push the crowds in the train? I sort of imagine that it's a bit like that. Maybe not quite, but I have a good imagination.

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While he was preaching God's word to them, ³ four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. ⁴ 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.

This might seem a bit odd if you are imagining a house like the ones we live in. It would be extremely strange if you were in the middle of your Growth Group and your house was packed with people and you heard someone on your roof and you went outside and saw them ripping shingles off and sawing through your roof sheathing and then cutting through your roof trusses and your drywall ceiling and then your insulation falls on the people in your Growth Group who are eagerly studying God's Word. That might tick you off a bit, and it should.

That is not what's happening here.

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The first century houses in that area were not like ours. This is a diagram of what their homes would look like. They could be several stories high, depending on how wealthy the family was, but the typical family would have a one or two storey home with a flat roof made of woven straw panels on wood slats. The panels could be removed, so the friends of this paralyzed man could lower their friend down to where Jesus was teaching in the house, and then repair the roof later.

Still, I don't think people would have thought that this was normal behaviour. This man's friends were very audacious. They took a risk that Jesus would reject them. They took a risk that the crowds would turn on them for their presumptuous, impertinent, bold act.

So, picture the scene now. The house is packed with people. It is standing room only inside and out. Everyone is there to get something from Jesus. Many of them want him to heal them. Some are there to hear his teaching. There are also the religious elite among them. Jesus is teaching in the middle of all this chaos. As he is speaking, some debris from the ceiling begins to fall on some of the crowd. They look up, covering their eyes and finally the light of the sun comes crashing through the ceiling and then a gurney with a paralyzed man on it is lowered down right in front of Jesus.

What stands out to you the most at this point? For me, the thing that reverberates in my head is, those must have been very good friends if they were willing to go to all that effort and risk.

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What risks would you take to bring someone to Jesus?

They could have played it safe. This whole account is about the value of the soul. How much do we care for our own soul and for the souls of others?

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⁵ ***Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “My child, your sins are forgiven.”***

You gotta see the humour in this. Jesus is so funny. He never ceases to amaze me. He continually does and says the unexpected. It seems like a very stupid thing to say. But really it's not. Jesus does not say stupid things, nor does he ask stupid questions. So, why did he say this?

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Jesus says the unexpected to find out the condition of our hearts and to engage us in what he is doing. That is what Jesus is all about. He wants us to build relationship with him.

The friends of the paralytic man took a huge risk and went to great lengths to make sure their friend had an encounter with Jesus. They lowered him through the roof in front of Jesus. He was so impressed with their faith and the first thing out of his mouth was, ***“Young man, your sins are forgiven.”***

What? Surely this is a typo. What was Jesus thinking? In Matthew's account Jesus says, ***“Be encouraged, my child! Your sins are forgiven.”*** That makes this even funnier. The man was not there to have his sins forgiven. His friends did not travel to Jesus, carrying their paralyzed friend on a stretcher, climbing up on the roof, digging a hole in the roof of Peter's house, risking ridicule, or worse, to have his sins forgiven. Jesus obviously knew this. So, what's going on?

I don't think Jesus said this just for the sake of the sick man. You have to remember who was in Jesus' audience. What he wanted was a reaction from the religious teachers so he could face them with the hard condition of their hearts. Jesus often did this. The parables he told were a probe that penetrated deep in the hearts of his listeners. The questions he asked served the same purpose. **Everything Jesus did and said was for the purpose of seeing what was in the heart of people so he could move them on to God's agenda. That is why he came.**

He asks us the same kinds of questions.

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Jesus continually sticks his probe in our hearts to find out what we really care about.

So, how about you? What do you care about? Do you notice all the things Jesus is doing in and through CRBC? Do you praise him for it? June 2nd we are going to have another Freedom Session grad where many people who have gone through the program this year and have been released from bondage to all kinds of things will give testimony to the freedom they received from Christ. We get to celebrate this together.

Christ Kids and Power House ministries have been busting at the seams with kids and families getting to know Jesus better. Our River Kids ministry has two sites where we have teams of youth and adults ministering to families telling them about the love of Jesus. We have so many youth, young adults, and adults serving and growing and telling people about Jesus in all the ministries of the church. We need to celebrate these things together. People are coming to Jesus.

There are over forty men in our Conquer Series learning how to help each other stay sexually pure for the sake of their relationship with God and their families.

We have over fifty people in our Growing Leaders on Purpose course digging deep to learn how to be a disciple of Jesus and lead others to do the same.

On Thursday nights Derek and Jenn Bird's home is busting at the seams with young adults eager to grow in their walk with Jesus.

As a staff we hear all kinds of stories about what God is doing through you at CRBC. We are continually praising God. Today at McIvor Lake several people are going to get baptized, and publicly proclaim that

they are going to follow Jesus for the rest of their lives. These are all things to celebrate and praise God for. These are God stories that are all about bringing people to Jesus. None of these stories is without risk.

The narrative we are looking at asks us a question as to what is really important to us.

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The mission of Jesus should be the thing that captivates our thinking and our conversation and everything we do.

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Let me ask you a question. **What is more important to you, bringing people to Jesus or maintaining your image?** All the God-stories I mentioned this morning have been about people like you taking considerable risk, stepping out of your comfort zones so others can be brought closer to Jesus.

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Jesus has the church here for one reason and that is to grow more like him so others would meet Jesus through us. That is the mission he gave us. Do not let fear or the status quo keep you from doing what Jesus called you to do.

Back to our text. The friends of the paralyzed man went to great lengths to bring their friend to Jesus. They lowered him through the roof right in front of him. Jesus told him his sins were forgiven. The religious leaders in the crowd did not think this was cool at all.

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⁶But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, ⁷“What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!”

These religious leaders didn't celebrate the fact that this man had his sins forgiven. They didn't care at all about that. Jesus knew their hearts. What were they so angry about? They rightly said, “Only God can forgive sins.”

If I hurt you, you can forgive me, or not. That's up to you. You have that power. Likewise, if you hurt me, I have the power to forgive you for hurting me. When you forgive me or I forgive you, we are saying that *shalom* is restored to our relationship.

That is not what's going on here, though. Jesus was not forgiving this paralytic for busting through the ceiling and interrupting his sermon. When he told the man his sins were forgiven he was doing something that only God can do. What he said was that every sin that man had ever committed was forgiven by God. Jesus made the man right with God. He restored his peace with God. He did something that only God can do. No wonder they were upset. They knew that, unless Jesus was truly God, what he did was blasphemous.

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⁸ Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts?”

That is always Jesus' question to us. **What's in your heart? What do you really care about?** Think about that question. It's so important. Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, ***“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”***

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In other words, **the things that are most important to you will captivate you. You will fight for them at the expense of other things in your life.**

What is most important to you? Where is your treasure? What do you have your heart set on? What takes up your thoughts? What do you spend your time on, or your money, or your energy?

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What kinds of things do you celebrate? That is what Jesus is getting at here.

⁹ Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk’?

The religious people complained to Jesus after he had forgiven the sins of the paralyzed man. Jesus confronted them on their hypocrisy and the condition of their hearts.

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¹⁰ 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, ¹¹ “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!” ¹²And 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!”

So, earlier the religious leaders rightly said that only God can forgive sins. Jesus didn’t disagree with them. He simply proved his authority to forgive sins by healing the man. He proved that he is in fact God. They were right in saying that only God can forgive sins, but their hearts were very wrong and hard, and closed to what Jesus was doing.

Contrast that to the crowds: ***“They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, “We’ve never seen anything like this before!”*** That should be our goal, to open our eyes to what God is doing around us, respond in praise, and join him in making the name famous in Campbell River.

The thing God cares about more than anything is that we would open our eyes to what he is doing around us so he can use us as his witnesses to bring more people to Jesus to receive his forgiveness. There is nothing more valuable than our souls.

That is what Jesus said a few chapters later.

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Mark 8:34–37 (NLT)

³⁴ Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ³⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. ³⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? ³⁷ Is anything worth more than your soul?

Today after the service we are going to go to McIvor Lake to celebrate the baptisms of several people who are going to publicly profess their faith in Jesus. These are my favourite kinds of celebrations. I am hoping that most of you will come out and celebrate with us.

And if you have asked God to forgive you, based on Jesus death on the cross and you have not yet been baptized as a believer, please chat with us after the service or just show up at the lake and we will baptize you. If you don’t have a change of clothes we are bringing extra shorts and t-shirts and towels. Don’t give yourself any excuses. If you want to commit to following Jesus, it is going to take some risk and being okay with publicly saying you know you need Jesus.

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Psalms 107:1-2a (NIV)

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story.”

For the remainder of our time this morning I would like to give you a chance to celebrate what you see God doing around you. Let’s celebrate together.



Bringing People to Jesus

Mark 2:1-12

Week of May 13, 2018

Objective of this study: To understand the importance of bringing people to Jesus.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us.]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 95:1-9** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

Welcome (5 minutes)

Do you have a memory of a favourite celebration, such as a birthday party?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word (30-45 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Mark 2:1-12
 1. Describe Jesus' growing fame and the consequences of it.
 2. List the various characters in this narrative and describe their motivations for being there. What was important to each of them?
 3. What did the friends risk by bringing their paralytic friend to Jesus?
 4. What did the religious leaders miss out on? Why?
 5. What was Jesus like in this story? Think about his responses to the various people.

Work (30-45 minutes)

Sermon quote: *“The thing that is most important to you will captivate you. You will fight for it at the expense of other things in your life.”*

1. Think about your life. What captivates you? What do you fight for?
2. As you have been walking with Jesus have you seen changes in what captivates you?
3. We will always risk something, no matter what choices we make. What do we risk when we have a hard heart? What do we lose out on?
4. Brainstorm together about ways we can bring people to Jesus?
5. Spend a couple minutes and write down names of people in your life who need Jesus.
 1. Break into pairs and pray for these people. Ask God to give your divine opportunities.

Prayer

1. Spend the rest of the time praying for each other. **Praise God together for how he works, and how he allows us to partner with him to accomplish things in his kingdom.**
2. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:
 - A. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
 - B. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus
 - C. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
 - D. **Our missionary of the month:** Ken and Debbie Dewar
 - E. **Our missionary of the week:** Glen and Lorrain Buekert
 - F. **Local CR church:** Living Waters Fellowship, Pastor Randy and Dianne Beatty