

**Brave Enough to Follow**  
**Part 3**  
**Am I Making Myself Clear**  
**Pastor Brett McBride**  
**September 24, 2017**

Well Good Morning, Church!

Just watching John's video there reminds me that Jesus oftentimes leads us to difficult places. Who would have thought – I am certain that John wouldn't have - that growing up on the Prairies that he would be engaged in the work that he is engaged in. But he does so because that is where Christ has led him.

And as we journey through the Gospels and as we have watched the last few weekends of videos about our upcoming DNA Conference, our Global Outreach Conference, I am struck again at how following Jesus leads us into places that we never thought we would go and ministries that maybe we wouldn't have chosen to be engaged in.

But as you look at Him in the Gospels, Jesus is always advancing the Gospel, the truth of who He is. And He is doing it with compassion and justice. And we see that today through the many ministries that we serve in.

You can turn in your Bibles to Mark 2:1. We will be reading from there in a moment.

As many of you are aware, yesterday was the run for Silas House, our transitional refugee home. If you were in church throughout September you may have seen a video where Nicki Dee challenged me to that race to see who could run faster and raise more funds towards Silas House.

I just want to report back to you that it came to a photo finish. We are just putting the finishing touches on that video, so you are going to have to wait until next week to see if I have to grow hair or Nicki Dee has to shave his head.

So we will find out next Sunday through a video that will be presented on platform. It came down to a sprint finish. I think I have it; Nicki Dee thinks he has it, but we need video evidence. And so the Olympic officials are just looking over it now and going to put it together for us next weekend.

Over the last number of weeks we have been going through a series called "Brave Enough to Follow", also entitled "Faith Enough to Follow", how Jesus took ordinary men and made them into fishers of men.

How did He equip them? How did He train them for ministry?

And we have been tracking through the Gospels looking at that.

And two lessons that Jesus is constantly repeating for His disciples, two lessons that we as Christians today always need to be aware of is: the power of Christ and the priorities of Christ.

We need to have a proper understanding of who He is - His authority. And we also need to have an understanding of His ways or His priorities.

And Jesus has been training His disciples, equipping them, making them into fishers of men. He has preached in Capernaum in a synagogue on the Sabbath and multitudes of people were seeking Him.

And then He leaves Capernaum; He goes on a preaching tour. And we pick up the story of Him returning to Capernaum after He has done that tour through some of the towns in Galilee.

In Mark Chapter 2:1 we read this:

“A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.

“So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.

“Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them.

“Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.

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

“Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves,

“‘Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’

“Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, ‘Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven” or to say, “Get up, take your mat and walk”?’

“‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...’ He said to the paralytic, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’

“He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’”

What I want to look at in our time together this morning is the faithful friends, the forgiveness of God and the furious experts.

As I mentioned already, Jesus had previously preached in Capernaum, in a synagogue, on the Sabbath, and during His message had cast out a demon from a demon possessed man.

And that caught the attention of Capernaum. That evening everybody shows up at His house and we are told in Mark Chapter 1 that late into the evening Jesus is healing those with various diseases and casting out demons.

This was His previous trip to Capernaum. And then He left for a while and He has now returned.

Last week we looked at how He touched a leper and made the unclean clean. (We looked at that last week.)

And He has now returned to Capernaum and it is no surprise to me that when He returns word starts to spread that Jesus has returned. And many theologians believe that Jesus went home because He had a home in Capernaum – it is His main ministry base throughout His ministry in Galilee.

So when He returns there, a whole of multitude of people have crowded into Jesus' house. And sometimes we read through the Gospels and we glance over certain sentences and certain activities that Jesus is engaged in, but it strikes me that when a crowd gathers around Him, what Jesus does throughout the Gospels whenever a crowd has come around Him - we read about it in Verse 2 – there were so many people gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door.

And He did what? He preached the Word to them. He preached the Word to them.

Why, when you study the Gospels, is Jesus continually teaching and preaching the Word to people? Why is He always giving His time to instruction?

Well I think the answer is found in Matthew 4:4. Jesus, when He is being tempted out in the desert by the devil says this:

“Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

This book is not just a book; it is nourishment for our spiritual lives. It is actually food for the believer.

Now I have met a lot of Christians in my 20 years of being a Christian and I daresay you are hard pressed to find a Christian that goes without a physical meal. Many of us celebrate fellowship over food. Many of us leave church on a Sunday and go get the Christian chicken at Swiss Chalet. You are hard pressed to find a Christian that forsakes food.

But I have met many a believer who aren't nourishing their spirit with God's Word. I have met many a believer who aren't eating it and nourishing their bodies spiritually with the truths that are contained in Scripture.

When you witness Jesus in the Gospel, whenever a multitude or a crowd has gathered, He feeds them God's truth. He feeds them the Word.

A couple weeks ago, as a group of pastors, we had a meeting together and we were just sharing about various aspects of church ministry and the congregation and our culture at large. And I was talking to them about some of the lessons that we are going to be looking at in the coming months and talking about some of the series that we would be going into.

And we just got into a conversation about how even within the Christian community there is a lot of debate over God's Word and the authority of His Word and its truths and its relevance to our lives and about holy living.

And it was a beautiful conversation where all the pastors around the room were just burdened for our culture and our generation to appreciate the realities of God's Word and its truth and its authority in our lives.

And we closed that time in prayer. And it was the highlight of my week. One of the pastors prayed and as he prayed for our congregation, he was moved to tears and started to weep that people would spend time in His Word so that they could be nourished for the multitude of deceptions that exist in our culture today.

That is the kind of pastor I want to serve alongside. That is the kind of believer I want to serve alongside, one who is moved to tears that people would be drawn to the truths contained in Scripture.

Oswald Smith put it this way when he said,

*"I am perfectly confident that the man who does not spend hours alone with God will never know the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The world must be left outside until God alone fills the vision."*

We need to be people who spend time alone with God so that He can fill our vision, and as He does He transforms our lives and we are just consumed with who He is. And we see Him at work all around us and we join Him in what He is doing.

Whenever you see Jesus in Scripture He is feeding people the truths of God's Word.

Now service is going along great, everybody is crowded into Jesus' house, and then all of a sudden a disruption takes place. As He is preaching the Word there is a bit of a scratching at the roof, maybe a bit of dirt and sticks and root tiles start to fall into Jesus' home where He is preaching.

And I love the faith of the friends who carry the paralytic. Look at the faith of these men. Maybe they tried to get their paralyzed friend to Jesus when He was in Capernaum previously. And when everybody was looking for Jesus and He went off for His preaching tour around Galilee, they probably missed their opportunity. But they are desperate to get their friend to Jesus this time.

And when they experience an obstacle, when they experience someone in their way, they don't just give up and say, "Sorry, John, we tried to get you to Jesus but we'll have to try another time; it's too busy."

No there is a tenacity and a grittiness and a perseverance to their faith. They don't give up at the first sign of an obstacle; they go around; they go above; they go so far as to rip through the roof to get their friend to Jesus.

It reminds me that as disciple-makers there needs to be a perseverance, a tenacity to our faith to get our hurting friends to the feet of Jesus.

Some people want to get to Jesus but they can't get themselves there; they need somebody else to carry them.

And as I look at these friends, they have a faith that is active, not passive. They have a faith that sees obstacles but tries to get around those obstacles because they are so desperate to get their friends to Jesus.

And it reminds me that we need to be a church that is consistently persevering to get our friends and family members and loved ones to the One who can heal them.

This past week I was in a café in the city and was doing some studying there. And when I walked out after I was completed my work, I ran into a congregant, a member of the Peoples Church in this certain part of the city. And we got into a conversation about last week's message where Jesus cleansed the leper and touched him.

We had a great discussion, and as he was talking he started to share about his family and he started to share about his children and his burden for his children who aren't living in a vibrant relationship with Christ, who are still discovering their way. They are great kids, as he described them, but he is burdened for them.

And as he started to share his burden for his children, tears started to fill his eyes. And he started to look back over his life and wonder if he could have done better, if he could have done more to have them experience the reality of who Jesus is.

And as his tears started to run down his face, as they filled his eyes, I just was so moved by the compassion of a father for his children. It was certainly a God moment because God is really moved with compassion that all people would come to a saving knowledge of Christ. He wants all people to believe in His source of salvation.

So when this father was sharing that and he was moved to tears about it, it just reminded me of this passage, it reminded me that we need to be faithful friends who are burdened and continuing to persevere despite difficulty or delay in whatever we are trying to do.

We need to persevere in our faith, to carry our loved ones to the feet of Jesus, that they can experience Him.

And I said to him, “May every tear that you shed and every groaning that you feel for your children be a prayer offered up to God that He would move in their lives in a miraculous way.

If you are here this morning and you have a son or a daughter or a husband or a wife or a family member or a co-worker or a friend who doesn’t know Christ and you are burdened that they would experience the Jesus that you have experienced, may you continue to persevere and hold them up before our Heavenly Father.

May you, like these people, carry them to the feet of Jesus. And if you face obstacles, may you go around it or go above it because that is the heart of God.

These friends embody the mission of the church. We need to be a church that will help get people to Jesus and lay them at His feet regardless of the obstacles.

Our mission is to carry people in their paralysis, tearing down what is hindering them, getting to the reality of who Christ is. And we can’t do anything about their condition, we can’t do anything about their state, but we know who to get them to.

And as I read this text I am also mindful of the many ways that we as God’s people, we as a church; what are some of the barriers that we have built over church history that actually become hindrances from people experiencing Christ?

See, these people want to get to Jesus, they want to get their friend to Jesus, but they have to go through a congregation that are all crowded around Jesus. And they have to overcome all these obstacles to get to the real Jesus at the center of His home.

And so as I look out over church history, as I have served in ministry, sometimes I ask the question, what walls or what roofs have we built around Jesus that get in the way of people experiencing the real thing? What are some of the traditions that we have handed down or created that actually become obstacles or hindrances to people encountering Christ?

I think of some of the churches that I served alongside in, in inner city ministry. There was one in particular that reminded me of this story. We had worked with a number of youth in a community and they had come to the point where they were seeking Jesus, trying to get to know who He is, and they decided to go to the church that we were working out of on a Sunday, anticipating that they would encounter Christ at this church.

And so they showed up for Sunday service. They sat in the service, and as the service continued one of the pastors stood up and drew attention to the youth. Now everybody else was dressed in

a suit and tie, but those youth had worn normal street clothes. They had worn their jeans and t-shirts. And one of the girls had dyed her hair purple.

So the pastor drew attention to those youth and basically challenged them for the way they were dressed, mentioned that they had entered into God's house and weren't in suitable clothing and asked them to leave.

This is during church service.

And as I remember that moment, I think to myself, where in this book does it talk about Jesus welcoming people as long as they are dressed properly? Where in this book does it talk about creating distinctives as to who is welcomed and accepted in the presence of Jesus by their clothing or by their hair color or their lack of hair, whatever the case may be?

What are these traditions and obstacles that we build around Jesus that sometimes act as hindrances to people encountering the real thing?

As I met with the church leadership over the weeks and months that followed, we got into a lot of discussions and a lot of debates. And they continually used a term referring to their church as "the house of the Lord".

Now it was a convenience store that had been converted into a church. I had gone to that convenience store multiple times before this church converted it into a sanctuary, and bought gum and various things at the convenience store.

And so they continued to repeat "This is the house of the Lord, this is the sanctuary of the living God; this is His house."

And I would go, "What are you talking about? This was a convenience store. There is nothing holy about the tiles and the bricks and mortar and walls of this building; it is just a building. But when the people gather together, those who confess Jesus as Lord, that is a living building; that is the church. It is not a building. And how do you as a church, when young people who are growing up in desperate circumstances come out on a Sunday, draw attention to their clothing and ask them to leave and come back when they can dress better?"

Sometimes we build obstacles. Sometimes we get in the way of people experiencing the real thing and sometimes we do it thinking that we are somehow defending the "house of the Lord" and that has nothing to do with Scripture.

And in this passage in Mark Chapter 2, you literally have someone breaking into the Lord's house, His literal house in Capernaum. It was His home that they have just ripped through the roof to get to Jesus.

And look at how Jesus handles the destruction of His home.

“When Jesus saw their faith, he looked at the paralytic and said, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”

When Jesus saw the faith of the friends who carried the man – that’s interesting to know – when Jesus saw their faith, those who just ripped through His roof, those who just brought destruction to the house of the Lord because they are so desperate to get their friend to Jesus; when Jesus saw their faith, He looks at this man and says, “Son, My child, your sins are forgiven.”

We need to stop and pause there a moment. Jesus doesn’t seem so concerned about his physical house, does He? I don’t think Jesus is going to return and He is not going to walk through our churches and go, “Wow, what a beautiful sanctuary you have, that you built in My honor. But there is one problem over here; I see a Slurpee stain on the carpet.”

I don’t think Jesus is going to be concerned about the physical building. He is going to be concerned about the people who were busy carrying those who wanted to get to Jesus but couldn’t get themselves there. He is going to be concerned about did we do that?

Would He commend us as faithful friends, doing anything we can to get our loved ones to the feet of Christ?

Now this must have been somewhat unexpected for the faithful friends who carried the paralyzed man and for the paralyzed man himself. I am certain that when they ripped through the roof and lowered the man before Jesus, they were probably hoping that He would heal him of his paralysis. I think that might have been the motivation as to why they are bringing their friend to Jesus because again when He was in Capernaum earlier, He was healing all kinds of sicknesses and diseases.

But Jesus looks at this man lying on the mat, He looks at his condition and looked past the exterior to the root of the problem and declares him clean.

It makes me wonder if his physical condition was somehow tied to his spiritual condition. Was this man’s paralysis somehow connected to his sin condition?

Now I don’t know if the man was paralyzed by sin, but let me take a small liberty at this point. How about you this morning? Have you ever felt paralyzed by sin? Have you ever wanted to get to Jesus but you have got this thing in your life, this mat that you are laying on; for whatever reason you just seem paralyzed right now. You know who you need to get to the feet of but you can’t get yourself there.

Have you ever felt paralyzed by sin? You long to be free from this thing that has you stuck, you wish you could be free, you want to run again, but you are stuck, you are just paralyzed.

Even for the believer this can be true.

John Piper refers to this in a quote he makes. He says,



*“There is a Christian version of this paralysis. The decision has been made to trust Christ. The shoot of hope and joy has sprung up. The long battle against sin has begun. But the defeats are many and the plant begins to wither. One sees only clouds and gathering darkness. The problem is not perplexing doctrine or evolutionary assault or threats of persecution. The problem is falling down too many times. Gradually the fatal feelings creep in. The fight is futile; it isn’t worth it.”*

Have you ever experienced the paralysis of that reality?

And we all have moments in our walk; if you have been a Christian for any span of time where we don’t feel like we are walking; we feel like we are stuck and we are paralyzed by something in our lives that just has us stuck on that mat.

My question to you this morning would be this: do you have faithful friends who will carry you when you are paralyzed as a believer?

I want you to take out a pen right now, take out a piece of paper and draw a rectangular box on that piece of paper. If you don’t have pen and paper, just do it in your mind. And I want you to put down the names of four friends who would carry you to Jesus when, for whatever reason you can’t get yourself there because you are paralyzed and you’re just stuck. Who are your faithful few that will carry you when you can’t walk spiritually yourself?

And if you can’t put the name of four friends who know everything about you and who would carry you, I pray that you would pray about that this week and ask God to bring them into your life because inevitably there are moments where we cannot get ourselves there; we need to be carried by the faith of others sometimes.

My question for you is if you were able to put the names of four people on the corners of your mat, people who would carry you, do they know that you view them that way? Do they know that they are the faithful friends who should follow up with you and keep their eyes on you?

That’s why we as a church emphasize life groups and Rooted. We are not meant to practice a solo Christianity where we are not in communion and community with one another.

In Galatians 6:2 it says this:

“Carry each other’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

“Carry each other’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Who do you share your burdens with? Church is meant to be a community that helps one another, especially when we are overwhelmed.

Now I saw a beautiful example of this yesterday at the run for Silas House. We had about 220 people show up on a hot humid Saturday morning and run 5 km for refugees who are living in our transitional home, to raise funds for their needs.

And it was beautiful to just witness 220 people from our church show up on that Saturday morning and engage in that physical activity. It was a great event to gather together.

And one of the most fascinating things was this: when those who had finished early, finished their race, they didn't get in their car and drive home; what they did is lined up at the finish line and cheered on everybody else who was still running their race.

Sandra Ryan, the pastor who led communion; she was like the greatest cheerleader I have ever seen. She had pompoms out there. People would be a kilometer away and she's shouting their name, "Come on! You can do it!" and just cheering people on.

It was a beautiful expression – it was a beautiful expression of what the church is meant to be. We are to cheer one another on. We are to bear one another's burdens. We are to pray together. We are to be excited and enthused for the race of one another.

One of the couples who are living in the Silas House shared before the race even began – they are from Nigeria – and they described how when they arrived to Toronto and didn't have community, didn't have relationships, they couldn't believe it when they were welcomed into Silas House.

They had been attending our church – they might be here right now; I don't even know – but they described how when they got into the house, when they come to our church on a Sunday, they feel completely surrounded by a loving community.

I thought to myself, "Thank You, Lord! May that be the description of the Peoples Church."

Because the road of a refugee is a long difficult road and how wonderful is it that when they show up they meet Jesus who says, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. I love you, I will help you find life established here in Toronto."

And they can tangibly feel the kingdom. What you have is faithful friends doing what they can to help those who need to encounter Christ.

And we see it in our own church today. This paralyzed man is carried before Jesus because he can't get himself there.

And during Jesus' time in the New Testament many people often blamed sickness or disease or blindness or paralysis in a person's life on their sinful choices. And how did this man feel lowered down in the middle of Jesus' preaching the Word, lowered down in the middle of the service; how did he feel when Jesus looked at him and said, "Son, your sins are forgiven." How did that man feel that moment that the Son of God looked into his eyes and declared him clean?

Do you remember that moment where you first experienced the grace and mercy of Christ, where He pronounced you clean?

But by making that statement, Jesus has just made one of the largest theological mic drops that ever existed – no not that ever existed – that ever existed in humanity. Jesus has just dropped a theological truth bomb.

Do you guys know what a mic drop is?

A mic drop is the act of saying something generally profound into a microphone extending one's arm and dropping the microphone to the ground from the shoulder level.

Now I have a microphone here. Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel, says, "Cheer up! Take heart. Son, My child, your sins are forgiven."

Mic drop - this is a theological mic drop and the experts in the law, the teachers of the law, are sitting there and they know that He has just dropped the microphone because Jesus has literally gone, "Your sins are forgiven," and by doing that He has gone, "Boom! Take that!"

Now let me explain why that is such a profound statement. Look in Verse 6.

"Teachers of the law..."

Again, these are experts,

"...were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'"

Who can forgive sins but God alone? Now these guys are scribes. They are experts in the law. They know Genesis through Malachi better than any of us in this room. Scribes literally wrote out the Word of God word by word, grammar by grammar, hand by hand.

If you made a mistake there weren't delete buttons with computers; it was very expensive to make a mistake so you literally were very careful.

These are who are observing what Jesus just said. These guys know their Bible. And their question is:

"Why does this fellow talk like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

These are great questions. They are good questions by very educated men who know the Scriptures. All of them are completely reasonable inquiries by the experts in the law.

And they are probably thinking - because they are experts in the law, they are thinking of some Old Testament verses where God makes absolute monotheistic statements.

In Isaiah 33:22, for example, God says this through the prophet Isaiah,

“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us.”

The Lord is the one who is our judge, the Lord is the one who gave us the law to whom we are accountable, the Lord is our king; He is the one who is going to save us.

In Isaiah 43:25 we read this:

“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

Who is speaking here? God is speaking. “I - I am He – I’m the one who blots out your transgressions.” This is God speaking.

In Psalm 103, what we read in communion; Verse 2 says this:

“Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.”

And later on in Verse 12 of Psalm 103 it says this:

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has *he* removed our transgressions from us.”

Again, it is the Lord who forgives sins according to the Old Testament.

So the experts in the law know that Jesus has just done a theological mic drop. That is actually in the original Greek. They said he did a theological...no I’m just playing.

And so the experts in the law are thinking, how can He do this, how dare He say that? Only God can do that.

We are told in Mark Chapter 2 they are just thinking this in their hearts, right? They haven’t said a word. They are just thinking about it. This is actually a question that was never answered.

And immediately Jesus knew in His spirit that this is what they were thinking and we are told He looks at them and says, “Why are you thinking these things?”

How disarming would that be? You are in a church service and all of a sudden the speaker turns to you and goes, “Why are you thinking that?”

I mean I’m so glad that I can’t tell what you guys are thinking. Some of you would be thinking of Swiss Chalet, others would be thinking something completely heinous that I couldn’t say from this platform, others might be thinking, “Would this guy just stop talking?”

Jesus knows what they are thinking in their hearts. I always find it captivating when He does this in the Scriptures. I mean it must have been so disarming for the experts in the law. They think they have got Him check-mated and He goes, “Hey, what are you thinking?”

And Jesus is about to answer a question that was never even in fact asked. And look at what He says to them, “Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or ‘Get up, pick up your mat and walk’?”

Let me ask you guys that question: which do you think is easier to just say: “Your sins are forgiven” or “Get up, pick up your mat and walk” to the paralyzed man?

So by a show of hands, who thinks it’s easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven”?

(Show of hands.)

Okay, who thinks it is easier to say, “Get up, pick up your mat and walk”?

Now I didn’t see enough hands. We are going to do that again. This happened in the first service. Let’s try this again, church. It’s okay.

Let me ask you a question by a show of hands, (and I will point you out if I don’t see a hand raised).

Which is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven”? Or “Get up, pick up your mat and walk”?

I still am not seeing enough hands.

But let’s just all agree that it is slanted towards it would be easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven,” and I have to agree because if I say, “Your sins are forgiven,” there is really no physical evidence that what I said took place.

But if I say to you, “Rise, get up and walk,” and nothing happens, it’s a little awkward and a little bit discrediting.

And Jesus takes their thoughts that they are thinking in their hearts and He brings it out center stage. And it’s as though He is wanting to make it abundantly clear to them what He is declaring.

“I want to make this clear. Am I making Myself clear to you? Let us bring this out center stage so that you without a shadow of a doubt know absolutely what I am saying and declaring is truth.”

And He says, “Rise, get up and walk.”

And the man gets up and walks and gives proof and evidence that what He declared earlier that his sins were forgiven actually took place.

Why? Because He has authority to do so.

Now let's take the experts in the law theology and reconstruct it a bit. Now if God is the only one who has authority to forgive sins and Jesus just displayed His authority to forgive this man's sins, then Jesus must be God.

And this amazed everyone because it dawned on them that they were standing in the presence of God.

This is a claim that Jesus makes and He accentuates it by bringing an unmasked question out into the open as though He wanted to make it abundantly clear. He wanted to grant them a proper understanding of who He is. He wanted for it to be abundantly clear that He was dropping the mic.

Jesus takes their thoughts – not even what they spoke but their thoughts, brings it out in center stage and gives them the evidence to prove His claims.

Do you know what I find so tragic about this passage, is those who had firsthand line of sight evidence of who He was, become furious about Him because it marks a transition in the Gospels.

Because of this claim, because of what Jesus did, because He claimed authority to forgive sins and, by so doing, claimed to be God among us, you see the experts in the law, the scribes, the Pharisees, begin to try and trip Him up, try and find a flaw within Him and discredit Him and eventually put Him to death on a cross because He is declaring that He is God among us.

That's what they crucified Him for, right before the crucifixion.

What is it in humanity that resists and rebels even when the evidence is so clear? You see the Christian faith is one that is built on evidence. It is not built on airy fairy faith alone; it is the evidence of the reality of the facts that are presented before us in the Gospels. Irrefutable, undeniable, Jesus is who He claimed to be.

And many today are willing to accept Jesus as a prophet or Jesus the great moral teacher, but when you study the Scriptures, He didn't leave that open to us.

C.S. Lewis puts it this way (this is a long quote so pay attention):

C.S. Lewis said this:

*"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher but I don't accept His claim to be God.*

*"That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher; he would either be a lunatic - on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell.*

*“You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God.*

*“But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”*

Jesus declared forgiveness of sins and in so doing declared that He was God among us.

And one man, we are told in Mark Chapter 2, came in lame and He walked out clean, came in paralyzed, maybe by his sins; carried by faithful friends, and encountered God who cleansed him and forgave him of his sins.

He was carried in by faithful friends; he was carried out by the forgiveness of the Father.

And maybe you are here this morning and you are wondering who is Jesus? Maybe you are here this morning and you are paralyzed by sin. There is a mat that you are lying on for whatever reason, whatever circumstance, and you can't seem to get up off that mat.

And maybe through this service Jesus has put His finger on the very thing that you are lying on and He says to you – the Son of Man, God with us, says to you, “Your sins are forgiven. Get up, pick up that mat that you have been laying on for far too long, and walk.”

Leave that behind, be cleansed, be forgiven. You don't have to stay there.

Maybe you are here and you have been a Christian for years and you are paralyzed by something and He is speaking to you today and He is saying, “Get up, pick up that mat and walk the life to which I have called you.”

Jesus doesn't just do these things thousands of years ago. He does them today in our lives if we look to Him by faith in what He will do in us. He is not just the forgiver of our sins; He is also the One who enables us to walk out the Christian life.

And my prayer is today that if you don't know this Jesus that you would come to know Him. And if you have known Him, but you have felt paralyzed, that you would reach out to faithful friends and journey together to encounter the reality of who He is.

Let's pray together.

Father, many of us come into today, maybe paralyzed today. There something in our lives, a mat that we have been laying on for far too long. I pray that each of us in this room would have a clear vision of You, who You are, forgiveness that You bring, the cleansing that You bring, the freedom that You bring, the liberty that You bring. May it be real in our lives by faith in who You are and what You have done for us.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

If you are here this morning and you want to talk more to discover who Jesus is or you just need someone to pray with, there will be pastors up here after the service, outside in the café wearing yellow lanyards.

God bless you, Church! May you enjoy the freedom of who Christ is this week. Have a great week!