

**6.28.09 / Mark 2:1-12**

This story follows immediately on the heels of the one read last week.

**What did it mean for those who first heard it?**

The architecture of first-century houses in Galilee plays an interesting role here. A normal house would be a mud brick structure with an edged roof. A ladder would run up the side of the house, and the roof could be used as a sleeping platform in warm weather. (We know from the story of David and Bathsheba that some people, some thousand years earlier, had been in the habit of bathing on their roofs as well.) It is this access that allows the men to access the roof, and they probably had to dig through the roof to lower the stretcher through. It is unclear from the text exactly how much damage this did to the house, but it could have been fairly significant.

This is also another place where the word “authority” appears (verse 10). Again, this word exists somewhere between “authority” and “power”.

Two terms appear within this story that we often think we know, but deserve to be looked at to make sure. First is “the word” that Jesus is preaching in verse 2. Modern American Christians use “the word” in a few different ways. Make sure you know what word this is. Mark 1:14 will be of help here. Second, Jesus uses the term “Son of Man”. This has a specific reference in Daniel 7:13, which it is generally assumed that Jesus is referring to. In this verse it has Messianic implications. The “How Do We Know?” document outlines more fully additional Biblical uses of this phrase.

1) What is Jesus doing at the beginning of this story? What is the response from the people? Why might this response be occurring?

2) Why do the friends of the paralytic open the roof? What kind of response might we expect Jesus, and those with him, to have to someone breaking the roof open? This process didn’t happen instantaneously. By the time the paralytic is lowered down his friends have been breaking in through the roof for long enough for everyone to wonder what this vandalism is about.

3) Whose faith prompts the forgiveness of the paralytic? Why? Why does Jesus forgive the man first, when his obvious physical problem is paralysis?

4) Are the scribes right, or can beings other than God forgive sins?

5) Which IS easier, to forgive sins, or to heal a paralyzed man? What function does this question, and the subsequent miracle, have? Digging deeper, how does this miracle advance Jesus’ ministry and aims in a way that another random display of power (say, making the walls glow) wouldn’t? Part of how we learn about God’s character is in how He chooses to use his power, so this is important.

**What does it mean in our current context?**

1) Here action (breaking open a roof and lowering a sick man down) is described as faith. What is faith? Is it intellectual acceptance of certain ideas? Is it a particular emotional response? Is it actions? Is it more than one of these? Is one of these three (intellect, emotion, and action) more important than another?

2) Do we believe that faith is linked to forgiveness? Do we believe that faith is linked to God’s other blessings? Whose faith? Is the failure to experience blessings a failure of faith?

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3) Forgiveness is a major theme in this story. What attitude towards forgiveness does God have in this story? What attitude towards forgiveness should we, then, as God's children, have? What is forgiveness? Is it forgetting that people did you wrong? Is it refusing to punish them? Is it a change in your own heart? Who benefits primarily from forgiveness – the forgiver, or the forgiven?

4) Jesus wins the conflict in this story, hands down. How does he handle the conflict? Are there principles we should draw from how he deals with the scribes, and apply to our own dealings with people? What does Jesus do? What doesn't he do, that we might do in his position?

#### Weekly Questions to Ask the Group

What do we notice about God in this passage?

How should this passage inform and shape the way we live our lives?