

The Unseen

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Okay. But let's get back to the sermon this morning. Okay, so before we begin, let's just pray and then we'll get started.

All right, let's pray, church. Lord, we just thank you for the songs we have sung this morning. We thank you for your body and blood that you have shed for us on the cross, as we have remembered this morning through the communion.

Lord, we thank you for this time that we are able to once again sit under your word and to be teachable, Father. Lord, help me to speak clearly and truthfully this morning as I bring your word to the congregation.

And help us to reflect, Lord Jesus, on your love for us. And Lord, we ask that your Holy Spirit move our hearts this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[1 : 17] Church, I've titled this morning's sermon as The Unseen. I'll be honest with you, as I was working through the sermon, I kind of changed a little bit, but I've managed to stick to it.

And just I've got three points from the passage this morning, which I hope to make clear to everyone this morning. And I think I want to thank Auntie Catherine this morning.

The songs were, she did a fantastic job introducing the big idea, really, for this morning's passage, which is that Jesus, who is God in his authority, came down to earth to forgive sin and to call all sinners.

And through the songs this morning, I hope we've got a picture of that. And I hope to reflect on that this morning through the sermon. So let's get into the first point this morning, as you can see in your handouts, the unseen condition.

Let me just read again verses 1 to 5 for Mark chapter 2. It says, A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.

[2 : 27] They gathered in such large numbers 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 paralyzed man, 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 by digging through it, and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, Son, your sins are forgiven.

Now from the get-go church, we find ourselves in a situation where Jesus is preaching to another massive, packed-out crowd in a home.

And this home commentary suggests that this was probably Peter's house. And we can tell that the home was overflowing, of course, with people having no room, even outside the door.

And I don't know whether any of you have been to a super-packed-out event where you're squished like sardines in a can and you're just trying to crane your neck above the sea of people in front of you.

[3 : 37] Now, just a quick fun fact. Why there were so many people in Capernaum was in fact that this city where Jesus was preaching at the time was located along what we call the King's Highway or the Via Maris.

So just imagine the Silk Road for the Middle East. So this was it, right? It linked Egypt in the south to the northern empires of Syria and Mesopotamia in the north.

Okay, so this was in fact a real melting pot of all kinds of people. And it's interesting that we see Jesus here doing all sorts of wonderful things in this city, right?

Now, we know that this mob of people has become quite the usual thing to happen whenever Jesus is around. In chapter 1 of Mark, we know that Jesus had already begun preaching and teaching in synagogues, healing the sick, and casting out demons.

And this is important in understanding our first point this morning. In chapter 1, Jesus had been declaring that the kingdom of God is near, and therefore called for repentance.

[5 : 00] Again, at the beginning of the passage this morning, we find that Jesus is preaching the word to the crowd, calling for his hearers to repentance.

And flowing from that in verse 3 and 4, we hear of some men which were carrying a paralyzed man to Jesus.

And because it was full, it was jam-packed, they start to MacGyver the situation by making a hole in the roof, lowering the man, and laying him before Jesus.

And Jesus sees the man's faith and responds, with, Son, your sins are forgiven. Your sins are forgiven.

Not the typical response, I'm sure. And I'm sure the doctors in this church will tell you this is quite unusual. Now I'm quite sure the paralyzed man, nor his friends, and even the crowd, were expecting these words from Jesus' mouth.

[6 : 09] I mean, this is like Jesus giving a wrong, it seemed like Jesus was giving a wrong solution to the problem. And for the crowd, what did they see?

They saw a stricken man with a physical illness, paralyzed. Now even today, this is a serious medical issue.

I've checked. I've done some medical background. And it can't be cured, even today. You know, if your nervous system breaks, there's something wrong there, and you can't really cure that.

Right? However, in that moment, Jesus' first and foremost concern wasn't the physical illness that everyone could see, but the unseen illness, the unseen condition, the spiritual illness of sin.

And of course, this was Jesus' main concern. What was Jesus doing at the start? He was preaching the word, preaching the good news, preaching repentance.

[7 : 22] You see, church, this response from Jesus is a next-level response. By addressing the sin, the spiritual illness, Jesus had addressed, in fact, the root of the physical illness.

Quite literally, Jesus was addressing the cause of the paralyzed man's suffering, the unseen condition of a man's heart, the illness of sin. And we know, we know that sin is the cause of all the pain and suffering in this world.

Remember what happened all the way back in Genesis? Remember this question? Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?

Sound familiar? The introduction of sin through the disobedience of Adam and Eve had caused the world to fall out of perfection and into chaos and suffering and sickness.

All the sickness and disease, all the result of sin. So therefore, church, Jesus was rightly concerned about the greater illness in this man.

[8 : 45] Of course, he was concerned about his paralysis, but Jesus' main concern and he was rightly concerned about was the illness of sin, one that plagues every single person on this earth.

And my God, does this world need urgent medical attention for it? And moving on, church, in verse 5, Jesus saw the faith of the paralyzed man and his friends.

They, the paralyzed man and his friends, recognized the authority of Jesus over the physical sickness and the faith that Jesus would make him whole.

And this is not surprising, you know, in context of what Jesus has been doing in Capernaum. And so they believed and trusted in the words and works of Jesus.

And it is on this authority that we move on to the second point in your handout and the second portion of the passage this morning. I'll read, immediately after saying that the paralyzed man your sins are forgiven, we read that there were some teachers of the law who were sitting there and thinking to themselves, why does this fellow talk like that?

[10 : 05] He's bespeaking. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Who can forgive sins but God alone? Now what's happening here is something like this.

I, I'm a lawyer by profession, I walk up to a criminal court not tomorrow, tomorrow's public holiday but let's say on Tuesday I walk up to court and I walk up to one of the accused who's waiting for their trial to begin and I tell the prosecutor and I tell the defense lawyer come on here guys and I whisper to them okay, it's okay, it's okay, don't worry, he's acquitted of his charges and I pardon him from his offense.

Imagine me going up to say that. Now you get the same reaction from the teachers of the law as with the prosecutor and defense lawyer. Who does this guy think he is?

Who does Joshua think he is that he can just pardon the accused? Only the king can do that. For those of you who do not know, only the king, the anointed, he can give out pardons and pardon you for your criminal offenses.

So, who does Joshua think he is? Does he think he's the king and give out pardons just like that? And this is kind of what Jesus is doing to the teachers of the law.

[11 : 27] He's claiming to be God. Now much more than me, Jesus had done things which kind of signaled he was more than just an ordinary man.

The paralyzed man after hearing what Jesus had done, realized that Jesus was more than a man. The healing of the sick, the casting out of impure spirits and demons, the preaching in the synagogues with authority throughout Galilee.

it was in Capernaum itself where Jesus had been teaching in the synagogue and where he drove out the spirit. And you can find this in Mark chapter 1.

And despite all these amazing things that Jesus did, the teachers of the law could not see, could not see who Jesus was. The teachers could not see beyond what appeared before their eyes, which was a man.

Now Jesus, being God, knew in his spirit what the teachers of the law were thinking to themselves and replies in verse 8, why are you thinking these things? Which is easier, to say to this paralyzed man, your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up, take your mat, and walk?

[12 : 47] But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Now Jesus handles, Jesus handles their query, the teachers of the law, by presenting a question or a proposition to the teachers.

And as you can notice there, in verse 9, a proposition that involves deciding between two, I would say, at the time, and I suppose even today, two impossible tasks.

It is impossible because, firstly, as admitted by the teachers, no man can forgive sin. However, on the contrary, no man could heal the paralyzed man again, otherwise it would have been done already.

So two impossible tasks are presented before the teachers of the law. And Jesus responds this way to deal with the calling into question of Jesus' authority.

authority, which is what is in fact happening. We see this because in verse 10, Jesus, in no uncertain terms, affirms his authority that comes from his divine character by saying, I want you, I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin.

[14 : 11] And the Son of Man here, he's giving himself kind of like a title, but he's basically referring to himself. He can also read, I want you to know that I have the authority on earth to forgive sins.

Right? So Jesus, to reveal his divine character, Jesus completes both tasks. Right? In verse 5, we already see that Jesus says to the man, your sins are forgiven.

And later in verse 11, Jesus tells the man to get up, take his mat, and go home. And that's exactly what happens.

He takes his mat and goes home. Jesus' divine character, which was unseen by the teachers of the law, is displayed in full view of all who are there, and they all praise God in amazement Jesus' authority, which is also God's authority over both the spiritual and the physical, is displayed.

Church, I want to encourage you right now that whatever hardship that you are dealing with, you can bring it to Jesus because nothing, nothing is beyond his control.

[15 : 38] authority. Now, moving fairly quickly, but we are here on our third point, and in the last part of our passage this morning, we find Jesus raising questions yet again.

Earlier, we see that the teachers of the law are asking who does this fellow think he is. Jesus and now we'll see the next question here. In verse 13, we see nothing new there, large crowds and Jesus teaching in the crowds.

It's from verse 14 which things start to get interesting. Now, Jesus sees Levi, otherwise known as Matthew, and this is the same disciple Matthew at the tax collector's booth, and Jesus asks him to follow me.

Now, Levi immediately gets up and follows Jesus, and it's important to note here, church, that the follow me here, when Jesus asked Levi follow me, was more than just you know, mari ikut saya belakang, you know, it was in fact a call to discipleship, a call to follow in Jesus' life and footstep, and the way he would live.

The same way in which Peter, in which Andrew, James, and John were called to follow Jesus, as they were by their nets.

[17 : 18] And the response by Levi suggests that he had heard of and listened to Jesus and was ready to leave everything behind for Jesus.

We see him answering the call of discipleship wholeheartedly by getting up and immediately following Jesus. In verse 15 and 17, we see that while Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, and this is the interesting part, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

Now, when the teachers of the law, surprise, surprise, who were Pharisees, saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

And on hearing this, Jesus said to them, it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

sinner. Now, church, the words tax collector appear heavily in verse 13 to 17. In fact, it's a total of four times in five verses. And we also see that tax collectors and sinners appear in the same sentence, as if tax collectors and sinners were one and the same.

[18 : 45] In fact, this was the exact intention and a common thing back in those days. So, while being a tax collector was not an offense in itself, it was, in fact, very hard to find or very rare to find an honest tax collector back in those days, back in Jesus' time.

So, back in those days, the tax collectors would cheat or demand inflated payments, and if they were working for Rome, because the Romans were there, they were despised as traitors to the Jews, traitors to their own people, right?

And their houses were regarded as impure, and they were expelled from the synagogue. Very, very bad negative connotations, right?

And it's, at least it's slightly better today. We still try and avoid the tax man, but at least he's welcome to church, right? Okay, but do you notice, church, how eyebrow raising this would have been for Jesus after what you've heard?

Jesus was on the verge of killing off his social life. Jesus, a Jew, setting foot in a tax collector's house, an impure place, eating dinner with not just one, but many tax collectors and sinners.

[20 : 12] Jesus was going against the grain. He was a counter culture of the day. And thankfully for us, the Pharisees asked the right question this time, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

And Jesus' response, church, as a result of his clear mission on earth, his clear calling on earth, which is to call sinners to himself.

Jesus not only lowered himself from a position of glory from the supernatural realm to the natural realm as a man, but was also willing to lower himself, potentially becoming a social outcast by mingling with or accepting the impure, the broken, and the sinners.

Now, this certainly wouldn't be the last time that Jesus did this. Some familiar examples would be the story of Zacchaeus, another tax collector, or the sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume and washed his feet with her tears and wiped his feet with her hair.

Now, what would motivate anyone, anyone to do something as outrageous, as nonsensical as that?

[21 : 50] And as we've sung this morning, church, the answer is none other than the love and the mercy and the grace of God. Love because we are his creation and his children.

Mercy because we deserve to die an eternal spiritual death but God in his love spares us by sending Jesus to take our place and grace that restores our relationship with God again without us needing to pay the price of our offense against God.

This is why Jesus had come. so Jesus church, who is God, came to earth to forgive sin and to call sinners unto him to be saved.

And today we have the benefit of God's word in the Bible. But how then shall we as hearers of the word ought to respond today? does this mean we have the permission to indiscriminately hang out with drunks and prostitutes?

Is Jesus now an easygoing, live and let live kind of Messiah? Absolutely not. What we see in today's passage church is that sinners were drawn to Jesus.

[23 : 22] and see how Levi without hesitation answered the call of Jesus. Jesus forgave repentant sinners and Jesus embraced sinners who were willing to hear his teaching and to believe in him.

Jesus was a friend of sinners not because he winked at sin, ignored sin, or enjoyed light-hearted revelry with those engaged in immorality, none of those.

But Jesus was a friend of sinners in that he came to save sinners and was pleased to welcome any sinner who were open to the gospel, who were sorry for their sins and on their way to putting their faith in him.

Sinners like you and me. so similarly church, we've seen Jesus' example.

Are we calling out to those who yet do not know Jesus, whether in our school for the youth, or at our workplace, or in our community?

[24 : 44] It doesn't have to be handing out tracts, it's quite old school handing out tracts, or sharing the gospel for half an hour, sitting down, just barraging that friend of yours.

It can be, but it doesn't have to be. It can be as simple as inviting a friend to explore what Christianity is about. For example, we're running the Christianity Explore program.

It could be as simple as inviting them to that. It could be just as simple as the way you treat other people. people. Last week at youth camp, we just had our youth camp, last week, and we had the privilege of having Pastor Stephen Fung, all the way from KL, and he said something quite intriguing to me, in fact.

He said this, rarely is anyone argued into a conversion. Rarely is anyone argued into a conversion. You see, people become interested in Jesus from the way Christians treat Christians and the way Christians treat other people.

This is the example that Jesus has set for us this morning. Now, let me call the musicians back on stage before I end this morning. Now, if you consider yourself a follower of Jesus this morning, I want to encourage you to be bold in calling others who do not know Jesus to get to know who this Jesus is.

[26 : 20] It may take time, but what's important is that we become intentional about it. Now, look out for those opportunities to drop a piece of the gospel into the conversation, or look out for those opportunities to show a little bit of compassion and love for others.

So, this morning, as you heard and you've seen what Jesus has done, and as disciples and followers of Jesus, we too are called to call sinners to repentance so that Jesus can forgive their sins.

Let's pray as I end. Father God, we thank you for your word this morning. we thank you, God, for sending your son Jesus to forgive sin and to call sinners to you.

We give you glory because we know you are God and have authority over the physical and spiritual, that you are able to heal us, not just physically, but emotionally, and most importantly, in our spirit.

Lord, I just want to take this time as well to commit every person here this morning who is sick and suffering from some illness in their body or mine. Lord, we ask that you will restore their body and mind.

[27 : 42] Lord, we ease the suffering of those who are ill and sick this morning in our presence. And Father, we thank you for your example in how we should treat others and treat one another who do not know you. In a world that is already upside down, Lord, we ask that you help us to live right side up, and in doing so, draw people to you and your son, Jesus Christ.

Give us compassion for the lost, and help us to love others like your unfailing love for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Pass the time over to Aunt Catherine.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.