

**THE REAL JESUS**  
**A Series on the Book of Mark**  
**“The Forgiver”**  
**Mark 2:1-12**  
**New City Church of LA**  
**October 5, 2008**

**I. Vision of New City**

Welcome to New City. We are a brand new multi-ethnic multi-socioeconomic come-as-you-are church right here in downtown LA.

Our vision is to be an inclusive gospel-centered community of lovers of Jesus Christ who connect people to God, grow together, serve the city, and extend God’s Kingdom.

Focus on how we grow together. Community Groups. Discipleship.

**II. Introduction to the Series on Book of Mark**

We are in the middle of a series called THE REAL JESUS, a series on the Book of Mark.

We said that people are interested in Jesus, but on their own terms. The problem with that is that Jesus on your own term is just a projection of yourself or what you want. And this Jesus can’t change you, can’t challenge you, and can’t correct you because it is you. Only the REAL JESUS can change you. I think Mark is arguably the best place to go for the real Jesus, the raw, unadulterated, unfiltered, straight-up Jesus.

**III. Reading of the passage**

Up to now, there has not been much conflict, but from here, there are 5 stories of conflicts, one after another, and at the end, in 3:6, Mark tells us the Pharisees started to plot how they might kill him. You will see that when people meet the real Jesus, they reacted very strongly.

Here’s the first of the story:

Let’s read Mark 2:1-12

[Comment as we read]

*This passage tells us three things about the real Jesus: (1) what he claimed to be; (2) what he came to do; and (3) our response.*

#### IV. First, What He Claimed to Be.

In verse 5, when Jesus forgave the paralytics sins, the teachers of the law were thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

It’s one thing to forgive the sin of the person who has wronged you, but Jesus has never met this paralytic before. In forgiving the sins of the paralytic, what Jesus is essentially saying is that all of your sins are sins against *me*. Only God has the right to say that. Only your creator has the right to say that. No one else has the right to say that. That’s why they accused Jesus of blasphemy, which means putting yourself in the position of God. *He was accused of claiming to be God!* And Jesus knew exactly what they were thinking, and he didn’t back off. He claimed to have the authority on earth to forgive sins and demonstrated that authority by healing the paralytic. There is no question about it: **the real Jesus claimed to be God.**

We saw right from the beginning of Mark that Mark declared that Jesus is YHWH, the creator of the heavens and the earth, become human. He made that clear in chapter 1. Now, he says that it’s not just the belief of the followers of Jesus; it’s something Jesus claimed.

Incidentally, scholars, both secular and Christian scholars, agree that Mark was written around 50-60 A.D. The earliest fragments of the book of mark pre-dates, via carbon dating, before 70 A.D. So, this claim that Jesus claimed to be God is not something that was made up in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, it was claimed from the beginning of Christianity. So, Da Vinci Code and others like it which allege that Jesus never claimed to be God and that the followers of Jesus made up that claim in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century is just out right wrong.

You’ve got to realize the magnitude of his claim. You see throughout the Bible that Jesus claimed to be God and even accepted worship from people. When Thomas saw Jesus, he vowed down and worshipped him. And Jesus didn’t say, wait a second, you got that wrong. He blessed him.

Hudson Smith, who wrote *World’s Great Religions* (a popular book for college religion courses): he says there have only been two prominent and influential figures

whose lives were so good, so incredible, so inexplicable, that people around them didn't just ask *who* are you, but *what* are you. They are Buddha and Jesus. Smith points out that the responses of these two people were completely the opposite: Buddha said don't worship me, I am not God; don't look to me; look at my dharma, my teaching; Jesus unequivocally accepted worship. He didn't claim that he is a god, he claimed that he is *the* God.

If you asked any historian, they will agree that Jesus is at least one of the 10 influential figures in history of the world. He might even be one of five or one of three most influential people. He could be argued to be the most influential person in the history of the world.

And, there were people throughout history who claimed to be God.

But, there is only one person who claimed to God and became one of the most influential persons in the history of the world.

Others who claimed to be God never convinced more than just a few people and never made much of an impact in the world.

Most great people pointed to something else or someone else. Except one guy: Jesus claimed to be God, got others to believe it, and changed the world.

The magnitude of his claim is so great that you better not just doubt that he is not God, you better be sure that he is not God.

If you received a letter from one of the major law firms in LA, in their official stationary, saying that you are the long lost heir to the British throne. How are you going to respond? You might say, c'mon, I'm Korean. But, you're not going to at least call them? The magnitude of the claim is so big that it compels a response.

If you get a letter from IRS saying that you owe \$5,000,000 in back taxes, what are you going to do? I haven't made \$50,000 in the last five years. But, you're not going to call them? The magnitude of the claim is so big that it compels a response. If you miss it, it could ruin your life; you could lose the greatest opportunity of your life. You better not just doubt that it's not true; you better know that it's not true.

When Jesus said that I am God, I am the only way to the ultimate reality, you shouldn't just doubt that it's not true, you better know that it's not true or it can ruin your life or miss out on the greatest adventure of your life.

I am not saying that you need examine the claim of every guy who claims to be God. We don't all need to examine the life of David Koresh. Because we don't have that much evidence of his divinity. But, there is one person who made that claim and, boy, look at the impact that he's made. Have you looked at him?

If you look at the real Jesus, the reality of what he claimed to be, there are only three conclusions you can make about Jesus.

It's either true or false, and if it is false, there are two possibilities: he either knew that it was false but made the claim, which would make him a liar, or he didn't know that it was false but made the claim, which would make him insane. Or, he is what he claimed to be. There are no other choices. He does not leave an option of being viewed as a great moral teacher. He does not leave that option to us.

He is either what he says he is or liar or insane. If you've met the real Jesus, your responses will be very extreme. Everyone who met the real Jesus, their responses were extreme. They either loved him or wanted to kill him. Why? The magnitude of his claim.

What do you think he is? Maybe you believe it doctrinally, but in your life, you've reduced him to your Genie (as we talked about last week) or maybe a great moral teacher or a great model for life. He does not leave that as an option for us believe about him because of the magnitude of his claim. He claimed to be God.

This is how C.S. Lewis put it:

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, or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make a choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse . . . but let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

He is LORD, he is God who deserve for us to fall on our knees and worship him and submit everything to him and follow him.

So, this passage tells us what he claimed to be.

#### **IV. Secondly, it also tells us what he came to do.**

Imagine the place. It's totally packed. So packed that there are people spilling out to the street. There is no way to get to Jesus. So, the friends of the paralytic go up to the roof and make an opening and lower him through the roof. It's pretty dramatic. What did he want from Jesus? Everyone knows. But, what does Jesus say? Instead of saying, rise up and be healed, Jesus says: "Son, your sins are forgiven." If he was a dude from LA, he might say, "uh, dude, I have a more immediate problem here." But, Jesus is saying, *no you don't*. The paralytic made no reference to sin but Jesus is saying to the paralytic that you think you know what you're problem is but you don't. I know you think your main problem is your inability to walk, your suffering, your health, but Jesus is saying your main problem is your sin, not your suffering.

This is a pretty radical thing to say.

You might think your main problem is your job, your housing, your relationships, your health, your marriage, your depression. But, Jesus is saying that your main problem is NOT that. It is your sins. Jesus is driving you deep.

Everyone in the world who is paralyzed wants to walk. This paralytic may have been resting all of his hopes in that. If I can only walk again, I can be happy; I would never complain; everything would be right. Jesus is saying, my son, you are mistaken. When I heal you, you're going to be pretty excited for about 3 months; that feeling will go away because you are still you. The root of human discontent is deep.

Cynthia Hymal is a journalist; I don't think she's a Christian. She has known a number of people who were struggling actors working in restaurants who made it in Hollywood. She says: when they were people like all of us who said, if only I had this or that, then my life will be fine, when they were like that, and they didn't have it, they were driven, stressed, too angry etc, but when they actually got the deepest desires of the heart, they become unstable and less happy than they used to be. They got depressed. It's not that they become arrogant, it's worse. She wrote:

"I pity celebrities. No, I do. Celebrities were once perfectly pleasant human beings, but now, the wrath is awful. You see, they wanted fame, they worked and they pushed, but the morning after each one of them become famous, however, they wanted to take an overdose. Because that giant thing that they were striving for, that thing that was going to make everything okay, that was going to make

their life bearable, that was going to provide them with personal fulfillment and happiness, happened but *they were still them*. The disillusionment turned them howling and insufferable.”

She is saying that they didn't get arrogant. It's that they got the thing that they wanted and they weren't happy. Then, she said something really interesting:

“I think when God wants to play a really rotten practical joke on you and grants your deepest wish and giggles merrily when you want to kill yourself.”

You know what Jesus is saying to the man? I am not going to play that rotten joke on you.

I am going to heal you but I am going to forgive you first. What does it mean to forgive? It means reconciling you into a relationship with God. He is saying that the biggest need we have is a relationship with God, and there is something that is preventing us from having that relationship. That's our sin. And what is sin? The Bible says anything we build our identity, our life on other than God is sin. If we say, only if I have this or only if I have that, I'll be okay. We are seeking to build our identity and life on that thing we are seeking. We are looking at those things to save us. Sin is going after something or someone other than God for our salvation. Sin is not just defined as breaking the moral code, the Ten Commandments. Sin is about chasing something other than God for your ultimate fulfillment. That means your pursuit of your health can be sin. Pursuit of motherhood can be sin. Pursuit of a job can be sin. Pursuit of a spouse can be sin. Pursuit of money can be sin. Pursuing good moral character can be sin. These things can be sin IF you are seeking to find your ultimate identity and life from them. These are good things, but they are not God. If you make them out to be God in your life, it destroys your ability to enjoy them as a gift from God.

Is there something in your life where you are saying: “If only I had this, I would be happy.” Is there something in your life that you are pursuing for ultimate happiness and fulfillment? That's your sin. That may have been the sin of the paralytic. Ask God for forgiveness.

**VI. Third, This Passage Tells Us Something About How We Should Respond to Jesus.**

How do we respond to his claim to be God? How do we respond to his offer of forgiveness?

First, we should learn from how he and his friends did everything possible to get him to Jesus. They knew that if they can just get him to Jesus, it will be okay. Obviously, they thought Jesus was going to heal them. They didn't really think about what else he was going to do. They sought out Jesus for physical healing and Jesus gave him physical healing and spiritual healing because that's what he really needed.

Do you have a friend who is struggling? Do everything possible to get him or her to Jesus. Use creativity. Have a can do attitude. Let nothing stop you. This doesn't mean you are going to pressure this person, but it means that you are going to be a community that brings people to Jesus at all costs. You are going to love this person enough to bring him or her to Jesus. You are going to value your friend enough to do everything possible to bring healing to your friend.

Second, there is the faith of the paralytic. When Jesus said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home," what did he do? It didn't say Jesus held him up or helped him up. Jesus simply commanded him to get up, take your mat and go home.

In many ways, I feel that that's what Jesus is telling us. Get up. Get up. You are forgiven! I love you. Get up. Get up. I have healed you! I want you to take a step of faith and get up and take your mat and go home. So many times, we know, but we don't take the step of faith. We don't get up. We seat there still without confidence, still down and depressed, when Jesus said, get up.

### **The Gospel Connection**

Jesus had to go down to the depth of suffering on the cross, not just physically suffer on the cross, but also spiritually suffer, to be separated from his God the Father, it was literally descending into hell. This was what he had to do to forgive the sin of the paralytic. This was the way he forgave our sins. He took the punishment for our sins and went down, so that we can by faith get up. Without the cross, we can't get up. It is only because he went down that we can get up.