

**A MIRACLE BECOMES A MINISTRY**

Mark 2:1-12

**Intro:** This miracle is recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels. The word Synoptic means that the three Gospels are just a synopsis of the life and ministry of our Lord, but it also means that they approach the subject from a similar point-of-view. John's Gospel is not more thorough than the other three, but his approach is entirely different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

In Matthew's Gospel it appears in chapter 9, verse 1-8. In Luke's Gospel, in chapter 5, verses 18-26.

Mark tells us that this miracle was performed in Capernaum, on the shore of the sea of Galilee. Matthew called it "his own city." Luke does not say where it was. But we can say that there were three cities which were important in the life of our Lord, in addition, of course, to Jerusalem. He was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, and later made His home, or at least His headquarters, in Capernaum. According to Mark's Gospel, our Lord had been in Capernaum immediately following the call of Peter and Andrew, and James and John. It was there that the Lord delivered a man who was demon possessed. Evidently the Lord performed an unusual number of miracles in Capernaum because later our Lord denounced the city in these words found in Matthew 11:23-24:

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

We all know that the Lord destroyed the whole city of Sodom because of the sin which still bears its name, and yet He denounced Capernaum because she had not been responsive to the many miracles that Lord performed there. He implied that Sodom would have been more accepting of our Lord if the same number of miracles had been performed in her that were performed in Capernaum. This reminds of what a solemn responsibility is laid upon people who saw our Lord's miracles, or, for us today, those of us who know about the Lord's miracles from what we have read, or heard taught, from the Bible. The light was surely given to Capernaum, but when it is not received, the light became darkness, and the darkness was intense!

What was the Lord's purpose in performing His miracles? It is clear that, while there had been other miracle workers, even in OT times, yet none ever performed as many miracles, nor as many different types of miracles, as our Lord did.

In answering that question, What was the Lord's purpose in performing miracles, we can say at least four things:

1) He performed them because Scripture predicted that He would. See Matthew 8:16-17:

16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses .

This was a quotation from Isaiah 53:4.

2) He performed miracles because He had compassion on the multitudes. There were many, many sick people in every city when our Lord ministered here on earth. We read, for example, in Matthew 14:14:

14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

But there was also a third reason that the Lord performed miracles:

3) The Gospel of John was written to tell us this third reason why the Lord performed so many miracles. See John 20:30-31:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

We can also say that there was another reason for the miracles:

4) They gave Him the opportunity to preach the Gospel, and so often the miracles themselves were illustrations of how physical healing could picture spiritual healing, or, in other words, salvation.

In no way did our Lord ever perform miracles to be sensational. His healing always attracted a crowd, but that was not His main purpose. In fact, in some cases He avoided the crowds. But this palsied man which we are considering tonight was a case in which all three of the Lord's purposes were involved.

Now let us consider this miracle.

## **I. THE PLACE WHERE THE MIRACLE WAS PERFORMED (Mark 1:1-2).**

We are told in all three of the Gospels that the Lord was in a place which was crowded with people, so much so that the men carrying the palsied man, were not able to get through the crowd. Luke alone tells us what kind of a crowd was there. Listen to what Luke wrote in Luke 5:17:

17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

We could almost say that this was a convention. Evidently there were some Pharisees, doctors of the Law, and other Jewish leaders who were interested in what the Lord was teaching. And they may have requested that they be given time with Him where they could ask the Lord questions. We can't say for sure. But it seems that it was an interested group. Mark tells us that the Lord was preaching to them. That apparently was the reason that everybody was there, to hear what the Lord was preaching. It is right after this that Luke gives his account of the healing of the man who had the palsy.

Then we read about:

## **II. AN UNEXPECTED INTERRUPTION (Mark 2:3-4).**

Mark is the only Gospel writer who tells us that there were four men who were carrying the palsied man. And so we see that this man was incapable of coming to the Lord on his own. We don't even know what he knew about the Lord. But it is very evident that the four men knew about the Lord, and that they firmly believed that the Lord could help him. It may have been that they were motivated by the possibility that their friend might die before they could get him to the Lord.

So when they couldn't get in the door. They took a stairway which was usually built on the outside of the homes in those day, got up on the roof, began to remove the roofing until they had enough space to let the man down right in front of the Lord. I don't know of many incidents in Scripture which would compare with the emergency nature of what those four men did.

But what was it that drew a response from the Lord?

### III. THE LORD'S RESPONSE (Mark 2:5).

It does not say that the Lord saw faith in the palsied man. It says that it was when the Lord "saw their faith," the faith of the men who had let their friend down through the roof, that He said to the palsied man, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The Greek word translated "son" is the word τέκνον. It is a family word. It means *a born one*. The Lord was recognizing the palsied man as a member of the family, and it had to be the family of God. He was one of God's elect. And so, instead of saying, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk," our Lord said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Now the Lord performed other miracles of healing where it was clear that the disease from which they were suffering was due to sin. And I am inclined to feel that this was the situation here. Not anything is said about the faith of the sick man, but he must have been willing for his four friends to bring him to the Lord. However that may have been, the Lord declared his sins were forgiven. He was saved.

But there were some scribes there who didn't say anything, but they were thinking in their hearts that the Lord was speaking blasphemies because He was declaring this man's sin forgiven. They said, and rightly so, that only God can forgive sins. That was right. But apparently it never occurred to them that the Lord might be the Son of God.

But the Lord knew what they were thinking. And so He asked them a couple of questions. The first was, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" And the second question we have in verse 9. (Read.)

What possibly was the Lord's reason for asking the first question? Was it to ask them to express to Him the problem that they saw, which might have led to their understanding that He was God, the Son!

What is the answer to the second question? Well, I would rather say to a person, "Your sins are forgiven," because they would have no way of checking to see if that were true. But if you tell a man to get up (that would be a problem for a palsied man), take up thy bed (would be a second problem for a man with palsy), and walk (was problem #3).

But the Lord prefaced his instructions to the palsied man by saying, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power of earth to forgive sins,

I say unto thee” – and then he told the palsied man to do those three things.

What happened?

The palsied man, cured of his palsy, got up, picked up his bed, and walked out of the house – not only healed, but a forgiven sinner and a child of God! And he didn't do any of it gradually, He did it all “immediately”! It was not gradual, but instantaneous!

Do you suppose that when it says “that they were all amazed, and glorified God, that that included the Pharisees and doctors of the Law also? I am inclined to believe that it did, but how far beyond that it went, only the Lord knows. But it is surely an amazing story, and every bit of it true, of the Deity and sovereignty of our Lord over sickness and over sin. We don't go along with those who say that if you are saved, you should never get sick. But we can say that sickness is the fruit of sin, not always as a judgment for a particular sin, but because if there had not been sin, there would never have been sickness.

**Concl:** There is a lot of encouraging truth in this miracle which opened the door for ministry. I think that anyone reading this story is impressed, or should be impressed, with the words in verse 5, “When Jesus saw their faith,” not the faith of the palsied man, but “their faith,” the faith of his friends, the Lord performed a twofold miracle – a healing of the body, and the healing of the soul.

We can't believe for anyone else even though many times we wish that we could. But we can by faith, by prayer alone, or by testimony to our friends, or by putting a book presenting the Gospel in their hands, or by inviting them to come to church with us, we can bring them to Christ. We know that the Lord gave this man's four friends the faith to bring the sick man to Christ, and the Lord gave the sick man the faith to be saved. We are to preach the Gospel any way that we can; the Lord uses His Word according to His sovereign will.