



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Things as They Should Be

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Mark 2:1-12

Clint Pressley

2 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. 5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— 11 "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." 12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

(Pastor prays)

Most of us can feel it. We know it right off the bat, one way or another. We know that we live in a world where things are not as they should be. Marriages should not end in divorce. Yet many of you have walked through that terrible pain. You know what it feels like. There should not be abuse of any kind yet there are people sitting in this room right now who have felt the effects. Maybe you've lived with it for years. As Christians, we believe that there should not be racism. Yet many of you have lived through the pejorative shadow of discrimination at some point in your life.

In this good world that God has created, there should not be sickness, there should not be paralysis, there should not be heart attacks. There should not be addictions or car wrecks or pornography or suicide. And yet, many of you sitting in this room have felt the devastating effects, the devastating reality, that accompanies those tragedies.

So with all the weird brokenness in the world that we live in, how do we flourish? How do we rise above it? How do we honor God? How do we live with joy? I think this fabulous story gives us some insight. So we watched the Lord Jesus as He walked into a world that is not as it should be. And in this passage, He heals brokenness. And today I simply want you to follow along in the storyline, and ask “What must we do? What must I do?”

Danny Aiken says that there are several things you need to ask of every passage, and I would recommend it to you. There are a couple of things you want to ask when you read the Bible. You ask, “What does this story tell me about God? What does this story tell me about my sin? What does this story tell me about Jesus Christ? What does this story tell me about what must I do?” I’ll make this the theme of the sermon.

Because God is Good, There are Things We Must Do

Let’s go to it. Let’s make these our points. Here’s the first one. Number one. You’ll see it in the passage.

We must be clear on our greatest priority

We must be clear on our greatest priority. We set it as a North star. Join me there in verses 1 and 2. Let’s see how this story begins. Let’s start in verse 1.
2 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days,

Capernaum will be the home base. It’s right there on the northern part of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus will go and preach and often come back to this, His new hometown, which is Capernaum. And the text says. *it was reported that he was at home.*

When you live in a small town, news travels fast. So He's back at home. Literally He is back at the house. Whose house? We don't know but it's probably Peter's home. He's come back for a rest. Verse 1 seems to say they've traveled for a while. They've come back home, maybe to catch their breath. Jesus has already done all kinds of miracles. Chapter One tells us His fame is spreading all throughout. We even remember the scene in Chapter One where all night long people lined up at the door to be healed and to have demons cast out. Now He's back in town in verse 2 and the text tells us that the people are no longer standing at the door waiting on them to open it. It says they're inside the house now. Let me read it. ² *And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door.*

There are so many people now that are packed into Peter's house. I wonder what his mother-in-law is thinking now. There's nowhere else to sit. People are stacked up at the door. Craning their necks and trying to look in. They are trying to see what this healer is going to do next. The people are gathered. They're looking for another miracle there. They are looking for another healing, and who can blame them? But instead in verse 2, Jesus is doing something that is even more important than performing miracles. Let me read it to you.

² *And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.*

They came for a miracle; what they were getting is Jesus teaching and preaching the word. Now, what does that even mean? What do we know about the content? That's what's important about preaching, not the dynamics of how He preaches but what does He say? What is the content? Well, we know a couple of things about the content of Jesus' preaching. Number one, we know that He was proclaiming the scriptures. We know that Jesus was an expository preacher. He took the scripture and explained it. We know that from the end of the book of Luke when the resurrected Jesus was walking on the road to Emmaus with the disciples. And the Bible says that He started explaining Moses and the books of the law, and all of the prophets and

how those scriptures pointed to Him. So we know that He taught the scripture. The second thing we know is that He called people to repentance and to believe the Gospel. Chapter One opens up with Jesus preaching. What is He preaching? He is preaching to repent and believe. We have our model in Jesus. Robert Owens says the very first word of the gospel is “repentance.”

Since I’ve brought it up, let’s talk about what the Gospel is. This is what we believe at Hickory Grove: We believe the Bible teaches that God is a holy, loving, and good creator who created all of us in His image. You have dignity because God created you in His image. That dignity, however, has been disfigured by your own sin. Sin doesn’t just separate you from God; it makes it so that you are spiritually dead. You are not just far away from God, you are dead in sin. That is a significant problem. That sin not only makes you dead, but it is also an offense to God. God is angry at sin and He is wrathful. He is a just God who will punish all sinners, so that if you are sitting here this morning as a sinner without Christ, you are under the condemnation of God. It is not me who judges you. It is God.

But God is not just a judge, He is also merciful and gracious. He is loving and kind. And He gives us Jesus Christ. Jesus will live perfectly in a way that you and I can’t. He will go to the cross and—remember that wrath and judgment I mentioned—at the cross Jesus will take all the wrath of God. All the judgment falls on Jesus and the righteousness that He earned is given to anyone who believes. God raised Him from the dead on a Sunday. We worship on a Sunday because of that. It’s a declaration of victory for any person who will turn from sin and believe. Jesus preached repentance and belief in the Gospel. We preach something else, too. We know that Jesus proclaimed that He Himself was bringing in the Kingdom of God. You go and read the Gospel of John and you’ll see over and over and over the **I am** statement of Jesus. There is a certain amount of authority He brings when He claims to be the actual answer in the Kingdom of God.

Now, this is important for us because in the story the people came with their own ideas of what Jesus ought to be doing. People come to Christianity with

their understanding of what Jesus ought to do. They came looking for a miracle, but instead, Jesus made teaching the word His focus. Why is that? Why is that so important for us? Why must we be people who are focused on God's word? There are two good reasons. There are two ways God reveals Himself. One is called "general revelation." That is to say, God reveals Himself in nature. And there is "specific revelation." General revelation is that it's a beautiful March day, you go outside and the sun is shining. You see the trees are starting to bloom and you think, "there is a God." General revelation tells us the general knowledge. Specific revelation is something altogether different. Specific revelation is given to us in His word. God has given us His word so that we might know who He is, who we are, our need for Christ, and how we are supposed to live.

Brothers and sisters, at this cultural moment in society there is the great need of this hour. It is not entertainment at church, but God's word preached at church. The great need of the hour is for men and women who claim Christ as Lord to actually know what He says. The great need is to know the life-changing power of God's word, which is the power of salvation. Look, this book is not just something we stand on. I'm thankful for the slogan, that we stand on God's word. But this is something we open up and feed on. This feeds our souls.

This week, Connie is visiting her mom and dad in Mississippi. She flew out Thursday to the airport, which is an absolute nightmare. Have you been to the airport lately? Avoid it at all cost if you can. Normally Friday, when I'm off, she and I will spend that time together. But this Friday rolls around and she's not there. I don't know what to do with myself. So I'm walking around inside the house, outside the house. I'm filling up dog food, cleaning out things. I'm out in the carport and whistling and up the driveway come two Jehovah's Witnesses. I was glad to see them. I was like, "Hey, how are you guys doing? Come on over!" So they walked up, and we started talking. Pretty soon, they ask me, "Do you know that most people think that God doesn't answer prayer?" And I said, "Can you believe that?" And they asked me, "Do you believe God answers prayer?" I tell them that "God is good. He's sovereign

and I lift my prayers up on the merits of Jesus. He hears my prayers and I'm thankful for that." I gave them the whole adoration, confession, thankfulness and supplication way to pray. The A C T S. And then I said, "If that doesn't work, you can use the concentric circles starting in your home and going out. And then sometimes I'll just pray while I'm on a walk. I'll use The Lord's Prayer as a guide of how I'm praying." And then I said, "How can I pray for you guys?" And he literally said, "You know what, you just keep doing what you're doing" and left down the driveway.

Now I knew those things we mentioned because I've been in church with you guys. We need to have God's word hidden in our hearts. It's not just to have a conversation with someone who believes differently, it's to make sure we have a North star. We have something we're standing on in a world that is so muddled. We live in a world where things are not as they should be. We must be clear on our greatest priority, to know God. How well do you know God? How well do you know His word? Do you have The Ten Commandments hidden in your heart? Do you have the 23rd Psalm memorized? Do you know The Lord's Prayer? Have you been through the Sermon on the Mount? Can you articulate the Gospel of God? We must be clear on our greatest priority. Let me show you the second thing we learned from the passage. Number 2.

We must uncover our greatest need

What a great story this is. Let's just walk through it together and I'll just point out a few truths from verses 3-5. You join me there. ³ *And they came, We don't know who the they is.* ³ *And they came, bringing to him a paralytic.* The man that is paralyzed, he has four friends, one on either side of this stretcher, two poles with leather straps. He's laid down on that. They are carrying him to Jesus. They have heard that Jesus can heal. Jesus is the one who can do miracles. They are bringing him there, but verse four says everybody has already bunched up into the house. They're packed in; the door is covered up with people. There's no way they can get in to see Jesus. It's a flat-roofed home with stairs outside to get up. We know that Peter went up on top of the roof and was praying.

So verse 4 tells us when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they went up on the roof. They removed the roof above Him. The “Him” is Jesus preaching. That roof is made with planks and then through the planks you would put down reeds and grass and then cover it with a veneer of hardened mud. So when they start digging in the roof—Look, if I’m in my house, I can hear a squirrel running across the roof. Can you imagine that Jesus is teaching and some guys are on the roof tearing it apart? I mean, it’s breaking up whatever concentration everybody in the room has as they’re listening to Jesus!

So the four friends tear the roof open and verse 4 says that once they get it wide enough, they now have some straps or ropes or whatever and they are lowering this man on a pallet down in front of Jesus. That’s a hard thing to do. I mean, they could have dumped him out on the floor. Have you ever been to the cemetery and watched the casket automatically go down slowly? The undertaker drops it down slowly. There’s a mechanized way of letting it come down. I have preached a funeral before in my very first church and have had four guys on either side of the coffin with the slide ropes under it and they had to lower the casket down. It’s hard to keep it even. Thank the Lord, we didn’t dump that casket open. I mean, how did they do this?

So they dropped the man down in front of Jesus in verses 4 and 5. And verse 5 says, ⁵*And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”* Those guys are looking down through that hole they dug and they believed. Jesus turns to the man laid on that cot and says, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Let’s talk about a couple of things here. Let’s talk about the friends first. What about those guys? What kind of faith did they have? A lot of times I’ll hear preachers preach this passage and talk about the faith of their friends, and that this is about courageous faith. And I think there is some truth to that, like it’s remarkable. Their faith is remarkable. They have this confidence. They think Jesus can heal their friend. They have **compassionate** faith. They could have been with the crowd, but instead, they stayed back with their friend who

is paralyzed. They have **creative** faith. They found out they couldn't get to Jesus so they dug a hole. They demolished the house. Those guys are left nameless, but in verses 3 and 4 there are six verbs stacked on top of one another. They **came**, they **brought** with them their friend, they **carried** this man. They **removed**, they **dug** or unroofed the roof. They **let** him down. You know, I started thinking, "faith" is a noun. The faith once and for all delivered to the Saints. If you go on our website, you can find our Statement of Faith. It is the Baptist Faith and Message, the New Hampshire Confession. We have the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed. You can find the Danvers statement. You can find the Nashville statement. We have all of these things that sort of help identify our faith.

Faith is a noun, but it lives as a verb. It's action. Brothers and sisters, if there is no *verb* faith, can there really be a *noun* faith?

I'd love to stay and talk about that, but let's look back at Jesus in verse 5. Look at the tender compassion of Jesus. In verse 5. ⁵ *And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."* So beautiful. "Son, your sins are forgiven." Your translation might even say, "child." There is affection there. You have foreshadowing there with Jesus calling this paralytic His son. Here's foreshadowing of the doctrine of adoption. That God in Heaven adopts us as His children on the merits of Jesus Christ. That we were once slaves to sin but we have been made children of God. Then Jesus does something that confounds everybody there. In verse 5 He says, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Now they have brought this poor guy to Jesus because he obviously had the worst problem you could have. We don't know what happened to him. He could have fallen off a roof or broken his back or he could have been born like that. We don't know what happened to him. Obviously he has a problem, but Jesus fixes a problem that they didn't even know existed. It's a terrible condition that this man had of being paralyzed. But his paralysis got him to Jesus. JC Ryle, the great Bishop of Liverpool 150 years ago, JC Ryle said that this passage shows us that sometimes affliction may prove to be a blessing to

your soul. Sometimes God afflicts to get us to Himself. Isn't that what the Psalmist said in Psalm 119:71? *It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.*

Sometimes the pain of life takes us to the mercy of God. His friends brought him to Jesus so that Jesus would *heal* him. They didn't know that Jesus was gonna save him. Jesus says, "son, your sins are forgiven." Now this is important. This is not just a statement of fact. This is Jesus creating a condition.

A little while ago I came up here and offered up a prayer of confession, and part of the confession is confessing our sins and stating forgiveness. I am stating what God has done. I don't have any authority. I can't make it happen. I'm telling you, the finished work of Christ, what He has done for you in confession and forgiveness. I'm just repeating what I know. Right here, that's not what Jesus is doing. Here is Jesus actually *doing* the forgiving. As the word made flesh, He creates what He commands. And as He teaches the crowd, there are worse things in life than being crippled. Before He ever gets to the man's problem, He goes right to his deepest need. Look, our deepest need is not whatever ailment we have; whatever bruising our souls have taken. Our deepest need is to be forgiven by God. Our sin has so blackened our hearts and destroyed who we were meant to be. His justice calls for purity that we don't have. Our deepest need is to go to the cross of Jesus and there find the mercy of God. Look, I'm not denying that you have needs today. We all have needs. But the most basic need you have is the forgiveness of God that can be yours in Christ. Have you come to Him in repentance and faith? Have you trusted that God has forgiven you by His own grace and mercy? Because God is good, there are some things we must do. We must be clear on our greatest priority. We must uncover our greatest need. Let me give you a third. Let's keep pushing on this. Number 3.

We must take hold of the greatest truth

We must take hold of the greatest truth. In verses 6-10, there's a lot that happens in this passage. Let's start with the scribes in verses 6 and 7. Notice

the scribes. The text says now some scribes were there. Scribes are the religious men. They know the Bible. They've written it down, hence the word "scribe." ⁶ *Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,* ⁷ *"Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

We already know there's a war coming with the scribes. Because the people said Jesus teaches not like the scribes. Jesus teaches with authority. The scribes show up to see how this man does actually teach. Described here, they hear Jesus, instead of healing the man, Jesus says, "your sins are forgiven." And look at the things that they question in verses 6 and 7. There are a couple of things to notice in verses 6 and 7. The first one is a setup. There's a setup. Why does this man speak like that? It's the setup to let us know that Mark is going to tell us why, because He is the very son of God. It's a setup. And then there's some foreshadowing that the scribes say He's blaspheming. That's a foreshadowing to Chapter 14, when Jesus will be nailed to the cross and the major accusation is that He's a blasphemer. And then there's irony. Because the scribes say, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" It's a rhetorical question with an obvious answer, and the obvious answer is that nobody can do it but God.

They didn't know that they were actually declaring more truth than they would ever know. They were declaring that, yes, Jesus is God. It's like when Pilate put that plaque over Jesus' head that said "Jesus Christ, the king of the Jews." He preached more gospel than he ever knew. Don't let that be you as a longtime churchgoer. Jesus speaks in verses 8-10. And when He does, the veil is being lifted up from the power of Jesus. This isn't just a man with a miracle-working power. Let me read it and point out a couple of things. But let us know that this is the second person of the Trinity. ⁸ *And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts?"* ⁹ *Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?* ¹⁰ *But that you may know that the Son of Man has*

authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹ “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”

There are a couple of things we have here. One, we see the omniscience of Jesus. He knows, doesn't He? Those scribes didn't say it out loud. They thought in their hearts and Jesus looked right into them. He knows. He knows the motivations of our hearts.

We also see the omnipotence in verses 10 and 11 that He actually does heal the paralytic. I mean, He tells that man to get up and walk, and in verse 12, he gets up and walks. He's been laying on that cot who knows how long? I can't even do that in the morning. When I've been laying in bed for 6 or 7 hours sleeping, I don't get up like that guy did. There's no atrophy in his muscles. He's healed completely. I live in an old house with a wood floor, and when I walk down the hall the floor is creaking and so are my joints. It's like a symphony. Not this guy; he gets right up out of bed. Jesus heals him completely. That's the omnipotence of Jesus.

And then you see the sovereignty of Jesus in verse 10. Here it comes. ¹⁰ *But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*". Jesus reaches over into the Old Testament to Daniel Chapter 7. It's the description of the One coming who will be the deliverer, the son of man. When you read the New Testament, there are three titles that are primary for Jesus. The most popular is "Lord." Then you'll see "Christ" is second, and the third in line is "the son of man." It is used 80 times in the New Testament and 78 times of them are Jesus talking about Himself, the son of man. It actually is who He says He is. If that's the case, then it runs me right into my fourth point. I'll try to bring it home with Number 4. If that's the case, if He actually is the son of God, if He is who He said He is, then number 4...

We must submit to His great authority

Then we must submit to His great authority. I want to go back and look at why. Why did Jesus heal the paralytic? Is it because He felt sorry for him? Join me there in verse 9. Jesus says, ⁹ *Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your*

*sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." It's right there in verse 10. The purpose of the physical healing of the man who was paralyzed was to show that Jesus actually has the authority to forgive sin. You see, He did what they *could* see to confirm that He can do what they *cannot* see. And the secret, the deepest pain, the most shameful problems, those things that can't be seen, they can be forgiven by Jesus. Today, Jesus will forgive but we must yield to His great authority as Lord. We've come to the cross and we trust what He has done for us. Christ will take and heal your soul.*

Look, because God is good there are things we must do. We must be clear on our greatest priority. We must uncover our greatest need, forgiveness. We must take hold of the greatest truth, that Jesus is the forgiver, the son of God. We must submit to the great authority that Christ is Lord, and I'll just give you one more point. Number 5.

We must join the greatest celebration

We must join the greatest celebration. I'll just close it at verse 12. ¹² *And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"*

So they've made a hole in the roof and now this man leaves this crowded house. They've gotten out of the doorway. He is walking out with his mat in his hand. And the text says that they were all amazed and finally people speak. Nobody's spoken yet in 12 verses. Nobody has said a word except Jesus. And here in verse 12, they are amazed. They glorified God. They said "we never saw anything like this." We must join the greatest celebration, giving glory to God and marveling at his saving power. And the people respond by rejoicing in the love and the forgiveness and the power and the restoration and the healing that God gives His people in Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, this world is not as it should be. But God is. And I want you to trust Him in Jesus. Join me as we close together in a word of prayer.

(Pastor prays)