



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Mark 2:1-12 Jesus heals a paralysed man (6 June)

This is the first of a series of five controversies (Mark 2:1 - 3:6) which arise as the various Jewish authorities respond to Jesus' mighty words and deeds. The issues create tension and conclude with the very first plot against Jesus.

Jesus heals a man in response to faith – the faith of the friends who brought him – but whilst they are looking just for physical healing, Jesus discerns a spiritual dimension to the man's needs. In both forgiving his sin and healing his paralysis, Jesus brings wholeness to him. Jesus performs the mighty deed so that all may know that he not only has the authority to forgive sins, but also 'wills' to do so (see 1:40). He does two impossible things, doing what only God can do; his authority reveals the astonishing extent to which God is present on earth, in him.

Some teachers of the law are outraged when Jesus claims that he has authority to forgive sins; surely only God can forgive sins, and he dwells in heaven. It is the first time that Jesus has come into direct conflict with members of the religious establishment. By contrast, the man and the onlookers are full of praise to God for what Jesus has done.

1. Tell the story through the eyes of the paralysed man.
2. What do the religious leaders find shocking about what Jesus does?
3. How far does the gospel message concern both forgiveness and healing?
4. How would you feel if you were seeking physical healing, and Jesus started talking about forgiving your sins?
5. How important was the role of the people who brought the paralysed man to Jesus? What are some practical ways we might follow their example?
6. Read John 9:1-3 and Luke 13:1-5. What does Jesus imply here about the connection between sin and sickness?
7. How did Jesus' words and actions answer the questions raised in the minds of the teachers of the law?
8. What does Jesus think is our biggest need?
9. Jesus raised conflict and controversy in the religious community, especially with the religious leaders. What are ways he might do this today?