

Weekly Bible Study for Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

Bible Month #1 "Identity" by Phillip Dixon with contribution from Kent Brower

Pray together and read slowly and carefully Mark 2: 1-12. Highlight words or phrases that you would like to explore in greater depth with one another.

Jesus forgives the paralytic's sins, then heals him. The religious elite are outraged: 'who can forgive sins except God alone?' Jesus' response is telling. The healing confirms that he has that authority. Once again, ironically, Jesus' opponents offer a true confession. Yes – forgiveness of sins is God's prerogative. Jesus forgives this man's sins. The conclusion is self-evident.

Q1. We read in verse 2 that "so many gathered there was no room left" what is the biggest Christian event you have ever attended; how did it feel to be surrounded by so many?

Q2. What is the Word that you think Jesus may be preaching (see chapter 1:15)?

The healing of the paralytic man and the forgiveness of his sins are inter-linked in this account. His friends have not brought him to Jesus to have his sins forgiven but to be healed, yet the very act of coming to Jesus is to invite forgiveness and to heal the dis-ease.

Q3. We see many instances in the gospels of the courage and faith of those who come to Jesus seeking healing (verse 5). The digging out of the roof and the lowering on the mat were extreme actions of confident and determined men who dearly love the one suffering. Have you ever seen an expression of Christian confidence and determination?

Verse 7 contains a beautiful irony about who Jesus is? Mark already knows, as his opening verse states "Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1) and the following verses, 8-10, contain a one-sided dialogue in which Jesus poses an important but puzzling question in verse 9. Surely the answer is it is "easier" to forgive sins rather than physically heal because one is more visible to see the result than the other. If Jesus were not the Son of God then he would be, as the teachers of the law say, committing blasphemy.

Q4. Verse 10 Jesus refers to himself as "the Son of Man" and one who has "the authority" with a clear reference to Daniel 7:13. How well do we (as the church) help new believers (or old) to understand these terms and references that clearly for Jesus were important to make?

The final verse has the man, no longer a paralytic, fully restored in both health and in relation to the forgiveness of sins, walking (perhaps jumping) out of the room in the full view of all. They were all utterly amazed -gobsmacked in our colloquial English- and they praised God saying, "we have never seen anything like this." When Jesus tells us "you will do greater things than these" he makes it clear that we must believe in Him (see John 14:12-14). As we conclude, bring to mind those who need so much to come to Jesus today to receive forgiveness and healing and receive God's restoration.