

Mark 2:1-12
A Healer and More
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Every town has their local celebrities. My home town of Estes Park has [cowboy Brad](#). He plays his guitar and sings folk songs and western music. He has a white cowboy hat, a big belt buckle, flowing blonde hair, and is about 50. Cowboy Brad can draw quite a crowd of around one to two-hundred people. Cowboy Brad might not sound very famous but two hundred people isn't bad in Estes.

Now what if I were to say the name "[Angie Miller](#)"? Maybe some of you recognize her name from the American Idol television show. And the rest of you don't recognize her name because you spend your time in better ways. Angie Miller came in third place on a nationally televised music competition called American Idol. This is big news for us in New England because Angie Miller is from Beverly Massachusetts. I drove through Beverly when she was on the show and there was a banner hanging across the road. It welcomed her home and declared May 4th 2013 "Angie Miller Day." When she came home to sing she didn't draw a hundred people, she drew thousands. The town of Beverly had to issue parking instructions for those coming in to see her perform.

Cowboy Brad and Angie Miller are musicians who attract lots of people to come see them. Now imagine someone from New England is able to perform miracles. This person has the power to cure cancer by simply saying "be clean." I bet that person would draw not hundreds, or thousands, but tens of thousands, if not millions. This is the type of popularity Jesus experienced because he could perform miracles. He grew up in Nazareth of Galilee, which is pretty much like Lynn Massachusetts. There was a saying "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Jesus travels up to Capernaum off the sea of Galilee—pretty much Gloucester. But along the way he runs into a man afflicted with leprosy.

Leprosy is a skin and nervous system disease we now call Hansen's disease. Although it's curable today, leprosy still afflicts thousands of people every year. Back in Jesus' day there was no cure and these lepers had no hope. But word gets out that Jesus has the power to cast out demons and cure the sick. So the incurable leper comes to see Jesus. And Jesus heals him—he heals the leper.

And Jesus only command is to not tell anyone. But the leper ignores Jesus and tells everyone. And because he tells everyone Jesus becomes so famous he can't openly enter towns. So when he arrives at Capernaum and begins to teach in a house it quickly fills up. But there is another sick man who needs to get in to see Jesus but is unable. He wants to experience the healing power of Christ but can't reach him. So four men decide to do something drastic to get him in to see Jesus. Let's read about it in Mark 2:1-12 (read Mark 2:1-12).

Why do the four men bring the paralytic to see Jesus? What do they see in Jesus that causes them to tear apart a roof?

Jesus is a healer for the hurting. (v. 1-5)

Jesus is a healer for the hurting. In Mark chapter one Jesus heals the sick and casts out demons. As I already said Jesus also heals a man with leprosy. In our passage, Mark 2:1-12, Jesus heals a paralytic. A paralytic is

someone who is paralyzed. This man is so paralyzed four men have to carry him on a “bed.” This “bed” that he’s confined too is more like a “stretcher” or “mat.” His “bed” is not a place of comfort, but a place of long suffering. And so he has come to Jesus for healing. Because he’s heard Jesus is a healer for the hurting. And Jesus does not turn him away.

Last time Jesus healed the leper it caused him all sorts of trouble, so why heal this guy? Why doesn’t Jesus turn him away? Healing is a sign of the kingdom of God. We’ve just begun a sermon series on the kingdom of God. For many of you perhaps the kingdom of God is a foreign concept. You don’t know what the kingdom of God is or why it’s important. As we’ll see throughout Mark the Kingdom of God is partly about healing. Pastor Dana taught us last week that the kingdom of God comes in three ways. First, through preaching; second, through exorcisms; and third, through healings. Last week we saw how Jesus has the authority to cast out demons. This week we will see how Jesus has the authority to heal and forgive.

But before Jesus performs the miracle he is actually preaching. Mark 2:2 says, “And he was preaching the word to them.” Mark 1:15 shares Jesus preached, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Jesus is preaching the good news about his own arrival. He is calling on people to repent and believe in him. He is preaching the kingdom of grace has come. And this kingdom, Christ’s kingdom, brings healing. Healing is a sign of the kingdom of God.

So how does Jesus respond to the paralytic? What does Jesus do when the paralytic is lowered through the roof? Jesus invites the hurting to come and be healed. Jesus wants this paralytic to receive physical and spiritual wellbeing. But notice the importance of faith in this story. Jesus could have stopped his preaching when the four men came to the door. He could have stopped the meeting and healed the paralytic but he didn’t. The text says “when Jesus saw their faith” then he forgives. This passage is all about “seeing” and “believing.” Jesus “sees” their “faith” and only then forgives the man. The Pharisees can’t “see” anything because their hearts are evil (Matt 9:4). And when the crowds “see” Jesus heal the paralytic, they praise God (Mark 2:12). So since Jesus wants to “see” their faith he continues to preach.

They climb up on the roof and begin to dig out a hole. Roofs back then were made of mud, thatch, and tiles. So you can imagine as Jesus is preaching chunks of mud and clay are falling. You would think this is a good time for Jesus to stop and heal the guy. But he doesn’t until the paralytic is lowered down right in front of him. Jesus waits until the paralytic has come all the way to him, till they are face to face. Jesus invites the hurting to come and be healed. Like the paralytic he wants to see our faith too. This doesn’t mean the more faith we have the healthier we’ll be. But it does mean God wants to grow us as we trust Jesus.

But does God heal like this today? Does he still provide supernatural healing now? God is still healing the sick and the hurting today. Some churches today offer healing through prayer. Sometimes God chooses to heal and sometimes he doesn’t. When I worked in aquarium maintenance my boss liked to tell me a story. He said doctors diagnosed his wife’s grandmother with breast cancer in her 30s. But when they opened her up they found the cancer everywhere. So they closed her back up and told her to go home and die. Her skin turned black and she was dying. Then a friend invited her to go with her to church. At that church the pastor prayed for healing. Last week she celebrated her 94th birthday.

God advances his kingdom supernaturally, but also through science. One of my mentors lead a missions trip to Honduras. And one of the girls came down with an infection. They were miles from anywhere so it could

have gotten bad. But one of the students brought antibiotics on a whim. My mentor did not tell them to pack antibiotics. And yet God nudged the student to bring them anyway. Those antibiotics were exactly what the sick girl needed and she got better. Notice how God heals and advances his kingdom in various ways. In one he does so supernaturally but the other wasn't any less special. God is still healing the sick and the hurting today.

But if all we see is the healing in this story we actually miss the main point. What is this story trying to tell us about Jesus?

Jesus is more than just a healer for the hurting. (v. 6-7)

Jesus is more than just a healer for the hurting. The paralytic comes to Jesus and instead of healing him Jesus does something else. Jesus says "My son, your sins are forgiven." And the scribes, the religious leaders, go nuts because only God can forgive sins. This man couldn't possibly be God because that doesn't make sense. No! He's not God and so that means he's actually a "blasphemer." Blasphemy is "The act of cursing or slandering the name of God."¹ That's a serious charge because they punished it with the death penalty. Their mistake is they've already decided who Jesus. They are ignoring what Jesus says about himself. And you know what? They thought they had every right to tell Jesus who he is. Because they felt like Jesus had wronged and hurt them. Remember how Jesus healed the leper? Jesus told the leper to go and show himself to the priests and religious leaders. He was supposed to go and make an offering for his cleansing as the law commanded. And this offering was supposed to be a "proof" to the priests. But the leper disobeys Jesus and doesn't present himself to the priests. And so no wonder the religious leaders are angry at Jesus. They hear about Jesus healing a leper but the leper never shows up. It's as if Jesus is disrespecting them by not presenting the leper. They're so upset they can't consider that maybe Jesus is speaking truth. They can't believe that maybe Jesus is more than a man.

Do we make this same mistake today? Can we fall into the same trap as the religious leaders? It's easy to decide who Jesus is without asking Jesus. I imagine when you meet someone new you like to introduce yourself. You walk up to them, share your name, shake their hand, and tell them who you are. But what if you walked up to someone and they started telling you who you are? What if you were about to say "Hi my name is Jonathan"? And they say, "Hi, your name is Pete. You're a plumber and you love sports." I wouldn't like that very much and neither would you. But so often that is what we do to Jesus.

We decide who Jesus is before discovering who Jesus is in his word. We create an idea of Jesus in our hearts and he's usually a nice Caucasian male. The Jesus painting by [Sallman Warner](#) used to hang in my home church.² In our youth room we still have the tougher cooler version by [Richard Hook](#).³ I remember in my teens seeing a "Jesus is my boyfriend" shirt for girls. But none of these are the pictures Jesus paints of himself. He comes preaching the word, casting out demons, and healing lepers. He comes calling out the Scribes and rebuking hypocrites. He is not just a man; but God in the flesh and we should fall down and worship him.

¹ Henry L. Carrigan Jr., "Blasphemy," ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 191.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warner_Sallman

³ http://jesus-story.net/images/head-of-christ-Richard_Hook.jpg

It's easy to decide who Jesus is without asking Jesus. But maybe like the Scribes you feel right in doing just that. Maybe like the religious leaders Jesus has "disrespected" or "offended" you. Maybe a Church, Christian, or religious organization has hurt you. So you've rightfully decided that Jesus is not God and that's that. Jesus, you're a teacher, a good man, and a healer. You have amazing abilities but you're not God. But to tell Jesus who he is, is to ignore what Jesus says. When Jesus says "My son, your sins are forgiven" he's introducing himself as God. As C.S. Lewis describes it this means Jesus is either a lunatic, liar, or Lord.⁴ He is a crazy lunatic if he thinks he's God and not. He is a liar if he's telling people he's God and not. Or he is Lord because he's telling the truth. Jesus doesn't let us think of him as a nice guy or good man. Jesus introduces himself as God and we can worship or flee. It's easy to decide who Jesus is without asking Jesus.

So if Jesus is more than a man what is he? Who is Jesus claiming to be? Jesus is a healer for the hurting and a savior for the sinful. (v. 8-12)

Jesus is a savior for the sinful.

When Jesus says to the paralytic "your sins are forgiven" he's the one forgiving him. It's not that Jesus says your sins are forgiven in some abstract way. Instead, Jesus is actually forgiving the man. My professor [Dr. Stephen Witmer](#) said this is like a wedding pronouncement. I had the honor of officiating at one of my best friend's weddings. The most exciting part of this wedding for me was the pronouncement. That was the moment when I actually married the bride and groom. When I say "I pronounce you husband and wife" that's when they become married. The words I speak actually cause a change in their legal status from single to married. Jesus is doing the same thing when he says, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Jesus is pronouncing the paralytic's sins "forgiven." It's like a judge in a courtroom who says, "I declare you not guilty" His words change the legal status of the defendant to that of "not guilty." Jesus does this same thing for us who trust in him alone. He declares us "not guilty" and we are forgiven. Jesus is a savior for the sinful.

But isn't there something strange about this? Does Jesus have the right to forgive this man? Jesus has the power to forgive sins. My friend Michael explains it like this. Imagine if when we are singing, one of our elders walks up front. Let's say Matt comes up front and walks up to Steve and Tom who are singing. Then Matt punches Steve in his white Santa Clause beard. And you know he punched hard because Matt has a shaved head and mustache. And so Steve has to stop singing because he just got punched in the face. But then Tom turns to Matt and says, "I forgive you." Something tells me Steve wouldn't like this very much. Tom actually can't forgive Matt for his sins unless Tom is God. But Jesus actually can forgive this man, as strange as it is, because he is God. Jesus has the power to forgive sins.

So why does Jesus heal the paralytic? Why not just forgive his sins and move on? Jesus heals the hurting to show he saves the sinful. Jesus heals the sick to reveal he saves souls. Jesus asks which is easier to do—heal or forgive sins. Both of them are hard to do. Forgiving sins is abstract but Jesus makes it concrete. Jesus heals the paralytic to prove he can forgive sins. Verses 10-11 say, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." And that's when the paralytic picks up his bed and walks out. By healing him Jesus reveals he is the messiah. He is the

⁴ <http://www.josh.org/liar-lunatic-or-lord-2/>

“Son of Man” who forgives sins (Dan 7:13-14). The kingdom of God brings healing for the hurting. But more importantly it brings salvation for the sinful. Jesus heals the hurting to show he saves the sinful.

So where should we go from here? What does this mean for you and me? Jesus is a healer for the hurting and a savior for the sinful. I ask Jesus to heal and help me and those around me all the time. Jesus wants us to call upon him as the healer for the hurting. But Jesus is a two-part package. He came to heal but his ultimate mission is to forgive. He came to restore us spiritually who have a broken relationship with God. He came to make right all the wrongs we’ve done to each other and him. So if you’ve never thought of Jesus as you’re savior, I invite you to do so. And if you’re a Christian, I invite you to worship God differently. Worship Jesus the way he presents himself. Come and fall at the feet of the savior of your sins. Jesus has forgiven us and this grace means everything. Jesus is a healer for the hurting and a savior for the sinful.

We opened by talking about the musician Angie Miller and her ability to draw crowds. What you might not know is that even though she is a singer she has trouble hearing. She has lost 40 percent of her hearing in one ear and 20 percent in the other. She can’t hear her surroundings very well but she can hear herself sing.⁵ And when she does sing she uses her voice to praise God because she is a Christian. Her father is the pastor of a church plant in Salem called Remix.⁶ She has led worship there and sang at some of the churches in the area. I imagine like any of us in her position she would like God to heal her ears. But when she was on American Idol she didn’t sing about physical healing. She sang about spiritual healing through Christ Jesus. When she was on American Idol she sang a song called *Love Came Down*. The song is about Jesus coming down and rescuing us. The chorus says “Love came down and rescued me.” “Love came down and set me free.”⁷ We share about Jesus because he has saved us from our sins. Jesus is a healer for the hurting and a savior for the sinful. But he’s not just a healer, a teacher, or even a good man. He is God in the flesh and has the power to forgive sins. We can come to him asking for healing and help. But we can also come asking for forgiveness and grace. There is no better healer or savior than Christ Jesus. Jesus is a healer for the hurting and a savior for the sinful.

⁵ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angie_Miller_\(American_singer\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angie_Miller_(American_singer))

⁶ <http://remixsalem.org/the-team/>

⁷ <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/karijobe/lovecamedown.html>