



**Sermon Notes: Steve Stanis,  
“The Good News of Forgiveness”**

**16 February 2025**

**Readings: Mark 2:1-17; Psalm 32:1-5, Ephesians 4:29-32**

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**Introduction**

Mark 2 is the last in a series of healing stories and the first of five controversies for Jesus with the religious leaders. The theme today is Jesus’ Messianic authority, in this case; the authority to forgive sins.

I need to begin by defining the term ‘sin’ because in 2025, this vocabulary divides us from the world and yet it’s meaning is core to our belief.

We have been created to love and worship God.

The core issue is when we try to worship something other than God; when we put something else in God’s place. It can be good things or bad things, but God-substitutes will always fail us.

We’ve been created for a relationship with God; to live with Him at the centre of our lives. That is why the Christian message is called “good news,” because God loves us and wants us in our right relationship with Him. The only reason *any* of us can come to God is because He loves us. This is the message Jesus brought to Earth, and this is what he is explaining in this miracle.

**The Good News of Forgiveness:**

To be in a right relationship with God, we need forgiveness for substituting other securities in our lives for God. In this way, forgiveness is at the very heart of the gospel. It is the central theme of Jesus’ ministry and the cornerstone of God’s relationship with humanity.

Today, we are looking at (Mark 2:1-17) ‘The Good News of Forgiveness’. We will also reflect on (Psalm 32:1-5) and (Ephesians 4:29-32) to understand the joy, freedom, and restoration that forgiveness brings. I pray when you leave today you will think afresh about the profound implications of forgiveness in our daily lives and the practical ways we can embrace it.

**The Context of Mark 2:**

(Mark 2) begins with Jesus returning to Capernaum. The text tells us, “*The news spread that He was at home*” (Mark 2:1). This small note speaks volumes.

Jesus, who often had “*nowhere to lay His head*” (Matthew 8:20), is portrayed here as having a home base. Whatever His connection with the place, it was no secret to the people of the village. They knew *exactly* where to find Him. What stands out, is how quickly the news of His presence spreads and how people flock to Him.

The house becomes so crowded that there is no room, not even at the door. Imagine the scene: people spilling out into the street, desperate to hear His words. Why?

Jesus’ message was unlike anything they had ever heard. Some things never change! The people were longing to hear Jesus speak, to witness miracles, and to experience hope.

This scene reflects the hunger of the human soul for something greater, which many fill with a “god-substitute”.

The Word that Jesus preached, was not just a message but an invitation to a transformed life. Jesus proclaimed the arrival of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom that offers freedom, healing, and, most importantly, forgiveness. In our lives, we often find ourselves searching for

something to fill the void in our hearts. Like the crowd in Capernaum, we yearn for a word of hope. The Good News of forgiveness is that Jesus offers us a way to be reconciled with God and with others, breaking the chains of guilt, shame, and bitterness.

**Faith in Action:**

Mark then introduces us to a paralytic man and his four friends. Unable to get through the crowd, they climb onto the roof, remove part of it, and lower their friend down to Jesus. This act is both desperate and audacious. It's a tangible expression of their faith—a faith that Jesus “saw” (Mark 2:5). The faith of these men is alive and active.

They believe Jesus can heal their friend, and they will stop at nothing to bring him into His presence. This is active and visible faith. These four friends believe in the authority of Jesus and do something about it. This is a critical point: faith is not merely intellectual assent; it is visible in our actions.

James later writes, *“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead”* (James 2:17). Likewise, when we truly believe in the authority of Jesus, and the power of forgiveness, it transforms the way we live. We step out in faith, seek reconciliation, and extend grace to others.

**Forgiveness Before Healing:**

No-one expected Jesus to bring spiritual healing. The man came for physical healing, and his friends went to great lengths to make it happen.

(Verse 4) *“Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on”*. But Jesus addresses a deeper need first: the man's spiritual condition.

Jesus' response is remarkable. He sees their faith and declares, *“Son, your sins are forgiven.”*

This statement shifts the focus from physical healing, which is temporary, to spiritual restoration.

For Jesus, forgiveness, the restoration of a broken relationship with God, is the greater miracle because it is eternal. This revelation is the profound purpose of Jesus' mission. This speaks of the authority of Jesus. Not just any authority, but *“authority to forgive.”* And not just authority to forgive, but authority to forgive *“on earth.”*

These are the key phrases to bear in mind here.

Authority, Mark is telling us, is about releasing people from bondage and *“letting them go.”* It's a *“present”* reality, not just a hope for the future. *“Authority”* is not just a matter of hierarchy or control. It's a profoundly *“spiritual”* issue. *“All authority,”* Jesus tells His disciples at the end of Matthew's Gospel, *“is given to Me in heaven and on earth”* (Matthew 28:18). And He proves it in this passage not only by forgiving and restoring the paralytic's spiritual condition, but by restoring Him to full physical health. This transforming work is a sign of the kingdom now, as it is in heaven.

**The Authority of Jesus:**

The scribes present in the room are outraged.

They think to themselves, “*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” (Verse 7). Their question is valid. In Jewish thought, forgiveness is God’s prerogative. By claiming to forgive sins, Jesus is making an audacious claim about His identity. He is not just a teacher or a healer; He is God in the flesh.

To prove His authority, Jesus asks, (Verse 9) “*Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ (which cannot be seen) or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat, and walk?’*” (which can be seen). Then, in a stunning display of power, He tells the man to rise. The man does, to the amazement of everyone present.

This dual act—healing and forgiveness—demonstrates that Jesus has authority both in the spiritual realm and on earth. It is a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, where death and sickness will be no more. In Verse 10, Jesus refers to Himself as ‘*The Son of Man*’.

The most important background for this title is (Daniel 7:13–14), where an exalted messianic figure, one like a human being, comes before the Ancient of Days, that is, God Himself, and is given authority, glory, sovereign power, and an eternal kingdom.

All the nations of the world worship him.

*‘Behold, with the clouds of heaven  
there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him.  
And to him was given dominion  
and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;  
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one  
that shall not be destroyed.’*

The Son of Man is not merely a humble reference to Jesus’s humanity. It is a powerful statement of Jesus ‘*authority*.’

**Forgiveness in the Psalms:**

This theme of forgiveness is echoed throughout Scripture. Psalm 32:1-5 provides a beautiful picture of the blessing of being forgiven:

*“Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*

*Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit” Psalm 32:1-2.*

The psalmist reflects on the agony of seeking God-substitutes: “*When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long*” (Psalm 32:3). A broken relationship with God affects our whole being. But when we confess, God is faithful to forgive and restore us.

The psalm ends with a celebration of this truth: “*You forgave the guilt of my sin*” (Psalm 32:5).

**Living Out Forgiveness:**

We now turn our attention to Verses 13-17.

Levi is a tax collector. Whether working for Herod or the Romans, tax collectors were despised by the Jewish population, both because of their reputation for dishonesty and their collusion with the Roman authorities. The Romans leased out the rights to collect taxes to the highest bidder; a system that was full of corruption.

Jesus's call to Levi to *"Follow me" is a call to discipleship, just as Jesus called Simon and Andrew* (1:16), and James and John (1:18). It would have been viewed as shocking by the religious establishment that Jesus would choose a disciple from such a despised profession.

Common fishermen were bad enough, but a tax collector was unthinkable! Just as the two sets of brothers left everything to follow Jesus, so Levi immediately gets up and leaves behind his lucrative business. Jesus then goes to eat at Levi's house. The religious leaders are horrified. Jesus hears the questions of the religious leaders and responds, *'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'*

The religious leaders do not have eyes to see or ears to hear. By contrast, the tax collectors and lowly acknowledge their spiritual need.

The first step in receiving God's gift of salvation is to acknowledge our need for God's grace.

Jesus clearly warned that God will not forgive us if we do not forgive others.

It's not that we earn God's forgiveness by forgiving; instead, God expects forgiven people to forgive. When we have received forgiveness, we are called to extend it to others.

Paul writes in (Ephesians 4:29-32):

*"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths,*

*but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."*

This passage challenges us to embody the forgiveness we have received. Like Jesus, forgiveness requires humility and sacrifice. It often means letting go of pride, resentment, and the desire for revenge. As Paul urged the Ephesians, it calls us to let go of bitterness and malice, to speak words that build each other up, and to forgive as Christ forgave us.

This is not easy. Forgiveness often feels impossible, especially when we have been deeply hurt.

But it is the way of the Kingdom.

**So how do we do this?**

**1. Recognise the God-substitutes in your life:**

Like the psalmist, we must search our hearts.

This requires humility and honesty, but it leads to freedom and restoration.

**2. Forgive Others:**

Reflect on relationships where bitterness or anger has taken root. Ask God for the grace to forgive, remembering how much you have been forgiven.

**3. Be a Peacemaker:**

In your words and actions, strive to build others up.

Speak life into your relationships and communities.

Cultivate a spirit of compassion.

**4. Act in Faith:**

Like the friends of the paralytic, let your faith be visible.

Step out in boldness to bring others to Jesus, trusting in His power to heal and forgive.

Corrie Ten Boom said, *“Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred.”*

Can I add as a final comment; forgiveness is very different from reconciliation. It’s possible to forgive someone without offering immediate reconciliation. It’s possible for forgiveness to occur in the context of one’s relationship with God apart from contact with the offender. Personal, safe boundaries are vital.

**Conclusion:**

Forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel. It is the foundation of our relationship with God and the key to living in harmony with others.

Through the story of the paralytic, we see that forgiveness is not just a theological concept but a life-changing reality.

Jesus’ authority to forgive offers us freedom, joy, and restoration with God.

Forgiveness is a gift, freely given but costly to receive.

It cost Jesus His life, and it requires us to lay down our pride and embrace humility.

Yet, in doing so, we find the true freedom that only He can offer.

At KAC, I pray we will be a people marked by forgiveness, reflecting the heart of our Saviour to a world in need.

Amen