

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 6/27/04 Brad Brandt

Mark 2:1-12 "What Did You Expect?" **

Main Idea: People can have different, even misguided expectations when they come to Jesus. Such was the case in Mark 2:1-12, where we see three examples.

I. There are the expectations of the curious (1-2).

A. The crowd came to see miracles (1).

B. Jesus gave them what they really needed, the word (2).

II. There are the expectations of the concerned (3-5).

A. Some men brought a paralytic to Jesus (3-4).

1. They carried their friend.

2. They faced obstacles.

3. They cut through the roof.

4. They placed their friend before Jesus.

B. Jesus rewarded their efforts (5).

1. He saw the men's faith.

2. He declared the man forgiven.

III. There are the expectations of the critic (6-12).

A. Some teachers disapproved of Jesus (6-7).

1. They didn't like what He said.

2. They felt threatened by the implications.

B. Jesus exposed the critics (8-10).

1. He revealed their thoughts (8).

2. He revealed His authority (9-10).

3. He revealed our greatest need (11-12).

Application: Consider three lessons...

1. If you have a problem, bring it to Jesus.

2. If others have a problem, bring them to Jesus.

3. If you come to Jesus, beware of expecting too little.

The organ played, the congregation sang, and Bob could hold onto the pew no longer. It was the closing hymn of the Sunday morning church service when he walked to the front, in response to the preacher's invitation, "Come to Jesus, and you'll never be the same again!" And so he came, prayed the prayer as instructed, and, as he later told the story, "met Jesus."

I wish I could say Bob's life was never the same again. The sad fact, however, is that as the emotion of the hour faded so did Bob's interest in spiritual things. Oh, he came to church for a while, but not much anymore, just on special occasions now.

If you visited Bob and probed a little you'd find out he's been through some tough experiences since he made his profession—some health challenges, a family turmoil, a job disappointment. And quite frankly, he's disappointed, even disillusioned about life. If you continued to probe and asked, "Bob, what happened to your zeal for Jesus?" he'd probably shake his head, lower his voice, and say, "I don't know. I guess it's just not what I expected."

I need to tell you that Bob is not a real person. He doesn't exist. I made up the story. But on the other hand, there are plenty of people just like Bob. You may know one. You may be one.

We're going to tackle the topic of expectations this morning. We're going to address the question, "What did

you expect?" That is, if you are a person who has professed allegiance to Jesus, what did you *expect*?

The fact is, when people decide to "come to Jesus" they do so for a variety of reasons and with a variety of motivations. Some have been told, "Come to Jesus and He'll make your life better." And so they come expecting life to get better. And of course, the expectations of the hearer are shaped by the presenter of the gospel.

A young psychology student serving in the Army decided to test a theory. Drawing kitchen duty, he was given the job of passing out apricots at the end of the chow line. He asked the first few soldiers that came by, "You don't want any apricots, do you?" Ninety percent said "No." Then he tried the positive approach: "You do want apricots, don't you?" About half answered, "Uh, yeah. I'll take some." Then he tried a third test, based on the fundamental either/or selling technique. This time he asked, "One dish of apricots or two?" And in spite of the fact that soldiers don't like Army apricots, 40 percent took two dishes and 50 percent took one!

When it comes to gospel ministry, the issue of expectations is critical. For the person presenting the gospel the offer must be legitimate; for the person responding to the gospel, the expectations must be grounded in truth, not hype.

Most in this room today can point to a time when you "came to Jesus." My question is, what did you expect? It's a fact, as we'll see today in God's Word, that people can "come to Jesus" with different, even misguided expectations. And not everybody that "comes to Jesus" leaves with Jesus. Profession doesn't guarantee possession. Expectations are key. Such was the case in Mark 2:1-12, where we see three types of people who came to Jesus.

I. There are the expectations of the curious (1-2).

Verses 1-2—"A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them."

Jesus is in His second year of public ministry. It's the late spring or early summer of A.D. 28 and Jesus has returned home. Not to Bethlehem, where He was born, and not Nazareth, where He grew up, but twenty miles northeast of Nazareth in Capernaum, the place that served as His base of operations during the final three years of His earthly ministry.

In our last study we saw Jesus leave Capernaum, doing so because a leper He healed disobeyed His order to keep silent and chose instead to spread the news, thus creating a public spectacle that forced Jesus to stay outside in lonely places (1:45). Mark says it was a few days later when Jesus returned to Capernaum. He went "home," or more literally, to "the house," possibly referring to the home He visited in 1:29, the home of Simon and Andrew.

Word spread of His arrival and Jesus soon faced the same problem that drove Him to the wilderness in chapter one. A mass of people packed not only the house but also jammed the doorway and the outside. There wasn't an inch of room left anywhere inside or outside the house.

Why did this crowd come to Jesus? The reasons were mixed, but basically...

A. The crowd came to see miracles (1). I call this first group of people *the curious*. No one, of course, had ever done the things Jesus was doing! In previous weeks, He confronted demons and they obeyed Him. He liberated the possessed and they left with new lives. He healed the sick and even cleansed a leper by a touch.

"I wonder what He'll do today?" the folks must have whispered to each other as they squeezed into the

house. "I don't know but I'm sure glad I got in. I don't want to miss a thing!"

Then as now, people come to Jesus with all kinds of expectations. For this crowd it was the desire to see more miracles—healings, exorcisms, maybe even something bigger. That's what they wanted, *miracles* in the physical realm. However...

B. Jesus gave them what they really needed, the word (2). Mark says, "And He preached the word to them." They wanted miracles. He gave them God's Word. And even when He gave them miracles—as He will momentarily—it was to capture their attention so they would listen to His message.

Remember His mission statement, the one He cited for Peter in 1:38, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—*so I can preach there also*. That is why I have come."

And so He preached that day. My hunch is, although verse 2 doesn't say, He preached a message similar to the one recorded in 1:12, a message announcing, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

It's not that miracles aren't important, for they are. When Jesus healed the sick He was undoing the work of the devil (Acts 10:38). He was also fulfilling century-old prophecies concerning the Messiah (Isa 35:4-6). But He didn't come merely to be a miracle-worker. He'd come to save sinners. Our greatest need isn't for physical healing but *spiritual*.

Yes, as the story to follow reveals, our biggest problem isn't a physical one. It's sin. A physical disease can harm us for a few years. But sin, unless dealt with, will destroy a person for eternity.

Let this sink in, my friend. What we need most is to hear God's Word. Sickness of the soul is a far worse condition than sickness of the body. Ponder that statement, for it's true. Cancer. Heart disease. AIDS. Terrible diseases for sure, each with the power to cause physical life to end—and physical death is a terrible thing, no question about it. But oh the destructive power of sin! For the wages of sin is death—spiritual, eternal separation from God. Jesus asked the question, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul (Mark 8:36)?"

That's why we need the Word, beloved.

Jesus' example has tons to say to us about the current trends in the contemporary church. A common approach today is, "Give the curious what they want. That's how we'll reach them." Jesus gave sinners what they needed, not what their sinful hearts wanted.

J. Vernon McGee's remarks are helpful, "One of the reasons that I object so vociferously today to these people who put the emphasis on healing or tongues or something like that is that, even if these were gifts for this age in which we are living, it is getting the cart before the horse. Someone said to me some time ago, 'Well, Dr. McGee, So-and-So preaches the gospel, just like you do, and he has a healing ministry, too.' Yes, but is he known for preaching the gospel? Is that the reason people go to the meetings? Do they go to hear the gospel to be saved, or is the emphasis upon healing or some other emotional experience? I think we need to whittle this down to a very fine point. Our business is primarily to preach the gospel."

So there's the first example, the expectation of the curious. Such people come to Jesus, not with a sense of need but hoping to see a good show.

II. There are the expectations of the concerned (3-5).

I first heard the story we're about to investigate when I was a child. It's a powerful story, intriguing, and full of drama. It started when...

A. Some men brought a paralytic to Jesus (3-4). "Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on."

Here was a man in need, a paralytic. The KJV says he was "one sick of the palsy." What was his name? We're not told. How long had he been disabled? We don't know. We know that he had no use of his legs. We also know he had something else. *Friends*, real friends, at least four of them—perhaps more (Mark says "some men came" of which four carried the stretcher).

These men were true friends as demonstrated by four actions.

1. *They carried their friend.* See their compassion here. They're willing to do what they can to help. They can't fix the man's legs, but they can bring him to One who just might. So they went to him—I get the sense these friends initiated the whole episode. "Moshe [a made up name], we're going to take you somewhere today. Hold on tight!" And off they went carrying the burden they loved.

2. *They faced obstacles.* They made it to the house all right, but they couldn't get in. The crowd blocked the doorway and no one was about to give up their spot.

Had we been the friends we might have rationalized, "Oh, well, at least we tried. Let's go back home. I guess it's not God's will for you to walk, Moshe." But not these friends. They weren't about to let a little obstacle stand in their way! So they devised a plan and...

3. *They cut through the roof.* Barclay explains that the typical Jewish house had a flat-roof with an exterior staircase since the roof was used as a place for quiet. The roof itself consisted of beams that lay across the walls, perhaps three feet apart. The space in between was filled with brushwood packed with mud. It wasn't unusual to see a crop of grass growing on the thatch roof.

So the friends headed up the exterior staircase, dug through the thatch, looked down into the house, and saw Jesus sitting there. What a scene it was! The dirt showered down upon the folks below, including the Master who stopped His teaching session. I wonder what the home owner thought at this moment—if it was Peter he probably was about to lose it. I can see Jesus motioning to His disciple, "It's okay. It's only a roof. Let them continue. You'll be glad you did."

4. *They placed their friend before Jesus.* The friends lowered the ropes ever so gently, placed the pallet right in front of the Lord, and then dropped the ropes—they wouldn't be needing them again, they were sure. They'd done what they could do. Now they waited on the Great Physician to do what He alone could do.

This is the expectation of the *concerned*. They've come to Jesus motivated by love for their friend and belief in God.

J. Vernon McGee offers an important challenge, "What we need in the church today is stretcher-bearers—men and women with that kind of faith to go out and bring in the unsaved so they can hear the gospel. There are many people today who are paralyzed with a palsy of sin, a palsy of indifference, or a palsy of prejudice. A great many people are not going to come into the church where the gospel is preached unless you take a corner of the stretcher and bring them in."

We can learn from these friends. Note what happened next...

B. Jesus rewarded their efforts (5). "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'" The text says Jesus did two things.

1. *He saw the men's faith.* You say, "You mean faith is something you can see?" Absolutely. If you can't see it, it's not genuine. In the words of James 2:14, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?"

I read a story about a young boy who, while on an errand for his mother, bought a dozen eggs. Walking out of the store, he tripped and dropped the sack. All the eggs broke, and the sidewalk was a mess. The boy tried not to cry. A few people gathered to see if he was OK and to tell him how sorry they were. In the midst of the works of pity, one man handed the boy a quarter. Then he turned to the group and said, "I care 25 cents worth. How much do the rest of you care?"

Yes, if faith is real, there will be works. Faith is proved genuine by works. Jesus saw the men's faith. By the way, Jesus is looking for that kind of faith in us, too. Not mental agreement. Not cheap words—anybody can say, "I believe in You, Jesus." He's looking for tangible faith.

At that point Jesus did something else, something quite unexpected...

2. *He declared the man forgiven.* Look at verse 5 again, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic..." He saw *their faith*, but He spoke to the paralytic. He made an announcement, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Not *will be*, but *are*. Your sins are forgiven.

Hold on. What does that statement have to do with the situation? The man came for healing. It's what he expected. It's what his friends expected. When then did Jesus talk about forgiveness?

It's the way the Lord often works, with us, too. We come to Him expecting something. He knows we really need something else.

The rabbis had a saying, "There is no sick man healed of his sickness until all his sins have been forgiven him." Granted, not all sickness is caused by sin (as Jesus made clear in John 9:1-3). But Jesus' words here seem to indicate this man's condition was the result of his disobedience to God. Yes, he needed healing, that was obvious, but he needed forgiveness even more, and it was the latter need that Jesus addressed first.

The priority of need for us is no different. As bad as physical pain is, it's nothing compared to the guilt and agony of sin, for sin angers a holy God and paralyzes us.

Did the sick man have faith? The text doesn't specify. It's possible he did but was still overwhelmed by his sin.

Jesus knew what the man needed most. My hunch is, the man also knew and he would have been glad to return home still on his mat and carrying this word from Jesus, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Ponder this, my friend. Jesus' earthly mission wasn't merely to heal bodies, but to save souls. When He returns He will grant His people glorified bodies, but that's future.

Your greatest need right now isn't physical. It's spiritual. It's not to get rid of a disease. It's to get rid of sin.

Do you feel the weight of sin today? There's One who will lift it. Come to Him.

Even His miracles, properly understood, point out His power to rescue sinners. H. A. Ironside explains, "Every form of disease healed by our Lord Jesus seems to picture some aspect of sin, which is like a fever burning in the soul, a leprosy polluting the whole being, a palsy making one utterly unable to take a step toward God, and like a withered hand incapable of true service. Whatever form sin may take, Jesus can give complete deliverance from it."

We've considered the expectations of the curious and the concerned. One more...

III. There are the expectations of the critic (6-12).

It's been said, "There's always a critic in the crowd." In this case there were more than one.

A. Some teachers disapproved of Jesus (6-7). "Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'"

These weren't simply local synagogue officials from Capernaum. According to Luke 5:17 this was an inspection team comprised of scribes from villages all over Galilee and Judea and even Jerusalem. They had come to check out this self-appointed rabbi who was swaying the multitudes. Luke's account mentions that the Pharisees were there, too.

Two things were true of this set of critics.

1. *They didn't like what He said.* "Why does this fellow talk like that?" they thought to themselves. Here are the legalists who know nothing of grace. They have a system to protect, an agenda to fulfill that blinds them from seeing men's needs and an occasion for God's glory. And worse yet, their critical hearts blind them to the fact that God has come in the flesh and is standing right before them!

A word about the literary structure of Mark's gospel is in order. Mark begins a new section at 2:1 that continues through 3:6. In this section Mark shows Jesus in conflict with the religious leaders of the day. In fact, in it we see five incidents where Jesus ruffled the feathers of the Jewish authorities.

Why would Mark include such stories? Remember Mark is writing for a particular audience, to encourage Christians around the year A.D. 60 who themselves were facing criticism and hostility from the leaders of Judaism. So Mark reminds them, the same critics didn't like what Jesus said, either. Furthermore...

2. *They felt threatened by the implications.* "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" That's actually a good question. Who can forgive sins? Except for God, no one. In Jewish teaching even the Messiah couldn't forgive sins. No man can pronounce forgiveness for sins committed against God. Only God can do that.

So if Jesus pronounced forgiveness, the implication was unmistakable. Jesus did what God alone can do because Jesus *is* God.

Jesus broke the tense silence. In so doing...

B. Jesus exposed the critics (8-10). He revealed three things.

1. *He revealed their thoughts (8).* "Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, 'Why are you thinking these things?'" Jesus knows men's thoughts. John 2:25 indicates, "He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man."

Jesus is omniscient. That's comforting if you are hurting, if you can't find words to express the pain in your heart. But it can also be convicting, especially if you are hiding sin or living a double life. He knows. He knows your deepest thoughts. And with His critics that day He revealed those thoughts.

2. *He revealed His authority (9-10).* Verse 9—"Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'"

Which is easier? Is it easier to tell a paralyzed man his sins are forgiven or to tell his lame legs to work

again? The former, right? It's easier to say your sins are forgiven. Why? Because nobody can prove whether or not what you said came about. It's your opinion against theirs. You could see restored legs, but you can't see a forgiven heart.

Which was easier? Indeed, for men, both are impossible. Men cannot heal or forgive, not in their strength for sure. Yet for God, neither is difficult. God can do whatever He chooses to do, including heal and forgive. Nothing is difficult for God.

By the way, that doesn't mean that nothing is *costly* for God. Many folks have the idea that it's no big thing for God to forgive sin. "After all, He is God and can do whatever He wants," they say. "He forgives sin simply because He is loving," they say. But that overlooks a very important point. He's also holy and cannot just overlook sin. There must be a basis for forgiveness and God in His love provided it. God forgives sins because His Son, Jesus, came to earth and paid the penalty for those sins. Though it's not hard for God to forgive it was costly.

The reason Jesus offered this man forgiveness—as He does to us—is because He came to this planet to make the necessary provision for that forgiveness. He came to pay the ransom price for the remission of our sins. The price? He went to the cross and died in our place, enduring God's wrath in our stead. Three days later He came back to life just as He said He would, in triumph over sin, death, and Satan himself.

Verse 10—"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... ' He said to the paralytic...". Mark uses the title "Son of man" fourteen times in his gospel. It was a messianic title (Daniel 7:13-14) and Jesus' Jewish hearers knew that. It certainly wasn't the last time the title would come from His lips:

Mark 8:31 "He then began to teach them that the *Son of Man* must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again."

Mark 9:9 "As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the *Son of Man* had risen from the dead."

Mark 9:31 "He said to them [the disciples],"The *Son of Man* is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise."

Mark 10:45 "For even the *Son of Man* did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

After revealing their thoughts and His own authority...

3. *He revealed our greatest need (11-12)*. "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'"

In Genesis God created the universe by speaking a word. Here Jesus put life into dead limbs, again merely by speaking a word. The man rolled up his pallet and left the house on legs that worked perfectly. Luke 5:25 indicates that as the man departed he "went home praising God."

Why did he go home? Why didn't he stay and listen to Jesus' teaching? He went home because Jesus told him specifically to get up, pick up his mat, and *go home*. Following Jesus begins *at home*. Go, let your family see what I have done for you.

And so he left, the recipient of a double miracle, with strong legs and a clean heart.

Take a fresh look at the story and you'll notice a surprising feature. In the healing of the paralytic, the paralytic plays a very small part. He is passive in the story. The spotlight is on the curious (the crowd), the concerned (the friends), and the critics (the scribes). Three categories of people who came to Jesus, three different expectations.

What did you expect? Let's make it personal. I see three lessons here for us.

Application: Consider three lessons...

1. If you have a problem, bring it to Jesus. The miracle that occurred at Capernaum that day proves Jesus' identity—He is the Son of man, God Himself come in human flesh. It also points to His mission—He came to forgive sinners and indeed provide the very basis for that forgiveness. My friend, if you have a problem, big or small, you can bring it to Jesus. Indeed, you must believe in Jesus.

2. If others have a problem, bring them to Jesus. Be a stretcher-bearer. Be on the lookout for those in need and be willing to get involved bringing them to Jesus.

3. If you come to Jesus, beware of expecting too little. He knows what you and I often don't know, that is, what we need most. So come with an expectant and submissive heart, saying, "Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way. Thou art the Potter, I am the clay."