

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

This Is Jesus

PART

6

TITLE

Authority To Forgive

SCRIPTURE

Mark 2:1-12



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Well, good morning, Providence. It's so good to be with you. I have the joy of opening God's word with you today. If you are new, if you're visiting, we're really glad that you joined us, whether you're here in the room or if you're online. And for those of you in prisons, thank you so much for honoring us by giving us a little more space in here, by worshipping in there.

We're so thankful. If you would, you can go ahead and open your bibles with me to mark two, one through twelve. And if you don't have a Bible, there is one in the seat back in front of you. You can take that home as a gift. As you're turning there, go ahead and glance to your right or left.

Make sure your neighbor's wearing green. And if they're not, go ahead and give them a little pinch. Happy St. Patrick's Day. We're so glad that you're here.

Here's a pinch. As you're turning in your Bibles, I want you to picture a scene that's going to be pretty vivid as we get closer and closer to summer. Picture a child on the edge of a swimming pool looking down at the crystal blue water and their father is just a few feet in front of them, arms wide, opening, motioning for them to jump. And as they look at the water, they're afraid. We've seen this scene before, right?

Whether you're at a public pool or a neighbor's house, kids, sometimes we're afraid to jump in the water, aren't we? I know that I was. And regardless of whether dad is able or not, we're still fearful dads. What do we do next? We usually start by reassuring them, right?

We say things like, you can trust me, go ahead and jump, or I can swim. It's going to be okay. I'm going to catch you or you have nothing to fear. It's only just a few feet deep. And in that moment we're reassuring a fearful child of our authority over the situation.

You love them and so you use your power to care for them. And as a result, your words to them aren't wishful thinking. Instead, they're assurances of why they can trust you. Have you ever experienced a situation like this where you needed reassurance, like a child jumping into a pool? Are you fearful today?

Oftentimes we can go through life needing reassurances and reminders of God's authority care for us. And in many ways, this is the hope that mark two one through twelve offers us. We've been in this series called this is Jesus. And our hope has been to showcase the real Christ, not the one that we make up in our minds or the ones that people tell us, but the one that the Bible shows us is who he really is and what he's like. In this story, Jesus will show us two reasons why we can trust his authority.

Just like a child on the precipice of jumping into a pool, we can stop and consider why Jesus' authority is trustworthy. But before we do that, let's pray and ask for God's help.

Lord, unless you build the house, the builders build in vain. So unless you speak, I'm about to speak in vain.

Unless you help give understanding, those of us listening will listen in vain. And so would you show us kindness now and help us to understand? Would you speak through my many, many weaknesses and speak through many of our weaknesses to understand?

And would you do what your word says and show us wondrous things in your law? Would you open our eyes to behold your beauty? We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So the first reason we can trust Jesus's authority is because he is God.

Read with me in verse one. As we start the text together, he says this. And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home, and many were gathered together, no more room, not even at the door, and he was preaching the word to them. So we can trust Jesus's authority because he is God. Up to this point in our story, through the book of Mark, we've seen Jesus portrayed as a healer, as a miracle worker.

He's cast out demons, and he's cured Jesus like leprosy. And because of his incredible miracles in power, Jesus has amassed a following. Therefore, everyone swarms to see this traveling miracle worker when he returns to Capernaum. Now, the details of Jesus's story so far in Mark are purposeful. Mark is organizing the details of his account to show us and to frame a picture for us to believe a certain message about Jesus, much like a photographer does.

When they take pictures, they choose certain things to highlight in on whether that's the foreground, midground, or background. And all of that is meant to demonstrate a message or a picture, something that they want you to see and notice. And Mark is doing the same thing. I mean, think back to the gospel of Mark in his baptism. We're seeing him as the chosen holy one in his temptation.

He's seen as the steadfast one in his healing of the man with the demon in the synagogue. He's shown as the Holy one that can cleanse and make others holy. And just last week, we saw Jesus as the one that heals the leper, and we see him as the compassionate one. Jesus is being portrayed to us as God in the flesh. Mark wants us to perceive Jesus not merely as a man, but as God in the flesh, dispensing power and miracles.

And just imagine for a moment you're in the first century, and you hear about Jesus. Wouldn't you want to see him? Wouldn't you want to bring a loved one to be healed by him? Maybe you're watching online today in a hospital room with a loved one. All of us here can feel and consider the weight of seeing and being with someone that we want to be healed, touched and seen by Jesus.

And so that's why four men bring a paralytic to Jesus. They recognize Jesus as God, and so should we. So let's read together the next few verses. Verse three. Say this.

And they came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him be-

cause of the crowd, they removed the roof above him. And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven because Jesus is God. These men come to Jesus for a miracle that only God can do.

Their behavior shows us that they believe Jesus is God, and that's why they go to such great lengths to get through the roof. I mean, consider who this paralytic is. We should really stop and consider the real people of these stories. Was he born paralyzed or was he maimed in a serious accident at some point in his life? How has he experienced life because of his disability?

Have people looked at him and laughed? Has he felt ostracized? Was he bullied at school and left out? Does he know what it's like to be able bodied? Think about these men that care for him.

Are they lifelong friends that have stuck with him throughout the years? Or are they family members that have been his full time caregivers? What do they feel like in that moment? Are they weary of caring for him? Have you ever felt weary of caring and caring for a loved one?

These are real people behind these stories. I know that we can read these. And some of you grew up, and you went to something called Sunday school, and you heard and saw this story on a felt board, and it looked really nice, clean and contained. And I want you to know and remember and realize that the stories we read in the Bible are not made up fairy tales. They are stories of real people with real darkness and real pain.

And the God of the Bible sees and knows and can speak to real people in real darkness and in real pain. Mark is showing us a world plagued by sin, twisting God's good creation in a way that causes desperation. This paralyzed man and his friends are affected by the darkness of sin and are desperate for help. The pain we experience is evidence of spiritual brokenness. Genesis one shows us that God created this world as a safe haven for humanity to enjoy God in peace.

And when sin entered the world, it wreaked havoc on the natural order. The physical pain and brokenness around us are evidence of sin's presence amid our darkness. Though God enters in, and in this story, the paralytic and his friends, they see him, they run to him, and they take the roof off to get to him. They believe Jesus is God and can help, and so they act accordingly. First century roofs were made of mud and straw, similar to the one that you see on the screen here.

You would lay sticks and rods of wood across the top, and then you would fill in the gaps with mud, clay and straw. And this was how they kept the rain and the elements off of them. But because these men believe so confidently that Jesus is God, they don't let anything stop them from getting them. Think about what they overcome to get to Jesus. The paralytic, he can't walk, and so what do they do?

They pick up him on a mat and they bring him to Jesus. The doorway into the home is crowded. So what do

they do? They go around to the steps and walk up to the roof. The roof is sealed shut.

There's no way down to Jesus. So what do they do? They start opening the roof to get down to him. Do you know what this is? This is faith.

That's why verse five says, and when Jesus saw their faith, do you notice that what that's showing us is that the preceding verses are showing us a picture of what biblical faith is. Faith is confidence. It's to believe true things about God and then to act accordingly. That's what is being demonstrated by these four men. In the paralytic, Jesus saw more than desperation, more than digging a hole in the roof, more than lowering a man down to him.

He saw internal confidence in God that led to external action. These men believed that Jesus was God, and so they acted accordingly. This is important. Their right view of Jesus propelled their behavior. Faith is not wishful thinking.

Faith is to believe true things about God and then to act accordingly. It's a lot like this popular way of understanding faith. We need to know the details, but those details ought to lead to internal trust in the thing in which we are trusting, much like this chair on the screen. I could tell you the details about this chair. I could tell you the wood that it's made out of, the joints that hold it together.

I could tell you who made the chair, how long they've been making chairs, and if their chairs are trustworthy, worthy. I could tell you the capacity of the chair, how many pounds it can hold. I could tell you how long it's been. I could tell you if it's been made for how long. I could tell you how many people have sat in it, if it's a new chair, if it's an old chair.

And all those details can be true. But faith requires a second component. It's not just mental beliefs about the facts. It's an internal, heartfelt confidence to move from. I believe and see these things about the chair, and I'm going to move over and sit in it.

And the same is true with Jesus. In the Bible, we are presented with facts about him. Jesus is God. He came for sinners. But those are not truly faith until they move from our heads into our hearts to where we trust him, to where we have confidence in him.

And that's what's demonstrated by these four men in the paralytic. Let me ask you, have you expressed faith in Jesus like them? Have you let a right view of Jesus propel your behavior? Let me just stop and encourage some of you in the room who model faith like these men. It was probably perceived as wild and ridiculous for them to go up on the roof and start moving panels.

They probably felt silly at times. They probably heard people yelling at them, hey, cut that out. And yet they

continued anyway because they saw Jesus as God and they knew that their actions were warranted. And some of you in this room are living in a way that is totally wild and ridiculous to those on the outside, but is actually the embodiment of faith. Some of you here give way beyond what is considered normal.

To fund the mission of providence. Some of you liquidate vacation days to go spend it on a short term mission trip. Some of you help lead life groups when you could instead relax at home. Some of you are spending your retirement years not on the golf course, but making disciples. Some of you are studying college degrees right now that don't make much money.

But that will make a big impact on the kingdom. All of this might seem wild and ridiculous to those on the outside, but please know that your roof tearing faith is seen, valuable and beautiful. These men, they saw Jesus as God, and they longed for Jesus to dispense a godlike miracle, the healing of this paralyzed man. And Jesus, he knows their desires. It's no mystery to him.

And yet, look at what Jesus does. In verse five, it says this. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven. I mean, just picture the story. So far.

It's probably a hot, stuffy room with all the people crammed into it. They're sitting around, the air feels heavy and hot, and Jesus is speaking. Until suddenly they hear footsteps on the roof. And those footsteps turn into the sound of digging and hammers and whatever else they have to get through the mud and the clay. And suddenly dust starts to fall and the dust starts to turn into little bits of rock and clay and until there is piercing light coming through those holes in the roof, into the room, and then suddenly through those holes, they see the figures and eyes of four men and what looks to be a paralyzed man.

That hole opens up and then the paralyzed man descends bit by bit, down before Jesus and down before everyone else until he lands at the feet of Jesus. I wonder if the room was absolutely captivated by this. And they're all looking at this man and they're looking at Jesus. Jesus looks at this man and he looks at everyone else and he looks at that man and he know everyone else is expecting, oh, he's going to do what he usually does. He's going to heal this man just like he's healed many, many people in the past.

And Jesus, knowing that and knowing our expectations, says to that man, son, your sins are forgiven. Why does he do that? He does that because he wants us to equate his divinity with his forgiveness. And that is the heart of this. Jesus wants us to see his authority as not just being God, but as being a forgiver of sins.

And that is the second reason we can trust his authority. Trust Jesus' authority? Because he forgives sinners. The paralytic had a much bigger problem than the inability to walk. He had a sin problem.

And Jesus wants him and us to see our deepest and greatest need, the forgiveness of our sins. In the gospel of

Mark, Jesus pushes back the kingdom of darkness one soul at a time, and he does this by forgiving sinners. In Mark, we see brokenness caused by sin all around. And Jesus conquers the darkness by dealing with humanity's sin problem. The paralytics condition was caused by sin.

The fall of Genesis three separated humankind from God, and that brought about death and decay. Now get this. Jesus is here in Mark, and he is recreating a new world. So if sin and subsequently death brought decay into the world in Genesis three, then forgiveness and subsequently life will restore and recreate the world in mark two. Listen.

Paralysis is real brokenness, but separation from God is even worse. If you're suffering today, or if a loved one is suffering today, know that Jesus sees your pain and he grieves with you. Whether you're here in this room, or if you're online, you're seen. Jesus feels for and with you. He's not apathetic.

He knows what real pain, and even the pain of a loved one can cause in our hearts. But you must know that Jesus loves you too much to provide physical relief without helping your spiritual problem. What good would it be to heal this paralyzed man, for him to walk for the next 20 years of his life, only to spend the rest of his eternity separated from God forever? Providence, family. Our greatest problem today is not sickness.

Lack of money, confusion about where to go to college, concern for our kids, behavior in school, the health of our marriage, the kind of car we drive, where our parents will spend their final years, if we have enough for retirement, if we get the promotion we deserve, or if we graduate from high school with straight A's. Our greatest problem is sin. Sin is disobedience to God. It is much more than doing wrong. It is a rejection of God.

And all of us have rejected God and are therefore separated from him. And this separation is the root of the darkness that we experience. And it's this separation that Jesus came to fix. The scribes present, however, take great offense at this. Read with me how they respond in their hearts.

Now some of the scribes are sitting there questioning in their hearts, why does he speak like this? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Scribes were distinct from Pharisees in that they held an actual job. They made a living off of keeping up with the traditions of Judaism.

They did this in a few different ways. One of them was by rewriting pieces of the Old Testament word for word, to make sure that its message was clear and understandable to future generations. Another way that they maintained the traditions of Judaism was by keeping up the interpretations of the Old Testament. One rabbi or teacher would share one message, and then they would record that message. And then share it again and again and again.

Saying that this is how we interpret this passage. The problem is that the scribes and Pharisees clash with Jesus. Because Jesus is God in the flesh. And he's sharing new revelation into what the Bible says. And they know that that is what Jesus is doing in this moment.

The scribes are so focused on their traditions. That they miss the source of their traditions. God himself. And that's what happens when Jesus says, your sins are forgiven. They know he's equating himself with God.

Because only the divine can forgive sins. The scribes know that Jesus is really saying God is Jesus. Because sins are an offense, primarily against God. Although God created humankind to know and enjoy him. Humankind decided to rebel.

And rebellion is at the core of every sinful human decision. To sin is to prefer something else other than God. We were made to find all that we need in him. But sin convinces us that there's something outside of him. And since sin is a rejection of God.

Only God can forgive sin. Only the offended can forgive the offender. So for Jesus to say your sins are forgiven. Was to say, I am God, and I can forgive sins. Listen, any one of us today should be offended if we heard anything like this.

The difference, though, is that Jesus validated his words. With his actions. With his miracles that prove that he was God in the flesh. And that's why Jesus corrects their attitude. Next, look with me at verse eight.

And immediately, Jesus, perceiving in his spirit. That they thus questioned within themselves. Said to them, why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven. Or to say, rise, take up your bed and walk?

In reality, both are extremely difficult to do. But Jesus asks, which is easier to say? Why? He's addressing their skepticism of him. Their thoughts claimed that for him to say that sins are forgiven was blasphemous.

Their thoughts accused him of making a claim that only God can make. And so, to prove to them that he really is God. And he really can forgive sinners. He shows them that as God, he can do both. Listen, it's easy to say your sins are forgiven.

Because there's no proof needed. It's much harder to say you're healed because evidence is required. But that's what he does. Next. Look with me at verse ten.

But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He said to the paralytic, I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, go home. And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out

before them all so that all were amazed and glorified. God saying, we never saw anything like this. It's here that the meaning of mark two one through twelve is revealed.

He says this that you may know because the proof that he has authority to forgive sins is that he can heal the paralytic. He says that you may know because he wants to prove to them what I just said before is vowed and trustworthy. And so that you know that that deeper meaning to why I came, I'm going to do this. So our two reasons to trust Jesus's authority, they make up the heart of this passage. So if you want to know what Mark two one through twelve is all about, it's this.

Jesus is God and he has the authority to forgive sinners. Jesus is God and he has the authority to forgive sinners. All throughout the gospel of Mark we've seen Jesus portrayed as divine the heavens part. At his baptism, he casts out demons, he heals lepers. The story continues that theme, but shows us a deeper level into Jesus' mission.

Mark wants us to see Jesus really as God in the flesh, but also to see that God, his mission is to forgive sinners. Jesus is not an ordinary person. He is God in the flesh. That's why Jesus refers to himself as the son of man. In the verses earlier, he says the son of man has authority on the earth.

This is a reference to Daniel seven of this coming Messiah, this coming chosen one that would have the authority to rule and to inherit the world. Jesus is God with the rights therein. That's why the people around Jesus are astonished at his authority. Have you noticed so far in our study of the book of Mark, the word authority keeps coming up over and over again, and it will in the rest of the book. In Mark 122, the crowd is amazed at Jesus's authoritative teaching.

In Mark 127, his authority is demonstrated when he casts out a demon. And here in mark two one through twelve, we see Jesus leverage that authority to forgive sinners. This is Jesus. This is why he came. Now let me just stop and just ask.

I've just shared with you that God came to forgive sinners. And if we're not careful, a glorious, beautiful truth like that can easily start to bounce off of cold hearts. If you were to leave this room and ask anyone on the street right now, what is God? What is he like? What does he require?

Or if you were to search the state and talk to people or the people in our country, or if you were to leave in a plane and go across an ocean and talk to someone and ask them, what is God like? What does he require? Almost every time you hear something along the lines of, God is apathetic towards me and I need to work to please him.

Jesus is God, and he has the authority to forgive sinners. And because he forgives sinners, that means that

guilty people can find rest in him. And so let me ask you, what does guilt feel like? What is maybe one of your earliest memories of feeling guilty?

Guilt is suffocating, isn't it? It's like a pit in your stomach. When you feel guilty, you walk heavily. And because guilt usually leads to fear, you're usually worried about tomorrow. Guilt probably makes you feel trapped, paralyzed, unable to move freely, and probably a lot like the paralyzed man in our story.

And in light of this, what do you do with your guilt? All of us do something with it. You might choose to ignore it, like burying your head in the sand. Just choosing to forget that it's even there and forget the reason why it came up in the first place, hoping that you'll just distract yourself with the next thing. Or maybe you numb it.

Numbing it is where we indulge ourselves in things or practices to hopefully forget about the guilt in the first place. Rather than making amends, we attempt to drown it out. Sometimes we numb it with innocent pleasures like binge watching, hobbies or fitness. Other times we numb it with age old vices like drugs, alcohol and sexual sin. Which one do you use?

Maybe neither of those are how you deal with your guilt. Maybe you use religion. Ignoring it and numbing it don't work for you. And so instead you choose to outweigh the good with, or outweigh the guilt with good. Spotless worship, attendance, faithfulness, faithful tithing, serving, doing whatever you can to somehow do away with the bad feelings of guilt.

If any of those speak to you, and man, do they all speak to me? Because I have participated in all of those. I plead with you to instead look to Jesus. He alone has the authority to forgive our sins. You don't need to ignore it, numb it, or use religion to outweigh the bad with the good.

You can experience total forgiveness through Jesus. I mean, is there a guilty person in this room right now? Is there one that has walked through the doors today that feels heavy and weighed down? There is hope for you. Jesus is God, and he has the authority to forgive sinners.

Verse ten of our passage shows us the basis for believing in the invisible. The forgiveness of sins is proven by Jesus's ability to heal the paralytic, the visible sin, is ultimately an offense against God. Therefore, only God can forgive sinners. And that's the beauty of this passage, that God forgives sinners. We were the rebels against God.

We rejected him. We resisted his rule in our lives. We traded him for lesser things. We were the offender, and yet God himself pursues us and initiates with us. God himself became a man to demonstrate his authority over sins over the world, to rescue us from the power of darkness.

This is the beauty of God and the gospel. We were the offenders, and yet God moved towards us. Whether you're new to faith, returning to faith, or you've been a Christian for a long time, please know we have nothing else to hold on to other than that truth, that we were the offenders and God moved towards us. This is the basis for christian living. This is the basis for healthy churches.

This is the basis for faithfulness in life and ministry for your entire life. This is the hope that we have to offer, and this is the bedrock on which our church stands, that Jesus is God and he has the authority to forgive sinners.

Listen to the beautiful invitation of Isaiah 55 seven. Let the wicked forsake his way. Let the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him and to our God, for he will abundantly say it with me. Pardon, you guys didn't do it. We're going to do it again.

For he will abundantly pardon.

God is not in heaven, keeping us at arm's length. No. God became the man Jesus to rescue us and to invite us to experience the forgiveness he offers. When you feel accused by Satan because of sin committed yesterday, today or tomorrow, look to Christ. When you slip back into old sinful habits, repent and look to Christ.

When your conscience is convicting, look to Christ. When you compare yourself to other Christians, look to Christ. And when you abuse forgiveness, look to Christ. You don't have to ignore, numb, or use religion on your guilt. You can look to Christ.

He has the authority to forgive our sins. Jesus is God, and he has the authority to forgive sinners. So in light of this, how do we respond? I want to share with you three ways that we can respond as a people. And I hope that you'll notice that they all deal with us as individuals, us as a church family, and then us as Christians living in this world.

The first way is this. Let's rest in God's forgiveness. If you're not a Christian in this room, meaning that you've not looked at the real Jesus of the Bible and put your faith in him like the thief. If your heart just kind of perked up at that and maybe the spirit moved in your mind or your thoughts, that probably is you. You can rest in God's forgiveness right where you are by prayerfully acknowledging your sin and trusting in Christ.

If you have questions about this, we'd love to talk with you at the welcome desk or by going to pray info. But if you are a Christian, though, I invite you to continue resting in God's forgiveness. As a Christian, let me ask you, how does God feel about you right now? Or in other words, how does God forgive you? I know we know the right answers to say, but sometimes our actions indicate we believe otherwise, because I know that

our hearts are inclined to see God as apathetic and even begrudging in his forgiveness.

How many of us picture God like two siblings fighting? There's typically an offender and a victim, right? Until mom comes and reconciles them, there's usually a offender that has done wrong. That was me a lot growing up. Sorry, Shannon.

And then there's usually a victim, and the victim has been wronged. And then mom comes over and says to the offender, like, say you're sorry, and you're kind of like, I'm sorry, kind of arms crossed. I don't really care, but I'm sorry. And then mom goes over to the victim and says, now say I forgive you. And because they're not really over it, they kind of say, like, I'm sorry, or I say, I forgive you.

I mean, how many of us picture God like this child on the screen, kind of crossing his arms with a scowl in his face and saying, I forgive you, as if he doesn't really mean it? Is this how God forgives us?

Is God like this child, forgiving but not happy about it? If we're honest, many of us live believing that God begrudgingly forgives, and that is just simply not the case. Brother or sister, I want to remind you that God is not giving you his forgiveness begrudgingly. God calls us children, and children don't need to fear the affections of their father. We should rest in God's forgiveness.

You can rest in God's forgiveness by joining us next week for our prayer and worship night, Sunday at 06:00 p.m. Or by RSVP to one of our Easter services. All of those are opportunities for us as a church family to rest in God's forgiveness as a people. This is so important because if we truly rest in God's forgiveness. We'll extend forgiveness to others.

And that's the second way that we ought to respond to this truth. Let's create a culture of forgiveness here at Providence, as forgiven people, we should be known for forgiveness. Jesus is God, and he has the authority to forgive sinners. Each one of us here is a sick person that's been healed. Each one of us is a hungry person fed a sinner that's been forgiven.

And as a result, we must live in a way that reflects our identity of being forgiven. Let's assume the best in one another. Let's show deference to one another. Let's not be cold holding grudges. Let's go to one another.

Let's not keep ourselves separate from each other. Can I just share one practical way to do that? Share when you feel wronged by someone. I know that seems opposite, but it's the way the Bible tells us to create a culture of forgiveness. I know that the world says to just keep it to yourself and try to not stir the pot, to not try and worry about what people will think about you if you bring up a wrong.

But the Bible tells us, Matthew 18:15, that when we feel wronged by our brother or sister, we should go to

them. Why? Because it opens up a chance for repentance and forgiveness to flow. It gives both parties a chance to repent and ask for forgiveness. When a wrong is brought into the open, forgiveness can flow.

And when a wrong is kept secret, bitterness and resentment grow. I know this personally, goodness, because I've failed in this so many times in my life. This takes wisdom. We need God's help to discern what and how we do this. But if we're diligent about being kind, tender hearted, forgiving one another, we'll see a culture of forgiveness grow.

And let me just say, I'm so thankful to be called one of your pastors because I see a culture of forgiveness here at Providence. Time and time again. You assume the best in others. Instead of responding with judgment, you seek to understand first. When you're wronged, you love.

I'm so encouraged and so, no, that I don't speak this because I see any lack, but I speak this because I want to keep seeing this culture of forgiveness take root and grow here at Providence. But the last way that we can respond to this truth is this. Let's tell others about Jesus' authority to forgive time and time again. In the Bible, when people come to grips with the forgiveness they've received from God, they go and tell others. And so if we've experienced Jesus's authority to forgive us, then let's go and tell others.

This is a picture of the Ganges river in India. It flows from a glacier in the Himalayas. It's believed to be the personification of the goddess Ganga. Hindus believe that if you go to the river and bathe in it, you'll be forgiven of your sins washed away. Thousands flock to it all the time and will even take little vials of the water home with them, because they believe that if you drink just a drop of that water before you pass away, that you will instantly be transported to heaven, to an experience called moksha.

Providence family. This is an utter travesty. The fact that there are any people in the world that look to someone or something other than Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins ought to be heartbreaking and heart wrenching to us. Regardless of whether it's Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, Islam, Judaism, or agnosticism, as Christians, we have responsibility to tell others that Jesus alone has the authority to forgive sinners. We must do this with a spirit of love, of friendship, and of understanding.

We're not bullying people into our beliefs, but we're loving them into Jesus's kingdom. This is not christian western expansion or manifest destiny. This is love for people that will experience absolute separation from God forever. Apart from Jesus, who is God, who has the authority alone to forgive sinners?

So let me ask you, what is the Ganges river of Raleigh, North Carolina? Where do your friends, co workers, neighbors go to to experience the remediation and the forgiveness of their sins? Where do they go to get right with God? We ought to go to those people across the street and across oceans to tell them. To tell them that Jesus is God and he came to forgive sinners.

He has the authority to forgive our sins. The story of the paralytic shows us that Jesus is God and he alone has the authority to forgive sinners. Jesus proves the invisible miracle of forgiving sins with a visible miracle of healing the man. This is ultimately a foreshadowing of Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus would eventually die to atone for our sins.

He was raised on the third day to prove that the atonement was finished and his resurrection, get this, would be the physical miracle that would prove the invisible miracle of the forgiveness of our sins. The story of the paralytic is a story of the gospel. Jesus rose again from the dead to prove that anyone who puts their faith in him can see this physical miracle and know that the invisible miracle of being forgiven, of their sins is complete and is done. Jesus begins his mission here in mark two, knowing that his authority to forgive sinners is rooted in his future death on the cross for sinners. And so with that, we ought to worship him and respond in absolute faith and confidence.

And so would you bow your heads and pray with me.

Jesus, we want to marvel at your grander and your authority and your significance and your majesty. You, through whom and for whom all things came into being, are the one that became a baby crying in a manger to grow and to live and do life with us so that you could show us that you are God and that you have the authority to forgive sinners. And we want to worship you. Lord, I pray for the hearts in this room that feel cold even now to this truth. And I pray that you would do what my words cannot do and that you would tenderly, compassionately show them what you're like and that you would convince them that you are God and that you have the authority to forgive their sins.

Would you help us to worship meaningfully with faith now? Would we pray this in your name. Amen.



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