

CHRIST, - THE SINNER'S ONLY HOPE (Mk. 2:1-12)

We often hear well-intended people telling us that all religions are essentially the same, and that the rise of multi-faith is to the advantage of us all. Religion is about making people feel good, and contributing benefits to our society, and upholding good moral standards, and producing healthy motivation ... and it doesn't really matter which religion you hold to, as long as it *is* for the common good. Well, it *is* true that many types of religion can contribute to these issues but there is one real need none other can meet apart from that which we refer to as Biblical Christianity. Biblical Christianity, - as the name suggests, - is the Christian faith that is built upon the truths of the Bible alone.

The greatest need of anyone is not simply a faith because faith by itself does not bring salvation. It is what, - or more correctly, - *Who* we have faith in. Jesus said, [Jn. 6:47 He that believeth on me hath everlasting life](#) ... [Jn. 3:17 he that believeth not is condemned already](#), because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ... This, then, is man's greatest need, - to believe in the Name of the only begotten Son of God. Otherwise, they are, - said Jesus, - [condemned already](#). The only means to escape the eternal wrath of God is through Christ alone, for only in Him is sufficient grace for deliverance.

What sends people to Hell? ... It is not sin on its own that sends people to Hell ... It is sin that remains unforgiven, ... sin that has never been dealt with by the death of Jesus on the cross. Hell is only occupied by people whose sins have never been forgiven. It is the destination of the unrepentant ... of those who have squandered the opportunity to believe in Christ ... and if they leave this life without Christ, they will be forever without Him. On the other hand, Heaven is occupied by people whose sins have been forgiven. So, this *is* man's greatest need ... to know your sins have been dealt with and completely removed by the work Christ carried out Calvary, so that the very moment you leave this present scene, you will be with Him in Heaven.

From the commencement of Scripture God is willing and eager to forgive. He could so easily have put Adam and Eve to death the moment He discovered they had sinned ... but instead, He made them [coats of skins, and clothed them \(Gen. 3:21\)](#) ... He took away their fig leaves and He slew animals, - He shed innocent blood, - to make a covering for their sin.

He is by nature compassionate, kind, loving and merciful, and it is His desire to save sinners from His own wrath. That is the Gospel!

So, there is nothing more offensive to God than sin, and there is nothing more Godlike than the forgiveness He offers through grace. And, grace comes at a price ... It came at the price of the sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, I Tim. 1:15 Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ... Eph. 1:7 In whom [*Christ*] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace ... And this grace is something completely of God. It is not something we can ever earn or work to achieve. It is beyond the reach of God's creation. Grace is a gift from God for He Himself, - and He only, - has met the standard His perfect justice requires.

When Christ died on the cross He satisfied those righteous demands of His Father by becoming a substitute by taking the place of the sinner. He died in the sinner's place. All the sins of all the sinners who will ever repent and believe were put upon Jesus as He died, and He died a substitutionary death, thereby satisfying the just wrath of His Father. That is the message of the Christian Gospel that salvation for sinners, - no matter who they are, where they come from, the colour of their skin, the language they speak, or anything else, - the message of the Christian Gospel is and has always been that through Jesus Christ alone is forgiveness of sin.

Thus far in the Gospel of Mark the Lord has carried out many healings and deliverances from demon-possession (cf. 1:23-45). His ministry relates to people. He didn't spend His time arguing theology, or trying to fix all the wrongs in their society ... He came for the one purpose, to free His people from their sins, so that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (Jn. 10:10).

At the beginning of chapter two, then, we have the crowd, the paralytic, the Saviour, the scribes and the leaders.

Mark explains, v.1 And again He [*Jesus*] entered into Capernaum ... During the intervening period he has been ministering throughout the region of Galilee, Mk. 1:38 And he said unto them [*His disciples*], Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. ³⁹ And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

So, for weeks and months, He has been in Galilee, healing, casting out demons, and preaching the Gospel. By the time we arrive at Mk. 2:1, Jesus had returned to Capernaum ... and notice also how Mark relates Jesus was in the house (v.1) ...

This was ‘home’ for Him, - it is the same word as ‘house’ (1:29, οἰκία), - and it was His ‘base’ in the area. It was very likely the home of Simon and Andrew. When the people realised He had returned, they gathered outside looking for Him. It’s not that they wanted to hear Him preach, but they wanted to be healed, etc. There is no indication they were interested in hearing Him preach the Gospel, or that they wanted to repent of their sins. And they came in such numbers that there was no more room in the house, no room around the door ... and even the street would have been full!

We remember another occasion in the life of Jesus ... when there was ‘no room’ for *Him*, Lk. 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. ² ([And] this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) ³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) ⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was *no room* for them in the inn. ... Isn’t it sad how normally people have ‘no room’ and no time for Jesus, except when they are looking something from Him ... when illness or troubles come their way ... That is when they want Him! That’s how it was at Capernaum ... They came to Jesus out of selfishness. ... That’s the way some people *still* come to Him today ... Sometimes people come to a church, or they phone us, or they send us emails looking for help, but they are not interested in hearing the Gospel.

And there is something else about this crowd outside the house ... Crowds are not necessarily a measure of success in the ministry. Sometimes people reckon if there are crowds going attending a certain church, it means there is great blessing to be had there ... regardless of what is going on ... regardless of what is being taught.

Actually, when you look into the Old Testament you will see the prophets standing on their own, - they didn’t know what it was like to have great numbers, except in opposition to their ministry ... Similarly, in most of the churches in the New Testament, in fact, Paul wrote, II Tim. 4:16 *no man stood with me, but all men forsook me* ... And even the Saviour pleaded, through the words of Jeremiah in Lam. 1:12, [*Is it*] nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted [*me*] in the day of his fierce anger. ... And nowhere does Mark in the Gospel record *crowds* coming to Jesus in repentance. ...

The crowds come because of their selfish curiosities. They wanted something from Him. But spiritually, they were indifferent, Jn. 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. ¹¹ He came unto his own, and his own received him not. They wanted all that Jesus had to give, but they don't want to give Him anything back! In fact, they hindered the work of Christ. That's why He had decided in 1:38,45 to depart from them. They were an obstruction to His ministry ... for the reason He had come into this world was for nothing less than to seek and to save that which was lost (Lk. 19:10).

Everything else, - all the healings and casting out of demons, - was 'extra'. Jesus' purpose for coming into this world was to preach the gospel to the poor; ... to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, ¹⁹ To preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4:18). ...

And here is something else ... His preaching was being interrupted once again. The devil doesn't like what the Truth has to say! It's different this time though. Previously, it had been the demon-possessed man in the synagogue who had interrupted (1:23). This time the interruption came courtesy of the men digging a hole in the roof of the house! But, generally the people were indifferent to Christ's teaching ... they were not interested ... they were more engrossed in His miracles.

Also among the crowd, Luke tells us, 5:17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by. ... They were the people who insisted upon being set 'on a pedestal'. You would have seen them walking to the synagogue seeking the praise of men ... And they were there in the crowd on that day 'keeping an eye' on what Jesus was doing, and what He possibly might say that would draw their opposition. They were the guardians of local Judaism. They were there to confront this Man from Nazareth when He would inevitably say something contrary to their teachings and speculations. On every occasion, they came to Jesus 'looking for an argument'. They wanted to see how they could catch Him out!

Isn't it amazing how people today come to Jesus, - and come to church, - for different reasons? Many also want Jesus to sort out their problems ... but that's all ... and isn't it also very noticeable how His enemies still continue to congregate around the truth of God in order to 'pick holes' and obstruct its proclamation! It shows us, indeed, there is nothing new under the sun (Eccles. 1:9).

Here were these Pharisees, steeped in their self-righteous manmade religion. They said they believed in the Old Testament Tanakh, and in the resurrection, and in the coming of a Messiah and His Kingdom, and in angels, in demons, in salvation ... They were devoted, they claimed, to the keeping of the Law and the complexities of their rabbinic regulations ... and yet they could not see Jesus as their *Emmanuel*, their 'God with us', their Saviour.

These opponents of the Gospel mingled amongst the crowd in Capernaum. They were sowing their seeds of animosity and hostility towards Jesus. They would have been jealous because of the attention He was receiving. They would have sneered at Him as an 'upstart', - an *uneducated* 'attention-seeker' from the hills. There was no doubt about it ... Jesus was a threat, and they wanted to haul Him before the courts, and silence Him.

They were the Pharisees whose office began after the children of Israel had returned from the Babylonian captivity about four hundred years previously. Since then they had been developing their form of legalistic Judaism that infringed the truth of God in the Old Testament. ... There were also the scribes in this crowd (v.6). Both scribes and Pharisees often worked together. Whereas the Pharisees would mainly have been the preachers, the scribes would have been the scholarly type, - the 'theologians' that formulated the doctrines and teachings of the Pharisees.

In the midst of all this, v.3 And they [*the ordinary people*] come unto him [*Jesus*], bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. ⁴ And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. They felt they had to do such a thing because the people had no sympathy for this poor paralytic man, - they didn't care about him ... they would not let him through! ... And the paralytic man *would* have been poor. He had no means to sustain himself. There was no social security 'benefits system', and no humanitarian organisations to help him. ... And the crowd was selfish beyond words simply because *they* wanted to see what was going on. They gave no thought to this man ... Jesus was the greatest *phenomenon* they had ever seen, and they didn't want to miss anything that was going on! ... That's all He was though! This was a self-seeking, self-serving, self-indulgent crowd ... and they wouldn't get out of the way! They blocked anyone else getting to Jesus.

... And people are still doing the same today! ... They are erecting obstacles to stop people coming to Jesus ... For example, in our school classrooms the delusion of evolution is *hurled* at the children. It's nothing more than fantasy in scientific jargon and yet children are being brought up to believe it ... while the same education system prohibits teaching the children the Bible truths our generations were brought up with. ... Any young child who asks questions relating to anything to do with God is discouraged by 'the crowds', until they go away and possibly lose interest altogether. Christian teachers would run the risk of being disciplined for teaching Biblical truths. As a consequence, we are producing societies that have no knowledge of God.

We have also seen it recently in the area of homosexuality. Increasingly, those of us who believe what the Bible says are marginalised and criticised.

Another of the many barriers constructed has been within religion itself! Religion has been 'reconstructed', and made to suit the desires of man, and not God! Man is their focus. They strip away the Biblical concept of sin, and repentance, and the need to come to God in believing faith through Jesus Christ. The man-centred religion is leading countless numbers towards a lost eternity in an everlasting Hell. Any who seek in these places to come to Jesus by way of the Gospel of saving grace are discouraged. It is like what was happening among the people in Capernaum, [they could not come nigh unto him for the press](#). ... Please don't allow our church to become like that! We are here to *bring* people to Christ, not to put up barriers to keep them away! In these dark days, - as it was in Capernaum, - people are searching and yet they don't know what they are searching for ... As God's people we must take great care to 'shine a light in the darkness', and not to put anything in the way of anyone who is searching for Christ. ...

Those four men carried their friend intending to find Jesus ... but the crowds kept them out. Indeed, look at the trouble to which the men went. Earlier that morning, they had gone to the man's house, and made all the preparations to make him ready. You can imagine them dressing the man, and the pain that would have accompanied it as they dressed him. They would have carried him 'dear-knows-how-far', but that is because they wanted their friend to meet Jesus and be healed. They had possibly seen and heard of Jesus healing multitudes of other people ... and what He did for them, they believed He could do for their friend.

That was what motivated them to bring this man to Jesus ... And this man ... what was his name? We're not told, and it doesn't matter. What did you call the men who brought him there? Once again, we're not told, and it doesn't matter. The thing that matters is his friends brought him to Christ!

Now, that's about as far as we are going in our study today, - we shall come back to it next week (D.V.) ... but here is enough for us to be considering just now ... Would I have been as determined and as faithful as those four men who brought their friend to Jesus? When was the last time I tried to introduce anyone to Him? Yes, I know it is difficult ... and in fact, it might be a little more difficult today than it was then because *then*, - as I have already suggested, - Jesus was a new phenomenon, ... and He was in front of them, and they could see Him. We don't have that today. Jesus is not with us *physically*.

And yet, if we believe Jesus Christ is the only Saviour from sin ... If we believe *He* is the only means by which men and women can escape the eternal wrath of God ... we'll not stop trying to find a way to introduce them to Jesus. The 'crowds' might be surrounding Him, the obstacles are 'piled high' 'at the door' ... but if the Lord lays it upon our hearts to introduce lost souls to Christ, we should be like these men and search to find another way in!

J.C. Ryle wrote "A man's religion may well be suspected when he is content to go to Heaven alone." ... Neither you nor I does 'the saving', and neither does our church, - we can never save anyone ... but we can tell about One Who does wonderfully save. We have many loved ones who are dead to Christ, and ... *who* is the only 'connection' they have to Him? Isn't it you and me?!

This paralysed man, at home in his bed, would never have met Jesus had it not been for the four men who came and made him ready, ... carried him along the stony and dusty road, took him carefully up the steps onto the roof; dug a hole, and took away the slates *and let the man down at the feet of Jesus*.

That was how they brought their friend to the Saviour ... May God put it within our hearts to follow their example and to see Him blessing our efforts in the salvation of those over whom He has given us personal stewardship ... for His Name and for His glory's sake! Amen.