

## Spiritual Authority in Action

Mark 2:1-12

### The Popeyes Chicken Sandwich Phenomenon: (Article Excerpt)

*“Popeyes' fried chicken sandwich is simple and self-evident. It is, from all appearances, a standard “Southern-style” chicken sandwich with mayo (regular or spicy), thick-cut pickles, a buttery brioche bun, and a chicken breast seasoned and spiced with Popeye's traditional buttermilk batter.*

*But Twitter, politics, focus-tested quality, naked enthusiasm, and misplaced priorities have made this sandwich a phenomenon. The act of acquiring this \$4 sandwich has reached Black Friday proportions. Lines snake out the door. Fights break out in the drive-thru. And a man died—literally died—over a sandwich-related conflict.”*

It was inevitable: Popeyes ran out of chicken sandwiches. They had ordered enough stock to last them through September, had the sales projections stayed within a predictable range. What they did not expect was for the sandwich to go viral; the entire stock lasted all of two weeks, and Popeyes tweeted out an official statement that they had sold out of sandwiches.” (Posted from Complex, BY KEVIN WANG).

The phenomenon only grew and the hysteria increased as the public awaited the return of the Popeyes chicken sandwich. Like the Popeyes’ chicken sandwich phenomenon, there are times when people and circumstances happen and cannot be explained or understood.

In today’s lesson, Jesus comes on the scene to an outpouring of awe, respect, and curiosity. The word of mouth testimonials of Jesus seems to take on a life of its own crowds grow larger and larger. According to the passage just prior, a man with leprosy had come to Jesus and pled with him to be made “clean”(Mark 1:40-45; also Luke 5:12-15). Jesus healed the man but told him not to tell others about it. Sometimes it is hard to keep a good thing to oneself. Our story opens to:

#### I. A Packed House (Mark 2:1-2)

##### A. Coming to Capernaum (v.1)

1. Although Jesus grew up in the small town of Nazareth
2. Capernaum had become Jesus’ adopted town.
3. News spread of his return home (possibly the home of Simon Peter)

##### B. Capacity Crowd (v.2)

1. Partially as a consequence of a healed man’s spreading the news about Jesus
2. There was no room—the power of word of mouth

#### II. A Paralyzed Man (Mark 2:3-5)

A. Extraordinary Entrance (vv.3-4)

1. Four men carrying a fifth man approached the packed house (v.3)
2. They broke through the roof by digging through an existing entrance.
3. Houses in Israel in Jesus' day had flat roofs made of reeds branches and baked mud. Difficult problems require diligent pursuits. (v.4)

B. Surprising Statement (v.5)

1. The reason given for what Jesus said in response is ***their faith***. (v.5a)
2. What Jesus said in reaction to this extraordinary entrance surprises us (v.5b)
3. Regardless of why the man was paralyzed, Jesus recognized that the man's greater need was to be forgiven for his sins.

III. Cynical Bystanders (Mark 2:6-9)

A. Silent Skepticism (vv.6-7)

1. Teachers of the law were educated both in God's written law and its oral interpretation. (v.6a)
2. Mark describes the unspoken skepticism of the teachers of the law (v.6b)
3. Jesus spoke as though he had the same power to forgive sins as God (v.7)

B. Perceptive Judgment (vv.8-9)

1. Scripture clearly affirms God's ability to know people's hearts (Jer.17:10; Acts 1:24; 15:8) (v.8a)
2. As far as verbal effort is concerned, saying that someone is forgiven requires about the same use of mouth muscles as telling that person to walk.
3. Jesus' point is forgiveness cannot be objectively verified but healing has physical proof. (v.9)

IV. An Amazing Miracle (Mark 2:10-12)

A. Absolute Authority (vv.10-12a)

1. The title Son of Man is a title used by Jesus because it comes with no preconceived ideas from Jesus' day. (vv.10)
2. Jesus shows the teachers of the law that he has authority to forgive sin. (v.11)
3. There could be no evidence of the man's forgiveness without evidence of his obedience. (v.12a)

B. Glorifying God (v.12b)

1. The evidence Jesus offered affirmed that his declaration of forgiveness was legitimate. (v.12b)

Conclusion

To pronounce forgiveness of sins is solely God's role (Isa 43:25), so for Jesus to do so is seen by pious Jews as *blasphemy*. But since sickness was seen as the result of sin, Jesus'

ability to heal the man convinces the *crowds* that God has granted him the *authority* to effect forgiveness (16:19; 18:18; Jn 20:23)

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