The God Who Came to Us – a walk through Mark 2

1. We are back to Just Jesus stories today. We will walk through Mark 2 and see that Emmanuel, God With Us, is WITH us – as in, FOR us. The force and weight of these stories should shake us a bit. Let's get started.

2. In Mark 2:1-12, we find the story of the paralyzed man who is lowered through the roof during a church meeting. Well…we can't call it "church" but it was a gathering of people to meet Jesus, ask him questions, and listen to his teaching. People were very, very interested in Jesus so the place was packed.

3. Enter some men who have brought their paralyzed friend. I like to think of these men sometimes. They were not family or that would have been mentioned here. Perhaps they were workmates. Perhaps they saw the accident that left this man paralyzed. Maybe they knew his family and their struggles to survive now that this man couldn't work anymore.

4. Whatever their relationship, it seems that a large group of men cared about this fellow. The phrasing in verse 4 says "some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them." I like it that the paralyzed man had a community that cared for him and would do whatever they could to help him.

5. In verse 5, we have a very short decision tree: they saw they couldn't get into the house because of the crowd SO they made an opening in the roof and lowered their friend down right above Jesus. They dug through the roof! This was no simple picking up and laying thatch aside – this was noisy and dusty.

6. When Jesus saw THEIR faith and the lengths they would go to for their friends, he said to the paralyzed man "Son, your sins are forgiven.' THAT is where this narrative takes a twist and we need to sit back and think about it for awhile.

7. He calls the man "son." There is a backstory here that we are not getting but there is enough to make us wonder if this man became paralyzed because of a sinful or foolish activity. Jesus's first instinct

was to forgive him. I am sure his friends wanted Jesus to heal his body but Jesus's first instinct was to clean up the issues in the man's soul and past. He did so without being asked and without any assurances from the man that he would clean up his life.

8. Even if the paralysis was from birth or the result of an infection or accident, it still matters that Jesus forgave instantly and without assurances or promises from the man or his friends. He forgave because that is what Jesus does.

9. This upset the teachers of the law and verse 6 has them thinking in their hearts "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" I was often told that we could not forgive sins. We could forgive the person for what they did but that sin still was out there in the cosmos and it was up to God if He forgave or not. Jesus was all about forgiveness and TOLD us to forgive each other. He even promised that if we forgave someone, God did, too. (John 20:23)

10. Jesus let them know he knew what they were thinking. They were saying "how can he SAY that" and he asked them "which is harder to say?" Clearly, Jesus had a sense of humor and wit. Then, Jesus said, "But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" and told the man to get up, grab his mat and go home.

11. I love it that Jesus got the man out of there. The crowd's amazement and the constant disapproval of the teachers of the law was not a good place for the man. He got to go home.

12. The next episode in Mark is the calling of Levi, the man we call Matthew, to come with him. Levi was probably a tax collector for Herod, not Rome, but, either way, people despised tax collectors and refused to fellowship with them or invite them into polite society. Jesus calls him and goes to eat with a group of tax collectors.

13. Eating with someone was a profound, public statement. When we take the Lord's Supper, I think we often miss that aspect of the ceremony or rite. He is eating with us and we are eating with him. We are swearing friendship, loyalty, allegiance to each other.

14. Just a quick question: how well did Matthew sleep for the first couple of weeks? Jesus called Zealots, too, the mortal enemies of tax collectors. Jesus called people who hated each other (and that is not too strong of a word) to walk, eat, and share together if they wanted to follow him. He still does that today.

15. So, if you are a person who has standards that keep you from associating with someone with whom you disagree (with lifestyle, doctrine, whatever), get over it. And if you are a person who thinks that you could never fit into a community that follows Jesus, think again – come on in. And if it makes others uncomfortable, we will work with them to help them get over it. Jesus chooses and he chose all of us.

16. The next portion of the chapter deals with religious traditions and laws. Mark 2:18-28 is worthy of its own sermon **(note to team members, if I think the sermon has gone on too long and this would have to be rushed, I will stop here and pick up next time).**

17. Believe it or not, there was a time when people thought that they had to follow a long set of traditions and actions to be viewed favorably by God… Jesus came to blow up those ideas and stand things on their heads. No longer would outward actions be the sign that you were a part of God's community (and God always intended for the outward actions to change their hearts). Now, the hearts were changed and the evidence of that would be outward actions (and inner thoughts).

18. Mark 2:18-22, Jesus is questioned about why his followers didn't fast like those of John the Baptist or the Pharisees. Jesus told them that it wasn't always appropriate to fast: sometimes, the Bridegroom was here and it was time to rejoice! Put it this way: if Christ were to walk in here right now, I think most of us would fall to our knees very quickly when he would rather we rushed toward him and hugged him.

19. This was all new to them and Jesus knew it, so he told them that it was like patching wineskins. He wasn't patching up the work

that God had done before. He wasn't there to make Judaism better. He was there to do something new.

20. And to prove it, in Mark 2:23-28, he responds to another criticism, this time alleging that his disciples were breaking the Sabbath! He brings up David and his eating of the consecrated bread which was lawful only for the priests. Jesus said it was all right because David was hungry. Then, verse 27 and 28.

21. He forgives. He sees us. He brings us together. He doesn't enforce countless rules but calls us to be like him: forgiving, loving, serving, accepting and kind.