

# Mark - The Words of Eternal Life

## The Doctor of Deep Needs

### Mark 2:1-17

Good evening. It's wonderful to be with you all this evening. The righteous remnant of Briarwood Presbyterian Church at Central Time Zone really gets you out here, doesn't it? Well, apart from being a wellness check on Briarwood Church to see how our Sunday evening service goes, I'm thrilled to have you all here and to be able to worship the Lord with you and be able to open up Mark 2:1-17. As we continue on in our series in Mark and we're noting, and I want you to note as I read this again, Mark is putting together a kind of collage about who Jesus is. And you remember I quoted R.T. France, the New Testament professor, who said that if Mark is a fast-moving stream, you know, Matthew is a stream that stops and has these pools of narrative and developed stories in a way that Mark doesn't. Insofar as we've been reading Mark, we've been going quickly. Almost through the rapids. Just story after story after story. Very short little vignettes. But notice Mark slows down here in this story, and we get a little bit of a pool, a little bit more of a narrative than we've gotten in the past. So I want you to pay attention to how Mark is unpacking this story, to tell us something about who Jesus is. So we're in Mark chapter two. We're reading one to seventeen.

***And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. Meaning Jesus. And many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near to him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him. And when they made and had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay, A And Jesus saw their faith. And he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven. Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they had thus questioned him within themselves, said to them, why do these things? 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. 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 and go home. And he immediately rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and saying amazed and glorified God saying, we never saw anything like this. And he went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, follow me. And he rose and followed him. And as he reclined at a table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. For there were many who followed him, and the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, those who are well have***

***no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but the sinners.***

This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, we do respond to your word with thanks. We return thanks to you that you have revealed yourself to us most perfectly through the person of Jesus Christ. As we read about him here in his tenderness, as well as his firmness with those around him. Lord, I pray that you would bless us, that we might find hope and consolation in his tenderness, and that we might find strength and confidence in his firmness. Lord, let us see Jesus, that we might be like him. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, as we've said in these early chapters of Mark, he is moving us towards that that turning point in Mark chapter eight, where the apostles will tell him, the disciples, as he's talking to them, will say, who do people say that I am? And they'll say, well, some say this, some say another, and then he'll say, but who do you say that I am? And at that point we'll have Peter step forward, speaking on behalf of the disciples and say, you are Christ, you are Messiah. You are that anointed one, that capital in Messiah that the Old Testament talks about who will come in the line of David and restore Israel from exile. Now we know that this is who Jesus is, because Peter proclaims it for him right there at the turning point of the book. And yet we haven't been given that information yet. And so as we're moving through these early chapters, Mark is painting for us a picture of who Messiah ought to be, not who do we expect Messiah to be? You have to remember that all of the Old Testament readers in Jesus day would have known with the prophets that someday, at the end of this great exile, there would be a repentance of the land. You remember we talked about that. That's why John's doing a baptism of repentance and that that would trigger or that would initiate this Restoration Age, when Israel would be re-established and would begin its movement over the face of the Earth. And we could point out Isaiah sixty six or Daniel nine, or the other places where it talks about what will happen when Jerusalem is restored.

Now, we don't have to try to imagine too hard to see how that might be received by a Judean living under Roman centurion rule, right? The Roman Empire, where the centurions are in your streets and they're treating you like second class citizens. And if you're not a citizen of Rome, you're not much. And they can imagine how one day Messiah will come and he's going to break the iron scepter of Rome, and he'll finally reestablish Israel in some kind of geopolitical way. Maybe a new David will reign and will come and will have victory over our enemies, casting off the colonists who have come and imperialized us. And so Jesus, knowing this, offers himself in a kind of hidden way early on. He's being a good teacher. He's being a tender teacher. He's starting with a kind of common ground that he has with his audience, and yet he's drawing them out to start asking questions about him. And Mark, in his whole rhetorical style of his gospel, lays hold of those questions, and he gives us each one. He reports the questions to us because he's telling us. I would even argue that Mark is, in a way, teaching us how to read his gospel. He's saying, these are the questions you ought to be asking. The first question actually comes from demons. Interestingly, remember in our last passage, they say, who are you? Why

have you come, Jesus of Nazareth, we know who you are. Are you here to destroy us? Mark says, isn't that interesting? Isn't it interesting that the demons would ask a question like that? Who is this? That even the demons obey him? And then we have the next question. The same passage that we read last week, where the scribes are listening to him teach, and the people are saying, he doesn't talk like a normal scribe. He doesn't just recite Bible verses to us and answers to our questions, but rather he speaks with authority. Unlike the scribes, we talked about how prophets would be known by their authority, by the way they spoke. People would hear them and they'd say that that person is a truth speaker.

And now, in the passage today, we have another rhetorical question that is offered by the audience. Do you see it there in verse seven where they say, why does that this man speak like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone? And Mark is saying, that's a good question, isn't it? That's a good question about who Messiah is because you're thinking of Messiah as a military commander. And yet notice what he's doing. He's acting like God in forgiving sins. So you see, Mark is kind of painting this big picture for us of who Messiah ought to be before he tell us, who Messiah is. And you remember a weeks ago I used that example that I can't help but think about in this passage, because I think it's such a wonderful illustration of it. But, you know, Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and the children are hearing rumors about Aslan, but they don't get to meet Aslan until they've already begun to see the work of Aslan in Narnia around them. And we remember that the snow melts and the ice on the rivers breaks free, and people start to start to receive gifts for Christmas. I love that it's winter all the time, but never Christmas. But all of a sudden Christmas happens. And so by the time they meet Aslan, they already love Aslan. By the time they meet him, they already realize what kind of king he really is.

You see, Mark's audience would have thought the best thing that Jesus can do, the best thing we can imagine him doing, is coming here and overthrowing our corrupt. Uh, you know, ethnic leader here, Herod, and overthrowing pilot who represents the Roman government and finally freeing Israel. That's the best thing that they can imagine Messiah doing. And yet, as we see in Mark, Messiah is about a much bigger course of action. He's not just looking to secure a geopolitical space on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, but he's actually about overthrowing that great cosmic imperial force of Satan, sin and death. But you see, they weren't looking for that. Jesus had to show them. He had to be a pedagogue for them. He had to teach them what they ought to be yearning for and what they ought to look for. And I would hasten to say, this is what our Christian life is about as well. It's learning to ask the right questions about Jesus. It's learning to recognize what he's really here for, not what we can in our best moments, imagine him to be here for. And so this passage includes one of these great questions. And it's a wonderful question, because in the question the Pharisees answer themselves, they say, who can forgive sins but God alone? It's interesting the way they put it, isn't it? They don't say who can forgive sins, but the priest and the temple, because they recognize that even the priests and the temple can't forgive sins. All that he can do is take you through the process of offering your sacrifices. And even the best rabbi can't forgive your sins. He can tell you need to be convicted of your sins and go to the temple. And then you can go to the temple, and you can check with the law and see what kind of offering you need to offer.

And then you can offer that, and the priest will facilitate that offering. But the priest can't forgive your sins. Only God can forgive sins because sins are between the individual and God alone. So in this passage today, the focus opens up on Jesus. He returns to a place called his home, and he is there and he is teaching. And in a large crowd is gathering. We've seen already that he's been casting out demons. He's speaking with authority, and he's healing diseases. You remember the woman with the fever and the man with leprosy who he makes clean. And so word about Jesus has been spreading around. This kind of carnival atmosphere has developed around him, so that people are now kind of bringing him challenges. It's almost kind of like a sort of ancient Near Eastern stump. The chump. Can we bring him something that he can't handle? Can we bring him something that's too great for him? And the greater they bring to him, the greater he does. And so the crowds are growing and swelling. And finally, this house is now so filled with people that you can't even get into the gate. You can't even get into the front door. And then the focus turns to this man. Now, interestingly, it's always important to notice who's named and who's not named. Notice he's not named at all. We don't find out later what the rest of his life was like. Like we do. Perhaps at least we can. We can guess about people like Nicodemus or Zacchaeus, right where we can see a little later on. We've got tradition about what he's what he had done and how he had had a role in the church. We don't know about this man. All we know is that he has some friends who care for him enough to find a way to present him to Jesus. Now, again, we don't know the heart of their faith. We don't know how well they understood justification by faith alone. All they knew is this Jesus might be able to heal him. We believe he can. That's all they knew. They knew. If our friend has this problem, then Jesus is his only chance. This could actually save his life. And of course, that's why they're vandalizing this house, pulling up what was most likely the palm fronds that were baked in mud in order to keep the roof hard, in case in those rare seasonal rains that they receive in this region. So they had they had covered it up, and now you could pull it back. It wasn't like a roof today. It's the kind of thing where if you go up with a good stick, you could kind of get it in between the palm fronds and yank it back, and the palm fronds would bounce out and they make a hole. So the mud is probably falling through into the room that is packed with people, and people are probably moving back as Suddenly this pallet is lowered down with ropes by these friends. And of course, this is exactly. This is exactly why these people had gathered there in that room. This is exactly the kind of thing they wanted to see. Here was proof positive. A man we all know. He's from our town. He's been a paralytic his whole life. It's not he's not a he's not a ringer that's been put in the audience who can act like he's been healed. This is a guy. This is a real control test. And they all gather together to see what Jesus will do. And so here comes the paralytic through the roof. And he finally gets his audience with Jesus. And the tension is building in the crowd is hushed. If you notice, everyone is hushed throughout the whole event. It's a quiet room into which Jesus steps forward facing the man and says, son, your sins are forgiven. Now I can imagine that there are two responses to this. You probably have the response of the crowd who's watching this whole thing take place? And they're saying, oh Jesus, that's not what he came here for. Or that's rather not what we came here for. Do you see the palate? Do you see the ropes that the friends are lowering down? That's not why he's here. He's not here to have his sins forgiven. He's here to have his legs healed. So I imagine that's one response. A bit of kind of umbrage that Jesus doesn't seem to

understand what's going on, particularly after he's done all these things so far. Doesn't he know the game? He's got to play his part, and yet Jesus doesn't. And then I imagine there's a second response, and it's the one that we actually are told about from Mark. You have the Pharisees who are watching this, and they're watching it with kind of a cold distance. They're still evaluating who is this teacher who teaches with authority? This man about whom we've heard all of these stories, and they're listening and they're watching, and they hear him step forward and say, son, your sins are forgiven. These men who had spent their whole lives dedicated to memorizing and copying and interpreting Scripture, they understand what Jesus is saying. They don't miss it. It's not it's not something that kind of slips by. Or maybe they misinterpret it. They know exactly what he is saying, and that's why their response is the response that it is. It's a response of indignation. Their response is this Jesus, who do you think you are? Who do you think you are talking in this way to this man? You see, Jesus had spoken with authority in their midst before people even said, maybe we should think about recruiting him. You can imagine they were thinking maybe we could use him to kind of bolster our own popularity amongst the people because he has such a crowd. And now notice what he's doing. The thing that rabbis can't do that priests can't do. He is openly declaring wholesale the forgiveness of this man's sin. And just to be clear, we know that he's not talking about some kind of previous sin that happened earlier in the day. It's not that Jesus tripped over the man's pallet, and the man yelled out a curse word at Jesus and said, Jesus says, don't worry, I forgive you. That's not what's happening. He is declaring a wholesale forgiveness of sins on this man.

Now, do you notice again, we have to read closely how Mark is presenting the story. There's a crowd. There's a destroyed roof. There's a pallet that's being lowered down to the ground. There's a paralytic man. But just note again, no one is talking. The scribes don't stand up and yell at Jesus. You see what it says? They say it in their hearts. This is something they're thinking about. And so Jesus is speaking into a silent room. It's a quiet room, and he's stepping forward and he's looking them dead in the eye. Even though they're sitting there quietly, you can imagine them kind of rolling their eyes or nervously looking this way and that as he looks right at them and he says, why do you say that in your hearts? He's speaking in a silent room, but he already knows their subtle, unspoken inclinations to rebuke his divine authority, by the way. Notice that the quiet is not just true of them. The silence is also true of the man who is laying on the bed. He says nothing. He doesn't like step forward like the man Jesus will later encounter. Say, Lord, I believe. Help me in my unbelief, or he doesn't reach up and try to grab the tassel from Christ's robe. Or He doesn't say, Lord, if you touch me, you'll make me clean like the leper said. Notice he's not saying anything. He's just laying there completely silent, completely quiet, passive and inactive. And in the midst of all this activity, the quiet man laying there hears his Lord speak his name, as it were. His new name. Son. Son, your sins are forgiven. You see, I think Mark is highlighting a truth about Jesus that he has yet to show. And that's this Jesus is the agent of salvation. Notice everyone else is sitting there passively, even the scribes who are cursing Jesus in their hearts quietly, everyone sitting there passively, including this man. He has done nothing to earn his salvation. He can't even get himself into the room. It's friends that he has to rely on to get him there. And yet what happens? Jesus steps forward and doesn't say, can you recite for me John three sixteen? He doesn't say, do

you know the Westminster Confession? He steps forward and the shepherd recognizes the sheep, and he looks in his eyes, and he says, son, your sins are forgiven.

You see how this undergirds that theology that we get from Paul later in Romans chapter eight, where Paul tells us that those that God foreknew. And if you've been in the covenant theology class, you know the best way to translate that is for acknowledged those that God recognized in history as his. He also predestined, those he predestined, he also called wise, so that they might be made anew and come to life by faith. You see, here we have the second person of the Trinity, who has been around for all eternity, and who knows the elect who are his, and he's stepping forward. And the kid doesn't have to say a word before Jesus says you're one of them, son, your sins are forgiven. Because it was his paralysis that made it possible for him to come before Jesus. Because that's the reason he's there, because he had friends. Isn't it interesting, by the way, Mark tells us, because Jesus saw their faith. This should be an encouragement to us as well as we're bringing our friends to the gospel as we're introducing them to Jesus. That it says Jesus saw their faith, the faith of the friends and the paralytic who all this whole group is considered kind of one big endeavor, bringing this man to come and stand before Jesus. And he recognizes them and he responds, and he identifies him by saying, your sins are forgiven. But secondly, the most important thing about this is this the man is coming before Jesus in the only way that is appropriate for any of us to come before Jesus. Utterly helpless, utterly passive. There is nothing that I can bring to him that would esteem me to him, that I might be saved.

And this is true not just at the beginning of your Christian walk. It is true throughout your Christian life that we recognize that when we come before the Lord in prayer, as we pray here at Briarwood in the morning and in the evening, when we open up with an invocation, and then when we pray, before we listen to the word of the Lord, notice we are not coming before him and saying, God, we cared enough. We cared enough to be here. Please save us, right? We say, Lord, we knew enough not to watch the Puppy Bowl this evening. We came to church, right? Okay, that's what my eleven year old thinks. She's like. I can't believe I'm missing the Puppy Bowl. Okay, that's not why. That's not how it works to be saved. I'm not coming and saying, look what I've done. Lord, look at all of my good works. Look at how active I am in the church. Please, Lord, now because of this, save me. Notice, the only way for us to come before the Lord is to come before him passively open, receiving our salvation, not earning it, not in any way esteeming ourselves to him. And isn't it interesting that this thing that this man probably considered his greatest lack his whole life? It's hard for us to even imagine what it would be like to be a paralytic in an ancient setting, like the ancient Near East. I mean, nowadays, you can imagine we already know. You know what it means to be a paralytic today. It's hard, but we've got so much help.

I remember when I lived in Bahrain, a city or an island country in the Persian Gulf, you would see incredible poverty there, unlike anything you'd ever seen. You'd also see incredible riches unlike anything you've ever seen before, but you would go down to the market, to the souk. And remember, as you'd walk into the souk, there was a big gate, and behind the gate it was just a sea of booths and stores that just went on for miles. But at the opening of the gate is where all the beggars would sit. And I remember there was a paralytic man there, and he would always

cry out when you walked by. And I remember thinking that life I can't even imagine in that kind of poverty. That's what we're talking about here. There's no help, there's no motorized wheelchairs, there's no occupational therapy. You imagine this man must have thought, if I could just get this one thing fixed, then everything would be okay. And yet, little did he know that it was that felt need that that incredible physical need, that financial need, that relational need that he had suffered from his whole life, this paralysis which would actually become the only reason why he finds himself now laying before the God of his salvation. You see, the thing that he thought was his greatest need was not his greatest need. And Jesus recognizes this, and this is where he meets him. I think there's a reason why the stories that Christians tell about their first meaningful encounters with the gospel, with Jesus himself, so often, so often include some kind of difficult moment, some kind of deep felt need that led them to pray prayers that they would not have prayed if it had not been for that felt need.

Now I think about my own grandfather on my mother's side, a self-made man, a veteran of World War Two, a Navy pilot from World War two, and Korea. Self-made man, a true hero. He had been a hero of this country's military. He was a Harvard graduate. He lived a life of hardened, self-reliance. Truly, truly a man that people looked up to. And yet, as a result of that self-reliance, he was not at all open to the gospel. And even as his children became believers, he would quietly, sometimes not so quietly, prod them and poke them and joke with them because of their naive faith. And it wasn't until late in his life, after a diagnosis with lymphoma in his body left wracked by nineteen eighties chemotherapy, he was laying in a bed upstairs. And I remember we'd visit and you'd only be able to go in for about five minutes and talk to him because he was in so much misery. And it was there that he met his Savior. And then all of a sudden, he was a new man. Now, don't get me wrong, he was still the curmudgeon of his old life, but he was now a curmudgeon for Jesus. So often it's those times of weakness, of impotence, of total inactivity that puts us in the right place before our Lord and our Savior. Now, it doesn't have to be so dramatic and also be a long life of just kind of or a long period of time of just considering the things of the gospel.

Some of you may be there this evening. You're considering these things, and you're not sure if you believe these things, but you're considering these things and that's fine. That's also a way that the Lord draws us to him. And yet as you grow and I believe if you're here and you're thinking all of that, then the Lord is at work in you. As you grow in your knowledge of God, you're going to realize more and more how little you bring to this equation. I remember one pastor telling me, the only thing that we contribute to our salvation is our own disobedience. That's the only thing we have to offer. It's the only thing that we can barter with our own sin. And of course, it's no bartering chip at all. So Jesus comes to this man. He sees his sheep. He recognizes his sheep as the shepherd. And he says, son, your sins are forgiven.

You know, it makes me think of those shows that used to be so popular on TV where you'd have some kind of family, it would be a game show, and you'd have some kind of family that was dealing with some sort of terrible difficulties in life. And it was always a very sympathetic family as well. You know, a person who had left his high paying job to help, you know, the youth in the city. And he had ten adopted children, and they were just struggling and doing good. And yet they lived in this really small house. And you remember what would happen. The show

would come and they'd say, we're going to build you a new house. And then at the time of the big reveal, they'd have, you know, a curtain in front of the house, the new house, or they'd have pulled up a semi that would be kind of blocking your view to the house. And, and the family would come out. And the whole idea was that they would move the semi to the side and they'd see the new house that the show had built for them, and then everyone would feel really good about themselves. Imagine the show going this way. They come up, they show up. The semi is there blocking the house. Everybody's waiting. They go for the big reveal. The drum roll comes, the music rises, they pull the semi out of the way and there's the host of the show and he says, your sins are forgiven. You know, you can imagine what people would say, right? You can. That show would not last very long. You could hear the TV's changing channels pretty quickly.

And you have the same dynamic here too, because as they see Jesus walk up and everyone's excited, is he going to do what he did with the leper? And is he going to do what he did with the woman with the fever? And is he going to cast out the demons? Is he going to do all this stuff? And he walks up and he says, your sins are forgiven. And yet then Jesus introduces his own question, right? Hearing what's in the hearts of the scribes, he says so which is harder to say your sins are forgiven, or rise up and walk. And I would actually argue that when Jesus asks that question, it is an honest question. He's not saying, I'll show you what's really hard or something like that, or I'll show you how much power I have. He's not doing that. He's actually asking a question that I would argue at this point. He alone knows the answer to. Because you see, Jesus is completely alone in this story, knowing what it means for him to say your sins are forgiven and to have that statement be true. Jesus Christ, who the prophet Isaiah refers to as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, who as soon as he is born, has his face set like flint towards Jerusalem, where he will go and not ascend to a throne. But he will be posted up on a tree like a common criminal. He alone knows which is harder to do. You see, it's an honest question. Jesus knows the death that awaits him. He knows the atonement that must take place so that the sin of the man is truly forgiven. And so, in a way, this scene sets the stage for the rest of the gospel of Mark. After we hit that turning point where they identify that Jesus is Messiah, everything that comes afterwards is either telling them this is how Messiah will die, or this is how you will die because you follow Messiah. And then ending with the death of the Messiah. Everything now is moving towards that end.

But it's not until we get to chapter two right here, where we first get a hint of what's going on, because Jesus alone knows the answer to the question. And I have to even wonder if, as he's standing there, we have a picture of the gospel. On one side, he's got the scribes and their hearts saying, who is this? Who do you think you are? Who can forgive sins but God alone? And then on the other side, he has the paralytic who stands in for the ones that he came to save. And he turns back, and he looks at the scribes who are already conspiring in our hearts. And for the first time in the whole gospel, we get a glimpse of how it's going to happen. For the first time, he goes, there it is. That's how they're going to do it. That's how the conspiracy will work. Because how else will this man, who's perfectly righteous and perfectly good and benefiting only to the benefit of everyone around him, how else do you get a guy like that to the cross with the nation standing around him crying out, crucify! But here we get a glimpse of it. Jesus standing between the man he came to save and the ones who would pin him to the cross. And I

feel as if he's got a glimpse of how this will take place. Now note how he forgives the man's sins. He speaks it. Notice he speaks it into existence. He says, son, your sins are forgiven because that is what he is doing. That's what he's doing right? Then, in that moment, as he's moving towards Jerusalem, he is about the work of conquering sin and redeeming his elect.

You see, that's what his old ministry is about. That's why he's preaching. Repent and believe, for the kingdom of God is at hand. The King is on the move, and he's heading to Jerusalem to gather his sheep unto himself. You see, that's what. That's what it means for the paralytic to be laying before Messiah King without any ability to do anything for himself. He's being presented to his Savior. And the only way that is fitting. Following Christ does not, and being a part of his kingdom does not mean that all of your felt needs will be solved. It doesn't mean that you're going to have an experience like this where suddenly the physical ailment, or the relational wounding, or the abuse in your childhood, or the financial struggles are all going to suddenly be unraveled and healed.

That's not what it means to be a follower of Christ. I want to be very clear about that, though. We will and you will hear stories about amazing things. And yet, that's not the essence of following Christ, rather the essence of being a disciple of Messiah, the one who would die. The essence of it is this having a new perspective on your felt needs, having a different way that you think about the things that you think are your greatest lack, your greatest absence, your greatest shortcoming, your most difficult besetting struggle. You have a new perspective on this because you realize it is these things that put you before Christ in the way that is fitting, so that you might have your deepest need met. That is your salvation. You see, Jesus is the doctor, but he's not coming just to heal our physical or emotional ailments. He's coming to heal our cosmic ailment, the problem of sin.

As a matter of fact, I think the second part of this story, which we won't spend as much time in this evening. But the second part, with the calling of Levi, and then the relaxing with the tax collectors in the sinners, is where Jesus actually explains everything that happened in the previous story. You see, just like Moses tells Israel, you're not the greatest of nations. You're the least. Or just as the Lord tells Elijah up on Mount Horeb, when Elijah says, is it I only I who am fighting for you, Lord? And he says, I've got seven thousand that you don't even know about. Or it's not just it's not just Paul who says not many noble, not many wise, not many beautiful, not many successful are called, but rather he calls the weak and the foolish. In order to confound the strong and the wise. We see the same thing happening here. Jesus says, I didn't come for those who reckon themselves healthy. I came for those who know that they're in need of a savior. You see, that's how our felt needs serve us today, just as we spoke about this morning. The gift of waiting is a gift of discipleship that draws our eyes to Christ. So are the gifts of our felt needs, our struggles, the things that, that, that, that wreck our bodies with anxiety and fear and concern every day. They are merely tools to draw you to the person of Christ.

Now, when you do this kind of expository preaching, by the way, where you're going through books every once in a while, the Lord gives you really wonderful little match ups between the morning text and the evening. And so I would leave you with this. Do you notice that both

Israel, when they are given the land of Zion, and this man, when he is finally given the thing that he's been waiting for, that is to stand up and walk? In both cases, the command is rise with the Israelites. It's rise up, take the land I've given you. And he turns to this man now, who is in a way, an embodiment of all of Israel in the midst of the restoration of Israel. This man who's laying there and has been waiting his whole life for this one thing. And the Lord says, now receive your blessing. The time for waiting has come to an end. And you remember what we said this morning. This is all just a liturgical practice for us to prepare us for that last day when Christ comes again and he calls us all and says, rise up, you dead. Rise up, you bones. Rise up and take the inheritance that is yours in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, we do come before you and beseech you. We know that we have nothing to esteem ourselves to you except for the blood of Christ that has been given to us. We know that we say that we are justified by faith, and in the same breath, we recognize that faith is a gift. It's not something that we've won for ourselves. It's not because we have a little better sense than the next guy, but it's because you have given it to us. And for that Lord, we give thanks. Heavenly father, bless us, conform us to your Son, Christ Jesus. Let us see him more clearly, not only in our pleasures, in life and our joys, but in our felt needs and those struggles that seem to dog us day in and day out. Lord, I pray that each one of them would leave us in a position where we are able to receive our Messiah in the only way that is fitting.

It's in Christ's name we pray.

Amen.