

Mark 2:1-12

Paralytic

Theme: We have a heart problem/That is why Jesus came

Something is wrong with our world....most of us would agree with that statement

There is too much injustice, pain, and greed

There is hunger, and illness and loneliness, and betrayal

If we choose to do it, we can read about it all or listen to it everyday all day long

And most of us have places in our lives where we think "This isn't right...if only things were different."

Something is wrong with our world

And the Bible doesn't say its because of politics or religious affiliation or national/international influence, or global warming or war or anything else

The Bible says that what is wrong with our world has to do with the state of the human heart.

The Bible says...right here...is where all the trouble starts...

Twenty-two days after you were conceived, a tiny little electrical pulse stimulated the heart muscle, the myocardia, of your left and right atria to contract. It's called an "atrial kick" and it forced blood into your ventricles.

(HEART BEAT?)

That movement was so faint that it could not be detected, even with amplification, but it was, in fact, the first beat of your heart, only 22 days after you were conceived and it's never stopped from that day 'till this—70 milliliters of blood with every contraction, 14,000 pints being pumped every day, 100,000 beats of your heart every day from that day to this one.

God gave us these amazing gifts called our hearts, our physical hearts, and of course, we can't even make them beat on our own. (STOP HEART)

Anybody here absent minded?

Anybody here forget

where your cell phone is, where you are parked (recently landed LAX – I had no idea)

where the car is, where the kids are, if even if you have kids?

*Imagine if our heart only beat when we remembered to tell it to beat!* I know I would be in serious trouble.

But it doesn't. God just created our heart so that that beat goes on (HEART BEAT) whether we are aware of it or not.

It's a gift.

And if it doesn't beat well, or in rhythm, the whole of our lives are threatened

Some of you have been praying for Norman Pratt's heart surgery

Norman is fine now, sitting up in a chair in recovery at O'Connor hospital

But he had to go into surgery because his physical heart wasn't functioning right

And it was threatening his life

The physical heart is the seat of our physical life

But God didn't just give you a physical heart.

God gave us all spiritual hearts too.

There is an inner me, there is an inner you,

That part of you that chooses, that part of you that devotes, that part of you that commits, that part of you that wills and loves,

The truth is that no matter how well you take care of your physical heart – no matter how many surgeries you have...One day its going to wear out. It's going to stop beating sooner or later. (HEART BEAT STOPS)

But *your spiritual heart, the core of you—that goes on forever.*

In the ancient world the heart was not simply an organ

It was the seat of personality...the core of who a person was

**Above all else guard your heart for it is the wellspring of your life.**

**(Proverbs 4:23)**

Don't worry so much, the writer of the Proverbs is saying, about how you are doing in terms of security, physical health, material well being, all of that stuff. That has its place.

But above all of that, the top of the list, the first priority is guard your heart,(your spiritual core) watch your heart, care for your heart because your whole life flows out of your heart.

Jesus said, **“Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.”**

If my heart is right, my actions will naturally flow out of me and reflect that spiritual core of who I am.

So the question that I want to ask you today is “What’s the condition of your heart, your spiritual heart, your heart for God and your heart for people?”

And it is possible for us to be deceived about the true condition of our hearts.

This is true physically, but it’s also true spiritually. There is a fascinating parallel, I think, between the physical heart and the spiritual heart How do we find out the true condition of our heart? This is from a research cardiologist,

Hardwin Mead is a research cardiologist and we used to know his family...he did a lot of groundbreaking work on the human heart...and this is what Hardwin said,

*“We see people come in all the time and look perfectly healthy. You wouldn’t know there was anything wrong with their heart. Simple tests can be done like listening to the heart, doing an EKG, things still look fine. But put that person under stress and now we see there’s something wrong, maybe life threatening. If we hadn’t examined them under stress, we might never have found the problem and there could have been dire consequences but caught in time we had a chance to correct it. They can live a healthy life if we examine their heart when they are under stress.”*

When it comes to my spiritual life, sometimes I might think my heart’s OK. I come to church and we worship and I see myself worshipping and I think, “Wow, I must love God.”

We sing a song together and I’m singing and my feelings are kind of caught up in the beauty of that song and I think, “Gosh, I must really love God.”

I see a picture or maybe an advertisement for something like COMPASSION and my heart is moved and I think, “Boy, I must have a heart for God.”

And then comes stress.

Then comes a problem in a relationship with another person. Then comes something at work that doesn’t go the way I want

it to go.

Then comes financial pressure where I don't have as much money as I think I want to have, need to have, got to have.

Then comes change that I didn't initiate, that I don't think I want.

Then comes temptation. When I am faced with not getting what I want, or when someone has hurt me so badly that I can't love them, even when I live with them, that causes stress...and—under stress—that's when I find out the truth about my heart, and a lot of times the truth about my heart is not nearly as good as what I had thought it was.

There are times in our lives when the state of who we truly are gets exposed in a way that not only surprises us, but also forces us to look at the reality of who we really are.

HERES RICO, ON THE DVD TO TELL US ABOUT A TIME THAT HAPPENED TO HIM

(VIDEO CLIP ON RUGBY)

At certain points in our lives we are faced with the truth about ourselves

Sometimes God puts us in situations where we have to be honest, where we have to come clean

And that's **The first step to curing our heart problem.**

## **1. Recognizing that we have a problem**

No one wants to hear that from a physician news about problems with their physical heart

No one wants the doctor come in and say, "You know, we've looked at your heart...we've done tests and examined it...and I've got to say...there's something really wrong...and we are going to have to do surgery."

Nobody wants to hear those words.

In the same way its difficult to admit that there is a problem with us spiritually.

Often we don't want to look at it

We'd rather see ourselves as pretty good people...and we can keep that illusion up if we want to...

But Jesus was very clear in Marks gospel...he said "I didn't come for people who think they are pretty good people."

I didn't even come for people who think that they are just good enough to squeak into heaven."

I came for people who know they have a heart problem and know that they are going to die without my intervention. I came for people who know they are not good enough and will never make it without me.

One of my colleagues shared this experience...

One Sunday morning during the prayer time which followed the sermon, one of the most well respected senior adult men in our church made his way down front to speak with me. He serves as a faithful deacon and Sunday School teacher. He has a kind, gentle, and generous personality and is one of the hardest workers in the church. I thought he must have been coming to pray for someone else. However, he took my hands and remarked, "Preacher, I want you to pray that I will be on the inside, in my heart, what people see on the outside."

Second Step is

## **II. Go To Jesus**

And I don't mean bring it before Jesus as a pretty good person who needs a little help, a little tweak here and there

I mean bring it before Jesus as someone who is desperate for him – someone who recognizes that unless a change of heart occurs we risk... spiritual cardiac arrest

I am so aware that I would not be alive if it wasn't for the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. I think about that every time I stand up here in front of you. I know that I am desperately and totally dependent on him for everything that I am today. I know that from the core of my being.

I used to be a chaplain in a General Hospital and I would have shifts where I would spend the night, and often people would die at night. I'd wake to the monotone announcement "Code Blue! Code Blue" and I'd have to go down and watch the

medical team try to revive someone who was coding. It's a pretty intense violent affair as paddles are put on the heart to revive someone.

And I remember after one failed attempt the doctor sighing and saying, "If only he had come to me sooner I could helped him and he would be alive today."

Don't wait to come to Jesus honestly, openly, desperately as one who is in need and knows it...

That's what the friends of the paralytic did right. They brought their friend to Jesus.

Speaks to the power of community – but we need each other sometimes to get us to Jesus when the bottom falls out

And It was their last desperate attempt – Jesus was their only hope. All they could do was hope for a miracle...and their hope was not dissapointed

That little house in

Capernaum that day was packed to the gills

Jesus is preaching to a crowd that is pressing in on him, longing to hear his teaching

There was something about Jesus that was so compelling  
*(small group...God/man– we're like "yeah, yeah" but what must that have been like?...imagine what Jesus must have been like!)*

People packed in...and Mark who is not much with detail mentions that people had come in such large number that

theres not even enough room *outside the door*, which means the street outside the house was probably jammed up too...

There was no way to get to Jesus...  
Jesus is preaching, and back then the roofs were flat on houses  
And he is standing there talking to the crowds  
And the roof above him begins to cave in  
At first a few flakes of dirt, and the KABOOM...the roof falls in  
in front of him – dust dirt flying around  
Can't you just see the crowd pulling back...everyone saying  
“Whoah”  
And the friends of the paralytic lower him down in front of  
Jesus

These friends would probably be your type A personalities  
today – movers and shakers – entrepreneurs, self-motivators  
Your “get it done”...“whatever it takes” sorts of folks

If we can't get through this massive crowd...  
We'll go up on the roof and back down through it...these were  
good friends...they cared about this guy because he couldn't  
move – and they were desperate and would do anything

But Jesus was not nearly as concerned about the outside  
problem – the physical paralysis – as he was about the mans  
paralysis of heart because of his sin

That's what he saw as the core issue when that stretcher came  
down through the roof, bringing with it a spray of dirt ... and  
the man lay there immobile, staring up at Jesus...helpless...in  
need...knowing that he was desperate.

That's when Jesus rivetes his attention – on his heart

And Jesus says, **“Son... Your sins are forgiven.”**

Who knows what the man had done? Who knows what choices he had made? Jesus knew, but doesn't reveal it.. He just looks him in the eye

Son...Your sins are forgiven

I don't know what this man felt like when Jesus said these words

If God my Creator and Lord looked me in the face and said that to me, I can't imagine that I wouldn't have a sensation of utter relief flood through me

I can't imagine that I wouldn't feel renewed in my spirit – I think the man lying on that pallet that day became mobile and free in his spirit – began to flex up and move and stretch in his inner being – before he ever was physically healed by Jesus, took up his mat and went home – which eventually happens...

But the religious leaders didn't like that Jesus said “Your sins are forgiven”

They didn't like it because it meant that Jesus was saying he was God (Again Mark is telling us who Jesus was)

They say “Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

They are judging. They are condemning. As the healed man walks out the door – what an irony...

**And Mark is saying...”Jesus is Almighty God. That's why he can say that”**

**Mark is saying...”Jesus came because we have a heart problem – that causes all of the other problems in this world”**

Mark is saying..."Jesus came so that our sins could be forgiven, and so that we could be free."

To know that God sees all that junk clogging up my spiritual arteries

Making my spiritual heart unhealthy and prone to disease and failure...to arithmeas and attacks

And that he desires to clean all that out, and make me whole...that is an awesome grace

Only God can do that...

Some years ago Christian author Max Lucado underwent a heart procedure after several failed attempts to restore a healthy rhythm with medication. He was going to have a catheter ablation.

A cardiologist would insert two cables in his heart via a blood vessel. One was a camera; the other was an ablation tool. To ablate is to burn. To burn, cauterize, singe, brand. If all went well, the doctor, to use his coinage, would destroy *the "misbehaving" parts of the heart*. Max puts it this way...

*As I was being wheeled into surgery, I tried to be witty.*

*"You're burning the interior of my heart, right?" "Correct."*

*"You intend to kill the misbehaving cells, yes?" "That is my plan."*

*"As long as you are in there, could you take your little blow-torch to some of my greed, selfishness, superiority, and guilt?"*

*He smiled and answered, "Sorry, that's out of my pay grade."*

The Dr knew it. The Pharisees knew it. ...only God can burn out the "misbehaving" cells of our spiritual heart

**"And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart" (Ezekiel 36:26).**

Finally...the third way to heal your spiritual heart is to **III. Do nothing all day**

That's what we do to keep our physical heart strong, right? We sit on the couch, stay comfortable, don't move, stay sedentary.

Just wondering if you all are paying attention.

That's not true, right? In order to maintain a healthy heart we need to exercise it, stress it a little, get the heart-rate up, and then rest it. Then go back to stressing it a bit more so that it can get strong. And its in that rhythm that we get healthy

And isn't it something that this is true for your spiritual heart also?

Your heart needs to find rest but that doesn't mean that we are just to be passive and do nothing.

God knows that you actually need stress for your spiritual heart to grow strong and healthy and loving and that's why God has brilliantly created little stress

producing mechanisms and placed them strategically all around you

These stress producing mechanism are called, “other people” who will frustrate you. They will stress you because they will thwart your will.

As Francis Chan puts it so simply: "Do you know that nothing you do in this life will ever matter, unless it is about loving God and loving the people he has made?"

— [Francis Chan, \*Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God\*](#)

**God's definition of what matters is pretty straightforward. He measures our lives by how we love."**

— [Francis Chan, \*Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God\*](#)

How I respond to people in my life is the number one indicator of the condition of my heart. Loving the people in my life, and in my world is the primary expression of an authentic love for God. My heart healthy check is how I am loving God with my life and how I am loving people – am I doing this well?

**Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.  
(1 John 4:7–8)**

Therefore, if you have difficult, cranky, impossible, hard-to-love people in your life, know that they are there to be used by God to build your heart and make it strong, and if you don't have people like that in

*your life, call the church office because we keep a list of those people and we will assign some of them to you.*

Jesus looked at the man that day, and he looks at all of us  
He sees the heart first...not the external. He looks in here  
because that's where all evil, malice, and darkness begins  
That day the man lying there on the pallat immobile, helpless,  
recognized that Jesus was his only hope.

Do you know that today? Do you know that all of our hearts  
are diseased until we bring our hearts to him....  
Do whatever you need to do to get into Jesus presence today  
(just like the guy) (maybe its in prayer now...or after the  
service...maybe you go home and let scripture minister to  
you...you take a few minutes to get yourself in Jesus presence)  
And when you do...  
Offer him your heart, and ask him to make it healthy; Ask him  
to forgive you, and take the burden away whatever it is...and  
fill your heart instead with his Divine Love that drove him to  
the cross so that he could say that day to the man on pallate  
And to you and me...Your sins are forgiven

That's why he came. To give us a healthy heart.