

The Problems Jesus Faced

by Dennis Kinlaw

Jesus' credibility problem was a major obstacle in his ministry, but he solved it by latching onto the back of John the Baptist and performing miracles to demonstrate his authority.

Duration: 38:47

Scripture: Mark 2:1-2, Romans 7:14-15, Revelation 22:1-3

Topics: "Problems"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses a story from the Gospel of Mark where Jesus heals a paralyzed man. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus needed to capture people's attention in order to make them believe in him. Instead of simply proclaiming his divinity, Jesus first forgives the man's sins, which surprises and intrigues the crowd. The preacher suggests that this unconventional approach was necessary for Jesus to establish credibility and gain followers.

Transcript

I want you to turn with me, if you have your testaments, to the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, the second chapter. And I want to use a story which is familiar to you. I'm sure there's not a person in the group who is not at least familiar with the basic parts of the story, if not with every detail.

But listen as you hear the reading of this familiar story, the beginning of chapter 2 of the Gospel of Mark. A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached to them.

Some men came bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus, and after digging through it, Lord the Matt, the paralyzed man, was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven.

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there thinking to themselves, why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up, take your mat, 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 tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home. He got up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of them all.

This amazed everyone, and they praised God, saying, We have never seen anything like this. Have you ever taken the time to try to think your way back into the life of Jesus and understand some of the problems that he faced? You know, you and I think of him as the Son of God, God come in the flesh, the miracle worker, and because of that he really had no problem. What could he bump into that he couldn't handle? And yet if you go through the Gospels and live with them a while, I think you will find that even Jesus had problems.

Now the problems were not due to his lack of power in terms of handling anything physical or natural that came along. His problem was in terms of getting done what God had sent him, his Father had sent him here to do. And that was to bring people to the place where they believed in him.

Now that creates a problem for the sovereign God, because the one who is all power himself cannot create in another person faith. Because faith is something that the person in whom it must come, faith is something that he has a part in producing. You know, credibility cannot be forced upon another person.

And if I force you to believe in me, you can count on it that you really don't believe in me. And so Jesus came, and the one thing he wanted out of the people to whom he came was that they should come to know who he was, believe that he really was who he was, and believe that his purposes toward them were good. And yet that was an almost insuperable problem.

You read the story of his relationship with his people in his own hometown, and you'll understand something of why. If I came to the faculty of Asbury College, or even if I came, maybe I should turn that around to the students of Asbury College, and begin to tell you things that caused you to say, he's under illusion. He certainly thinks he's somebody, and we know Dennis Kinlaw.

We know all of his weaknesses and all of his failings. We know all about him. You would, if you think about that a little, you will begin to understand something of what Jesus had as a problem when he came to Nazareth, though there really is not very much similarity between Jesus and me.

But of course, there's a vast difference also in the claims that I make, and the claims that Jesus made. Because when I come to you, I tell you that if there's anything saved in me, it's a sinner saved by grace. And that if there's anything good in me, it's something that God in his infinite mercy and goodness gave to me.

And that if I have any gifts at all, what are they that I should boast in them? Because I certainly didn't produce them. If there's anything there, it's something that God himself gave. And my problem is not that I have so much.

My problem is that I'm going to be held very responsible for what I do with what little I do have. Now you think of how differently Jesus came. Jesus came with, I suppose, brown hair, or black hair and brown eyes and olive complexion, two eyes in his face, just like everybody's else.

And I suppose he had a Jewish accent. And he came and he looked at these people and said, Now boys, you don't know who I am, but I want to tell you, I'm God. And the fellow said, Wait a minute, we played with you when you were growing up.

We watched you stub your toes just like all the rest of us did, physically if not otherwise. We know that you're different, and we know that there's some things remarkable about you, but you're not going to tell us that you're the invisible God, because the one thing a Jew knows is that nobody's ever seen God at any

time. And if anybody did see God, he'd die on the spot.

That was an old Jewish belief that the Old Testament taught. Moses, you will remember, the greatest man that ever lived. He never saw God face to face.

The best that God would do for him, who was his greatest friend, was to show him his back. And then Jesus comes along and says, I'm his face. Now who do you expect to believe that? And yet that was what Jesus had to do.

Jesus had to get people to the place where they believed that he was the eternal God come in human flesh. And he had a credibility problem. Now there were a lot of other religious people that had come along before him and made some claims, and most of the people that came along, religious people that came along and made those claims, didn't live up to their own claims.

So there was a big credibility gap in the minds of the ordinary public when it came to looking at religious leaders. You know, if you've ever read Elmer Gantry or if you know the kind of thing that goes on in TV and in the movies, you can count on it when the fellow with the clerical collar shows up, you better hold on to your pocketbook. Or more, because you can count on it in the media.

The one thing you know is you don't trust the guy who comes and says, I come in the name of the Lord. What if a guy came along and said, I am the Lord? Now how do you get people to believe that? You surely don't get them to believe it by telling them, do you? The one thing you can be sure of is if you tell them and you are that, they're not going to believe you. So you can't start off at the verbal level, can you? Now with that in mind, I think I understand a lot more of why the Gospels are put together the way they are.

Because Jesus had some basic problems, and the problem was to get somebody to believe in him. So in the Gospel of Mark, what do you find? The first thing he had to do was to get people's attention. And you don't think he'd get anybody's attention by coming along and saying, hi fellas, I'm God.

The second time he did that, they'd already be gone. They weren't going to listen to him on that kind of score. So what did he do? It's beautiful to me the way God the Father and God the Spirit led him in the way he made his presentation.

The first thing he did was he latched onto the back of the greatest prophet that the Old Testament ever produced, John the Baptist. A man that was so authentic and so real that when he came along the sinners of the worst sort came to the thousands, the multiplied thousands to hear him. It was like a Billy Graham ministry without a Billy Graham team.

Can you picture all those people showing up without any advertising and any promotion? Well they did for John the Baptist. And then one day Jesus showed up, and John the Baptist turned and said, I'm not the one you ought to be listening to. There's the guy you ought to be listening to.

He's the very Lamb of God. And people turned and said, wait, you're the big boy. And he said, oh no, I'm the one who's going to decrease.

There's the guy who's going to increase. I'm not worthy to take his shoes off. And people said, wonder who that guy is.

So when he stood up in Capernaum and began to speak in the synagogue, everybody nudged each other and said, this is the guy that John the Baptist said was greater than he was. And so Jesus started preaching. And as he preached, people paid close attention to what he was saying.

And as he preached, that crowd were very impressed by what he said, because they said he preached as if he knew more than the other preachers that came along, as if he knew what he was talking about. He didn't quote any books, he didn't quote any Broadway plays, he didn't quote any movies, he didn't quote any of these things. He just said, boys, this is it.

And it made sense. And he said, that's remarkable. When suddenly his sermon was interrupted.

There was a guy in the crowd who had a spirit in him that was difficult and that was evil, and so he confused everything. And Jesus turned and said, out. And suddenly the man that was upsetting everything was as calm and as quiet as can be.

And they knew that they had seen an actual spiritual, perhaps physical, miracle take place in front of their eyes. And they said, He is different from John the Baptist. Because you know, John the Baptist never performed one miracle to anybody's knowledge.

And Jesus started right there. Well at the end of that, Simon Peter, who had been a disciple of John's, came and said, Master, Preacher, why don't you go home with us? And when they got home, they found his mother-in-law had, was sick. And so Jesus said, where is he? He went in and laid his hands on Peter's mother-in-law, who was ill with a high fever, and in the next moment that fever was gone.

Now what do you think went on in Peter's head? I don't know about you, but I think what went on in Peter's head was, John was right. I never saw John the Baptist do this. He was a great preacher, but he couldn't cure anybody.

He couldn't perform miracles. And so Peter said, You know, I believe I'll follow this guy. And then he went out and told his neighbor.

And by sunset, they had all the sick people in that part of the neighborhood brought in, and Jesus went out and went from person to person and healed them all. And the word began to run, saying, This guy is very different. So he got their attention.

Then he started out over Galilee preaching. And as he did, he performed a miracle. On one occasion he healed a leper.

And then it says, he came home to Capernaum. Now you see, I can understand that. What did he do? He came into Capernaum, he preached, he performed one miracle in the church, then he went home with Simon Peter, then he went out and began to minister abroad and got away so the word could spread all around.

How many people do you think were at church the next time he came to town? Well, you're right. They couldn't get him in the church. They stood all around the windows.

And as they stood all around the windows, then Jesus started to preach. Now how's he going to tell them who he is? Now that he's got their attention, can he stand up and say, Boys, I'm God? No, he can't do that, because they wouldn't have believed him any more than NBC believed Jimmy Carter yesterday when he

said the Cubans really were responsible for that invasion in Zaire. If you listened to the news last night, I don't know about you, but you know, it breaks my heart when the news reporter, one of the reporters said to the news reporter who had been in the White House and gotten the special best of all possible briefings that was given to convince at least one reporter that the Cubans were responsible for Zaire, and John Chancellor said, OK, are you a believer? And the fellow said, Well, what he was asking is, do you believe our president? And the guy who had heard the best said, Well, it depends on the credibility of the witnesses.

And if you believe the word and the character of the people that are the witnesses, then yes, it's very impressive. But if you don't, then it won't be. And to this day, as far as I know, the public doesn't know whether the guy that the president called in to make a believer believes or not.

Why? He's got all that backlog of Vietnam and CIA disclosures and FBI disclosures. And Jesus had all that backlog of people that came in the name of religion for the centuries before he came along. Jesus wasn't about to stand up and say, Boys, I want to tell you who I am, because nobody would have believed him.

Now how do you fight that? Well, he was God's son. And when somebody is God's son, God will help him. God helped Jesus, and he'll help you and me.

And he'll help us have some credibility in your ministry this summer, wherever you are. But how did he do it with Jesus? OK. As he is preaching, suddenly they take, there's a commotion, and the towels begin to disappear off the roof.

And everybody turns, and there's where the attention is, and as they look a man is being lowered on a mat down through the roof. And as he gets down to Jesus, Jesus looks at him and watches that whole thing. And the calmest person in the crowd is Jesus.

And when the fellow got down, you can imagine how the fellow on the mat felt. And as he was being lowered down, Jesus looked at him and said, Son, your sins are forgiven you. You know, that's an astounding thing.

That is the, that really is the non sequitur of non sequiturs, isn't it, if you remember anything of your lesson. The one thing that nobody expected was for Jesus to look at that guy and say, Son, your sins are forgiven you. I'd love to have a movie of those four fellows who were lowering him, because I know what happened.

One of them nudged the other and said, What'd he say? And the other one said, What I heard him say was, he said, Our buddy's sins are forgiven. And when he did, the guy who nudged first looked at him and said, Who got religion into this thing? Now, it was a church service, but they didn't bring him for religion. They brought him to get his paralysis healed.

And as they stared, you remember there were guys around the wall who were the church leaders. They were the bishops and the superintendents and the big boys, you see. The church ecclesiastics, and they nudged each other and said, What'd he say? And one of them said, What I heard him say was, Son, your sins are forgiven you.

And they said, Ah, we know he's an evil man. He's just like all the rest of these religious fellows that ever came along. Jesus' credibility was gone, because they said, Nobody can forgive sin, but God.

Your biggest problem when you start to witness is credibility, isn't it? Because the one thing you know is, the world's been full of religious people since the beginning of time who weren't real. And so the religious leader said, Ah, he's not good. Only God can forgive sins.

And that was the reason he didn't tell them he was God in the first place, verbally. But, you see, when he told them verbally, they didn't believe. Okay.

Now, then Jesus said to them, Well, which is easier, for me to say your sins are forgiven, or say, get off your bed, put it on your back, get up and walk? Because he said, both are true. You're well, and your sins are forgiven. Now, it's an astounding story, and I want to draw some quick conclusions out of it that may be surprising, too.

First of all, I want you to think in terms, not of propositional preaching, verbal preaching like I'm doing, but I want you to think of dramatic communication where truth is taught in ways other than by verbalization. Now, I notice that Jesus didn't hesitate to verbalize, because he was verbalizing when he said, Son, your sins are forgiven. And when they said, Only God can do that, he was verbalizing further when he said, Well, which is easier.

He was saying without any question that he was God. But now, it's never enough to verbalize. There has to be somewhere that evidence beyond that.

Word is not enough. There has to be word and deed, verbal word and objective reality that correspond with each other, and then you can see. But now, let's think about this other kind of communication.

What was Jesus saying? I think he was teaching some profound theology. The first thing I want to say is that it's no accident that the guy that came to him in this case was a paralyzed man. Because I think that that probably is as good an analysis of you and me, as good a comparison as you can ever come across.

Now, we don't have time to go into that, but just let me read you a verse that I think are a few verses that apply to this. Listen to Paul. We know that the law is spiritual, but I'm not.

I'm unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I don't know what I'm doing. For what I want to do, I don't do.

But what I hate, that's exactly what I do do. And if I do what I don't want to do, I agree that the law, which is what I don't want to do, is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it's sin which has had its paralyzing effects on me.

Do you do as well as you ought to? Do you do as well as you know? Are you what you want to be? Are you like a buddy of mine when I was in high school? Closest friend I ever had when I first became a Christian, a witness to it. Big old bruiser of an athlete, golden gloves boxer, captain of the football team, tremendous tennis player, champion in his weight, golden gloves boxer. Wept, looked at me, said, Dennis, I want to be good, but I can't.

And you know, a paralyzed man has everything necessary to walk. He just can't walk. Or, if it's in his legs, or if it's in his arm, he's got everything there, but he can't do it.

Now don't tell me it was an accident that that guy on that bed was a paralytic. I think God ordered it. OK.

Now what's he saying when he speaks to him, and suddenly there he is in front of everybody's eyes, perfectly well. He can walk, he can stand, he can run, he can skip, he can do what anybody else can do

now because he's physically well. You know, there was something eschatological.

Now that's a stinker of a word at 8 o'clock in the morning, first day of Sunday school, isn't it? I mean, first day of summer school, isn't it? Yeah, you think it's Sunday school, don't you? But there was something eschatological in that. Because do you know what everybody is looking for? Everybody is looking for somebody that one of these days can solve all of our problems and make everything right. And do you know one of these days that's going to happen, at least for some? You look at the closing part of the book of the Bible, listen to this, next to the last chapter.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them.

Now what happens when God comes to live with men? They will be his people, and God himself will be with them, and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be nothing more to weep about.

There will be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain. For the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new.

Now that paralytic needed something made new, didn't he? Then he said, write this down. There doesn't need to be any credibility gap here, he says. For these words are trustworthy and true.

I'm making everything new. Now listen to the last chapter of the Bible. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the great street of the city.

On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. The United Nations hasn't learned about that yet.

But that's the answer to the United Nations problem. OK. No longer will there be any curse.

Now you see that paralysis in the human heart, that paralysis in the human personality, that disfigurement in the human person. There will be no more curse. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

These words are trustworthy and true. Now who wrote that? Do you know who wrote that? A guy who was standing in the crowd that day when that guy came down on that mat. And when Jesus looked at him and said, Son, your sins are forgiven you, or whichever way you want it, you're well, you're restored.

Why do you think John said there's coming a day when all sickness will be healed and all problems will be solved and war will be no more, peace will be established, love will reign and all things will be new? Why do you think John believed it? John had seen him do it in so many individual cases that he believed he could do it universally. So you see, that morning in Capernaum, Jesus was getting one of his new disciples who didn't know who he was yet, he was getting him ready to write the book of Revelation. And he was teaching him who he was.

Now, there's surely something Christological here, because you see, what he is doing is he's teaching them who he is. He makes it very clear that he is the one who can forgive sins. They can see that he can restore a paralytic, but he's saying that morning, Do you know I can do more than that? I can forgive sins.

And they say, Wait a minute, only God can do that. He says, That's right. So what's he doing? He is dramatically and verbally identifying himself as the Christ of God.

Now, who is the one who can do that for us? It isn't the apostles. They were standing around with their mouths open. It isn't the church.

They were saying, Who does he think he is? It wasn't the crippled. We can't do it for ourselves. He was saying, Do you know what you need? What you need is something nobody can do for you except me.

And I've come to do it for you. All right. Only Christ.

He is the one who has the authority, the Son of Man. Now, let me mention a third thing. We very seldom rightly read what our problem is.

If you had asked those four fellows what was wrong with their friend, what would they have said? They said, Man, that's obvious. Look at him. He's deformed.

He's paralyzed. If you had asked a paralytic what was wrong with him, what would he have said? He said, Look at me, man. I ought to tell you I'm paralyzed.

It's interesting when they lowered him down to the answer to his needs. The one who had the answer to his needs didn't say a word about paralysis, did he? He said, Son, your sins are forgiving you. Did you know that we very seldom ever know really what's wrong with us? We always lay our finger on what we think is obvious.

But the real problem is normally much deeper. It's not the visible, but it's the invisible. Now, the beauty about Jesus is, and the reason we need to come to him is, we'll spend all our lives working on the things that don't count.

And when it's over with, we will have never dealt with our problem. But if you come to Jesus, he will break through your darkness and your ignorance. He will break through my darkness and ignorance as to self-understanding.

And you'll lay his finger on it and say, Dennis, you're beating around the wrong bushes. You're working at the wrong places. Your problem isn't out there.

I can take care of that very easily. Your problem is down here where other people can't see and where you don't think there is any problem. And where is it? It's in terms of the real.

What is the real? That's the spiritual, that's the moral, the ethical, that which has to do with what's holy. You see, that's the one supreme thing about God. He's holy and we're not.

And it's the unholiness in us that's our problem. And until that can be dealt with, everything else is secondary. Now, what's the answer? The answer is, you've got to get concerned.

And you know, I now understand why God lets people get paralyzed. Do you know this fellow would have gone on all his life saying, nothing wrong with me, if he hadn't gotten paralyzed. The best gift that God ever gave him was his paralysis, because it helped him find out there was something wrong with him.

You know, I watch students at Asbury College that don't think there's anything wrong with them, and they're healthy, nice looking, got enough to get through, everything going right, and they're the ones to be sorry for, because they're the ones that are under illusion. So God, in his infinite love, gave to this guy paralysis so he could find out where he really was. The paralysis was a passing thing, but his other problem would have been eternal.

And so God gives you passing problems so he can get the eternal problem taken care of. Isn't that great? Thank God for some of our troubles that we say, if I could just get rid of that, everything would be all right. We're wrong.

Everything would be all wrong if we could get rid of those things. You know, the kid who says, why did he make me so ugly? That may be the best gift he'll ever get. Why am I not as bright as somebody else? That may be the best gift he'll ever get.

Or why is it I'm so undisciplined? That may be the best gift you'll ever get. I don't know where your need is, but wherever your point of need is that makes you hurt and say, yeah, I could use some help, that's the best possession you've got right now. OK.

Concern. Concern that either causes you to come or causes somebody to bring you. And it may be that that's the reason you're here this morning.

Many a kid that came to Asbury, not because of his concern, but because somebody else was concerned, namely a mother and a father who shipped him off, or maybe a pastor friend or somebody else. But thank God that the concern of somebody else can help you. And so they came.

OK. What kind of concern? The concern that brings you to Jesus, because there's where the answer is. And a concern that takes you anywhere else will leave you in trouble.

All right. A concern that brings you to Jesus. Jesus said, Beholding their faith, he said, son, your sins are forgiven.

They believed that Jesus could help him. They didn't know enough to believe he could forgive his sins, but they'd come to believe he could help him at the point where he thought he was in need. And you know, that's all right.

You may come for the wrong motive, but for God's sake, come. You may go to Christ ignorantly and for the wrong thing, but for God's sake, go. Because when you get there, no matter what your motive in going, if you give him a chance, he'll give you the right thing.

And then he obeyed him. He said, Take up your mat and walk. And the fellow did it.

And if you'll come to Jesus and listen and do what he tells you to do, you'll find he not only transforms and makes all things new at the point where you've been hurting, but he'll make you new at the point where you didn't even know you were hurting. That's what a wise and marvelous Savior he is. Now I want to say something else.

That's the last thing I want to say. That when you come to Jesus, you always get more than you bargained for. Those five guys came so he could get freed from his paralysis.

And when they came to Jesus, he got freed from his paralysis. But he got a lot more than he bargained for. And what he didn't come to get was worth a whale of a lot more than what he came to get.

And that will be true of you. Do you know one of the things that's exciting about working with young people is when you see them come to a place like Asbury and when you see them begin to confront Christ, you begin to say, I wonder what he's going to get from Christ that he never bargained for and that I never anticipated. Because we watch you with great delight and anticipation to see what good things God is going to do in your life if you really come to Christ.

You know, I have never met anybody who honestly, humbly, penitently came to Christ who didn't get a whale of a lot more than he ever bargained for. I could start over now and do the next hour in personal witness on that. The most delightful, joyous, best things, greatest treasures that have ever come in my life were not the reasons I came to Christ.

They were things that he tossed in. And you know, people went away that day saying, who is he? You know, I think the paralytic went away saying, you know, those guys around the wall said only God can forgive sin. And he said to me, son, your sins are forgiven you.

Could it really be that I have seen God? I think he may have gone away saying, you know, I think I did. And I think that thought just caused the sun to burst in his life. And you know, that's what he wants in your life, for you to believe in him.

And if you do, you'll go on well and rejoicing and witnessing. Have a good day.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/20/SID20904.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dennis-kinlaw/the-problems-jesus-faced/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net