

Mark 2:1-12

March 4, 2012 – 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT

## Never Like This!

✦ **Power to heal the body (vv.1-5)**

✦ **Authority to heal the soul (vv.6-12)**

In the name of Jesus, who has God's power and authority to heal inside and out, dearly redeemed:

Last week I watched an hour interview of several young men, all former Mormon missionaries, once pillars in their Mormon communities and families. One was the son of a Brigham Young University professor and her husband, both of whom also converted to Christ. It was a long, hard road for them that only a former Mormon could feel. But their stories give a wealth of insights into that American born religion and the sadness it brings to souls. What changed them? It started with Christians who would sit down and listen, then challenge them to read the Bible like a child. When they did, they saw something that we will also see today. Radiant in beauty is Jesus healing a paralyzed man. Everyone was amazed and praised God: *"We have never seen anything like this!"* Still today, **Never Like This!**

✦ **Power to heal the body (vv.1-5)**

If you have your Bible open to Mark 2, just glance back to the end of Mark's first chapter. God the Holy Spirit inspired Mark to record many powerful miracles of Jesus for mostly Roman Gentile readers. Citizens of the Roman Empire were impressed by anyone with real **Power**. Jewish readers would be amazed at Jesus reaching out and touching the unclean leper to heal him. *"I am willing," Jesus said, "Be clean!"* Strange to us is Jesus' order for the man not to tell anyone, and how it hurt Jesus' ministry when he did anyway: *"As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly, but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere."* (Mark 1:40-45) What other religious leader has ever avoided crowds? Most want to make a name for themselves.

Now Jesus is back in Capernaum in a house so crowded that no one could even come close to the door. What was Jesus doing? *"He preached the word to them."* God's Word was not only on His lips, but in His very essence. The Bible says Jesus is the eternal Word of God who took on human flesh through the virgin womb of Mary as God Incarnate. Listen to Jesus' words. **Never Like This!**

That's what the former BYU professor noticed about all her Mormon scriptures. Very rarely do they record the actual words of Jesus Christ, even though Joseph Smith named them the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The professor's son was angry when he was on his mission and a kind hearted Baptist pastor challenged him to read his Bible like a child. They had been taught that the Bible is true "in so far as it is correctly translated." But whenever the Bible disagrees with Joseph Smith, they say it's not the correct translation. Mother and son read the words of Jesus Himself in their Bible and were absolutely amazed. The living, powerful Word did something they'd never known before.

How many of us have four friends who would physically carry us past a crowd, dig a hole through the roof and lower us right down in front of Jesus? That's faith in action. We don't even know their names, or the name of the paralyzed man. We don't hear him say a word. But Jesus sees what the man needs. And not just him, but us and the crowd. In a way my sermon outline is backwards. We might expect Jesus' **Power to heal his body** would come first. Jesus had been doing miracles all over the place. But that's not what our Lord says. Before this body needs healing on the outside, here's what we all need. Jesus said to the paralytic: *"Son, your sins are forgiven."* Soul first, then body?

One of the former Mormon missionaries explained this well. "We always had such perfect families," he said, "but no one would talk about their struggles. I felt I was doing everything right on the outside, but what would make me clean inside?" If we're honest, wouldn't we have to admit our own hypocrisy when our thoughts and attitudes don't match God's loving commands? Our country would be

better off with higher standards of morality. Civic righteousness is a blessing. The old Jewish proverb says, ***“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.”*** (Proverbs 14:34 NIV84) Much of the sickness in our land comes from Christians acting as if the economy or their creature comforts and convenience are more important than being clean inside. Many argue their own standards of morality while condemning others as worse sinners. Self-righteousness cannot see it’s own hypocrisy. That’s why the LORD’s prophet Jeremiah said, ***“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”*** (Jeremiah 17:9 NIV84) Looking inside, let’s admit our selfish feelings and sinful thoughts. Then rejoice that God’s Word, the Bible, says we’re ***“born again”*** by Baptism (Titus 3:5-7) and God’s Word (1 Peter 1:23). God wants us to live our Baptism every day (Romans 6:1-11) in a whole new life of repentance powered by these amazing words of God’s Word: ***“Son, your sins are forgiven.”***

### ✠ Authority to heal the soul (vv.6-12)

Healing the body? Okay, but **the soul**? ***“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”*** Does Jesus have the **Authority**? One Mormon website says, “The Book of Mormon, along with the Bible, testifies that Jesus Christ is our divine Redeemer and that by living according to His gospel we can find peace in this life and eternal happiness in the life to come.”<sup>1</sup> But the Bible says, ***“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (Romans 5:1) Joseph Smith’s *Book of Mormon* contradicts the Bible: “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is **by grace** that we are saved, after all we can do.” (2 Nephi 25:23)

Did you catch those last words, “...after all we can do”? What had the paralytic done when Jesus said to him, ***“Son, your sins are forgiven”***? He was physically unable to ***“Get up...and walk,”*** when Jesus told him to. But Jesus proved He has the **Authority to heal the soul** when He used His **Power to heal the body** of the paralyzed man. Wouldn’t you think everyone would be cheering?

What more could Jesus do to satisfy work-righteous leaders then or now? Why not accept Him as the Prophet sent from God? They read their Bibles with self-righteous hearts, thinking God owed them for good works. It was like someone buying a car from you, holding out his hand for the money. You say, “No! You owe me. You’re buying the car.” He points to the price on the contract and says, “See! It says right here. Pay up.” God owes us nothing. We owe God for life and health and forgiveness of sin.

Jesus has done all the living and dying and living again that God demands for our souls. ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*** (Ephesians 2:8–10 NIV84) That’s good works out of thankfulness, not guilt. It’s the opposite of Mormonism adding, “...after all we can do.”

It was in today’s SECOND LESSON too! ***“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”*** (Romans 5:6–11 NIV84)

Jesus is God from all eternity. ***“Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking to themselves.”*** He did not argue. He kindly healed the man. And He has so kindly used His divine **Power** and **Authority** to heal us too. Not before or since has anyone done miracles like Jesus. **Never Like This!** ***“Praise the Lord, O my soul!”*** (Psalm 103:1-5) Amen.

<sup>1</sup> <http://mormon.org/book-of-mormon?>