Good Evening, good to see you!
As you know we've just begun a new series looking at the life of Jesus
and after a brief but brilliant interruption last week because of the Baptisms
we make it into Mark Chapter 2,
which is right at the start of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus has begun his ministry and news about him is spreading like wildfire!
Soon there are crowds coming from everywhere to see him.
*Mark 1:32 - That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus ALL the sick and demon-possessed. The* ***whole*** *town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases.*

Its clear that Jesus had the power to heal, and to heal many
And here's is our first problem…
You and I know that Jesus is the Son of God –

I could spend tonight talking about that –
especially since he claims the authority to forgive sins –
which his opponents only God could do…

But I am not going there tonight – Tonight I want to assume that you and I know that Jesus is the Son of God
and we know that 'through him' and 'for whom' all things were made
- all things that exist (both in heaven and on earth) were made 'through him and for him'

And knowing this gives us a problem…
because if Jesus is God,
if Jesus has the power to heal and
if he has the power to heal many,
then why doesn't he just heal the whole world?

Why doesn't Jesus just snap his fingers and all the illnesses in his town are healed?
Why doesn't he say the word and all blind people can see?
Why doesn't he pray to God and all the lame, all the lepers, all the injuries are healed – all around the world???

If Jesus is God,
if he has the power to heal,
if he is healing many right now –
***then why doesn't he just heal everyone?***
This is a big question.

If Jesus is God, if he has the power to heal, then why doesn't he healing everyone?
And the answer must be that …

That there is something more important going on right here!!

There is something of **higher priority** / of **more importance** than healing every illness in the world, every disease, every disability, every hurt.

Something more important!
This is an astonishing claim! – What can that be????

But then the problem gets deeper because
after Jesus has begun to heal – he then disappears…
*v35 very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*
*Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"*
**Everyone!**
*Jesus replied, "Let us go **somewhere else**--to the nearby villages - so I can **preach** there also. because that is why I have come."*

Jesus makes one of the hardest decisions in his life...
He goes away and prays over this for hours.
And then he chooses to leave the sick and the needy behind...
**Because he has come to preach.**

In other words there is something in what Jesus has to say to us that is more important / of higher priority / more pressing
than (not only world hunger, healing every disease and every illness)
but in healing YOUR hunger (if you were there), your disease and your illness.

There is something in what Jesus has to say to you that is more important than your deepest, most pressing, felt need.
That's what I want to talk about this evening.

If you are a not yet a Christian: there is something more important in life than your most desperate need, your fondest wish, your most pressing problem.

If you **are** a Christian there is ALREADY something in your life
More important than world peace, healing of all pain, your most desperate need and fondest wish!
We see what it is in Mark chapter 2
and I want to take two ideas from the text tonight…
that:
your problem is not your main problem; and
in your life there is a difficult question to be answered.

your problem is not your main problem; and
in your life there is a difficult question.

**1. Your Problem is not Your Main Problem.**
Mark 2v1
*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 the word 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, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.*

It is not possible to underestimate how big a deal this man's paralysis was to him and to his friends.
I know you know that – but its important to see
that this man's paralysis would have ***defined*** his life.

It would have been a source of deepest pain to his family
it would have presented immense practical problems to his friends,
it would have been hopeless with no possible medical intervention.
This man's life would have been full of burden and loss and sadness and poverty.

So his friends hear Jesus is in town and they don't care if they make a spectacle of themselves
they want their friend to be healed so they dig up the roof and lower him down.
*can you imagine someone doing that right now!!*
*It's a show stopper, isn't it!*
*Its outrageous!*

But then what Jesus says to the man is equally outrageous.
*v5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."*

Jesus turns to this paralyzed man, and instead of saying
"Rise up, be healed,"
he says, "Son, your sins are forgiven."
*Well I'm sorry but that just won't do…!!*

*Here he is, in obvious desperate need,*
*the only thing on his agenda is for healing,*
*this is his only prayer,*
*his only hope, his only need!*
*And Jesus seems to be ignoring his problem and saying something about SIN??!*
**Can you not SEE his need???**

Everyone who is hurt wants to be whole.
This man would have been resting all of his hopes in the possibility of walking again.
In his heart he is saying,
*If only I could walk again, then I would be OK.*
*If only I could walk then I'd be happy,*
*I would never complain, I would be content,*
*everything will be all right.*

And Jesus is saying, "My son, you're mistaken."
There is something more important in your life than your deepest need and your fondest dreams…
***Your problem is not your Main Problem***

Now I think this sounds outrageous,
try telling that to someone who is hurting as badly as this man

but it's true.
Jesus is saying,
if I heal your body, **if that's all I do,**
if I heal your body, you think you'll never be unhappy again??
But wait two months, four months - the euphoria won't last.

Something else will become your main problem
Something else will go wrong
Some injustice will still happen to you
Some illness may strike up, some accident may befall you, someone you love may even die…
And even if none of that happens – you'll still be discontent.

Because the roots of human discontent go deeper than your surface needs.
Jesus knows something this man doesn't know –
that he has a much bigger problem than his physical situation.

Jesus is saying to him,
I understand your problem.
I see your suffering – and I will deal with that (he doesn't say that but we know that is true…),
but please realise that the main problem in your life is not your suffering
it's your sin.
it's your **alienation** from God
it's the separation in your soul from the only ONE who can fulfil you.

Prince Charles once said that despite all the advances of our society
*there remains deep in the soul a persistent and unconscious anxiety that something is missing,*
*some ingredient that makes life worth living.*
Prince Charles said that:
here is someone with all the material comforts available to man,
the ultimate in social status
full of wealth, interests, influence, privilege…
and yet he says something is missing – some ingredient that makes life worth living.

The Bible says that our real problem is that every one of us is seeking that 'ingredient' in something besides God.
Whether it's success in our chosen field or
the need for a certain relationship, or
the desire to have our own home or family - or
**even** our desire to get up and walk - we're saying,

"***If I have that***, if I get my deepest wish, then everything will be okay."

What we are saying is
I am looking to this thing to save me from disillusionment,
from mediocrity, from meaninglessness in my life

And while we are searching for it, we're unsatisfied and frustrated and hungry for it;…
And IF we NEVER get – we will look back with disappointment and regret on our life;

AND even if we DO get it, what Jesus is saying is you'll **still be** empty and dissatisfied.
Because the roots to our discontent go deeper than that!

Jesus is saying,
If you have me, If you find peace with me, If you know me then I will fulfil you.

If I heal you now – you will still die.
If I give you someone to love now – you will still lose them.
If I grant you your deepest wish – time will still cause it to fade.

But IF you have me, if you have found friendship with God
then you have a base on which to build
then you have a foundation to face life
then you have something that will last forever
BECAUSE **(know this)** you HAVE BEEN made 'to be forever'.

Jesus is confronting this man with his main problem – his alienation from God
He is driving him deeper and saying,
*By coming to me and asking for your body to be healed,*
*you're not going deep enough.*
*You have underestimated the depths of your longings.*

Our deepest wish is not deep enough
Our problem (whatever it may be) is not the main problem
World Peace alone is shooting too low
Justice throughout the world right now is too small an ambition
Healing every one in the world is NOT the most important thing.

There is no other explanation as to why Jesus didn't click his fingers and heal the world
There is no other logic as to why he stopped healing and started preaching
Our problem is NOT the main problem.

Which means that whatever we wish for, it will not satisfy us
UNLESS we have already have answered the most difficult question in our life

Because
**2. There IS a an amazingly difficult question to be asked.**
*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!"*

Jesus asks: Which is easier?
to say to the paralytic,
`Your sins are forgiven,' or to say to him
`Get up, take your mat and walk'?
What do you think?

This is a difficult question
Jesus had to answer this question for himself right at the start of his ministry…

There he was healing people,
his popularity was soaring, he was overjoyed in his ministry,
he was making a difference to each life he touched
But then the question came:
Will you leave these people behind and go and preach forgiveness of sins to people who don't want to hear?

What should he do?
Should he stay and heal the lame, the hurting, the diseased
OR
should he go and deal with our alienation from God
Which is easier?  Which is more important?

Should he leave people in pain and hurt and misery **now** – even though he had the power to **momentarily** heal it all
or
should he rescue people from an eternity of isolation and alienation from God?

Which is harder for him?
to stay and receive the favour of all the people
OR
to walk the road of rejection and opposition that will lead to a cold nails and a cruel cross?
Which IS easier?
Surely what was easier was to stay and heal…
This must have been the toughest question in the world for Jesus.

But what do you think?
If God healed everyone of everything right now
If he did a blanket healing across the whole world
would that really turn people to Him?
would people really say
*wow, now I realise I need you God,*
*now I know that my true destiny is eternity with you*
*now I see what really matters is getting right with you*
OR
would we just take his blessings for granted?
would we just feel even more comfortable, even more complacent, even LESS interested in him?

You know the answer!
The unpleasant truth is that

without the symptoms of being alienated from God (injustice, hurt, unrelieved accidents & disease) we would never know we are in mortal peril of being alienated from God forever.

Without the consequences of a "world gone wrong" we would never know that the world HAS gone wrong.

The reality is that our **need** drives us to find God
This is why Jesus heals people one-on-one basis,
What we see in the Bible is that it is the personal encounter with Jesus that meets our need.
Our needs drive us into God's arms.

And this is not a one-off event…

It is not true that we become a Christian – we are driven into his arms
AND THEN we never need to be driven deeper??

Is it not true that our continual need drives us deeper into God's love?
*Every year or so I meet up with 4 other Vicar friends who were in my tutor group at college. One couple, David and Helen (both Vicar's) have a beautiful daughter in her late 20s, called Anna.*
*She got married a year ago to a great Christian guy.*
*10 months ago she was diagnosed with brain cancer with Tumours in multiple places I her brain - she was given less than a year to live.*

*As we listened to their story, as David and Helen poured out their heart, it struck me how their desperation had driven them in a new deeper sense of God's love,*
*they talked about his presence, his strength, in a way that I have never heard them talk – it was remarkable, authentic and deep.*

*They live now in more dependence upon God than at any point in their life.*

*Anna is a Christian, she loves God and knows that God loves her.*
*Her friends and colleagues on the Police force look on knowing that she knows God and that she has found something, someone deeper holding her.*

*God didn't make the Cancer happen – it is part of being in a broken world –and it makes God's heart break.*
*But our need drives us beyond the surface into the deep..*
***But it is not easy.***
This is a hard thing! This is tough!

I want to argue that it would be *trivially easy* for God to heal everyone's illness everywhere
BUT It is much harder for GOD to say –
no your need is deeper than you think,
your problem is not your main problem
you haven't seen it yet!

Its hard for Jesus to not heal the world
not only because to fix it he must die on a cross so that he can say to the paralysed man (to you and me) "I forgive you",

But its hard for Jesus because
he feels David and Helen's pain
he feels the isolation of the paralysed man.

This is not some remote God making some theoretical academic decision about how to solve a problem
this is Jesus walking alongside us knowing our pain, seeing our struggle, feeling our isolation,
because he has been through it too
And he doesn't opt out of knowing our suffering!

This is a hard thing to understand for us grasp
Because whoever we are (whether we are a Christian or Not)
we almost always go to God because we want him to heal our immediate pain, to meet our immediate need.

Most of us started going to church, because we had problems, and
we were asking God to give us a little boost over the hump,
to help us out so that we can get back to pursuing our deepest wish.

Almost always, we first go to Jesus saying,
"This is my deepest wish,"
and his response is almost always "I want you to go deeper than that".

There is nothing wrong with our "wish",
there is nothing wrong with presenting to God our deepest need
just as there was nothing wrong for the paralytic to want to walk or
for anyone to want to find love or respect or success
or whatever your need is

But it is when we think that getting our deepest will heal us, save us, fulfil us - that is the problem.
We have to go deeper

Jesus has the power right now to grant you your deepest wish,
your fondest dream
to give you that career success,
to find you that relationship,
to enable you to have the recognition that you've been longing for.

He has the power to give each of us what we've been asking for,
right now, no questions asked.

But Jesus knows that's not nearly deep enough.
He knows that whether we're a paralyzed man lying on a mat or struggling with any issue in our life
we don't need someone who can just grant our wishes.
We need someone who can go deeper than that and
satisfy our soul, light our life, lift our eyes beyond the here and now.

In short, we need to encounter Jesus deeper and deeper and that's the only way for our discontent to be healed.

This is hard!!
Paul knew this
seven times he prayed for a thorn to be removed from his side.
something so irritating,
so disabling that it seemed to dominate his thoughts and
disable his ministry.
*You know when I get a splinter in my finger I am a right baby!*
*I won't do anything  until it is out*
*Everything stops until this problem is fixed*
Seven times Paul said –
*God I can't continue with this irritation,*
*I can't minister with this pain*
*I can't be happy until this problem is dealt with*
*I can't do it anymore - and*
seven times God answered
Paul – is my Grace not sufficient for you?

**That's the hardest question in the world for you and me to answer in our life**
**"Is my Grace NOT sufficient for you?".**

This is a stunningly hard question
You are struggling with a real issue now?
It dominates your thoughts?
it keeps you awake at night?
it hurts to even think about it?
**Will you let it drive you deeper into God's arms?**

You are struggling with work?
You are uncertain of your future?
You long for a loving relationship?
**Will you let his Grace (the overflowing love of God poured into you) be sufficient for you?**

**Will you accept that he sees your pain and knows your struggle and he walks alongside you, his arms underneath you, holding you?**

Will you know that he WILL heal all your infirmities… and
he WILL heal all your diseases…

sometimes NOW – sometimes he'll heal you now, he'll answer that prayer for 20, 40, 80 years
He did for the paralytic man.
He has for many of you…
But even if he doesn't – if you trust him –
he will answer that need forever.
He will heal you forever.
He will hold you forever
He has made you for him/ to know him/ to love him deeply and forever.

And FOREVER is more important than healing all world poverty, all illnesses, all pain for a mere moment.

The hardest question in the world?
is this
Will you go deeper?
**Will you let his Grace be sufficient for you?**
**It is your only hope.**