

# Room for Jesus' Forgiveness

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, Watermark. That's really echoey. Good morning. My name is Alfie. If you don't know me, I help out with the university stuff around Watermark Church.

And today we're continuing our series on preparing him room, making room. Last week we talked about making room in our hearts for Jesus. And today I want to talk about forgiveness.

I think there's so many things to say about forgiveness. If I was to start now, I'd probably be done around Wednesday. So I'm not going to try to say everything. I'm going to try and just look at what forgiveness looks like when God forgives us, when God forgives his people.

And so I'm going to start by giving you guys a very practical, tangible thing to do with forgiveness. I'm sorry if I don't talk about the things that you want me to talk about. And I hope that you can find it in your heart to forgive me.

There are many things. And, you know, early on this year in October, Evelyn came and she did some workshops on forgiveness. I know many of you guys were there.

[ 1 : 08 ] And she left behind some books and some resources. And so if you guys, after this, are intrigued and you want to know more about forgiveness and what that looks like when we're forgiving other people and other people are forgiving us, there will be some books.

And Sylvie will be helping you guys with that. But for now, I'm just going to keep it simple. I'm going to talk about why Jesus came. Jesus came to forgive. He came to forgive us of our sins.

And I think that Christmas time, you know, we gather around with our families. We get together.

And there are many opportunities for forgiveness. Because we see that sibling that we haven't seen in a while.

And, you know, back in March, we had this argument. And we haven't talked to each other since.

And now, all of a sudden, we need to have that confrontation. Or, with the kids being home, they're just always fighting and you're trying to teach them forgiveness.

And people think that Christmas is a great time for forgiveness. And I think it is. But I think Christmas is also a great time for remembering the forgiveness that Christ offers us.

[ 2 : 13 ] There are some times when I think about forgiveness, and I think that it's incredibly simple. And other times I think about it some more and I realize it's very complicated. And there are times that I overcomplicate forgiveness, and there are times that I oversimplify it.

And I think our confusion, I think my confusion about forgiveness comes from the way that, you know, I was taught forgiveness as a child. I have a younger brother. And as children, we were always fighting.

So we'd get into arguments. And depending on the day, it might escalate. And, you know, punches would be thrown. Kicks would be thrown. And my mother would come in, and she would break up the fight.

And she would find out who started it. And then she would say, it was usually me who started it.

She would say to me, Alfie, now you need to forgive your, you need to apologize to your brother.

And I'd say, no, I'm sorry. And then she'd say, no, say it clearly. And I'd say, I'm sorry. She'd say, what are you sorry for? And, you know, I'd have to explain. And then she'd turn to my brother and say, hey, now, Jojo, you need to forgive your brother.

[ 3 : 15 ] My brother would say, I forgive you. And then my mother would make sure that this forgiveness and this reconciliation happened. And she said, now you guys need to give each other a hug. Now, in those situations, the last thing I wanted to do was to hug my brother.

The last thing he wanted to do was to hug me. Because I wasn't really sorry. And he hadn't really forgiven me. But we did it anyways. Because if we didn't, there'd be more trouble.

And, you know, I think sometimes we do this. And, you know, I talked to my parents about this yesterday over lunch. And, you know, they said that, you know, when you're a parent, you know, you make do with what you've got. And that's what they did.

And so I'm not going to try and, you know, berate you parents for teaching forgiveness badly. But I think there's so many things in our lives that skew the way that we view forgiveness.

The way in which we forgive each other. I think, you know, the way I was taught forgiveness in those stressful moments as a seven-year-old. Was to grit my teeth and to forgive and to put it out of my mind and to get on with life.

[ 4 : 22 ] But as we grow, I think conflicts become a bit more complex. It's not he hit me and she said I smell funny. We go and we have interactions with different people and they hurt us in different ways.

And, you know, we learn different things about forgiveness from our different cultures, you know. I think forgiveness in Texas is very different from forgiveness in Taiwan. All right? And you come to Hong Kong and in my life where I'm not really Chinese and I'm not really Western and I'm not really African.

Forgiveness just became this really huge confusing mess. Forgiveness. I think that some of us grow up and we're told that forgiveness is actually a bad thing.

It's a weakness if we forgive. You know, that when we are wronged that we should hold it against other people. Right? That actually holding a grudge is fantastic because it means that, you know, we can get something from them later.

There's these ads on the MTR and on TV. It's got Alan Tam, an old canto pop star there with his friends. And the advertisement says it's a PSA for prostate cancer and it says, real men protect their assets.

[ 5 : 31 ] And I think that's the most Hong Kong ad ever. I love it. But I think that line, real men protect their assets, is a lot of the way some of us, we think about forgiveness.

You know, forgiveness is giving up our assets. And if we're going to protect our assets, we're going to hold our grudges. We're going to withhold forgiveness. Because that's going to give us profit sometime down the line. You know, one day, you know, this person's misdemeanor against me is going to come in useful when I'm in a sticky situation.

At other times, I think we make forgiveness to be something really, really light and really cheap, really flippant. Where, you know, we forgive everybody for no real misdemeanor.

And we forgive them for huge things without even giving a thought. You know, we say that love and peace and harmony are these ideals and they need to be, you know, maintained at any cost.

And so we say, I'm going to forgive even though I haven't really dealt with this conflict in my heart. I haven't really dealt with it with this person. We say, I forgive not because we've forgiven, but because we have this idol of peace and harmony that we're going to chase after and we're going to serve no matter the cost.

[ 6 : 47 ] And while it seems very nice that we've forgiven, we realize that under these layers of plasters of forgiveness, there's hurt and there's wounds which have gone untreated.

You know, Watermark, the way that we interact with God, who God is should be changing and it should be reaching and transforming our lives.

But many times I think I do this, where I take my experiences from my life and I put them on God. I paint Jesus with the brush that I've received from other people.

You know, we look at God and we think that he's like our parents who for 15 years have been dangling this misdemeanor over our heads to ensure our compliance, to ensure that we do things the way that they want.

Or we walk through life assuming that God's going to forgive us all the time. After all, it's his job, right? I'll do whatever I want and I know that if I come and say, sorry, God will forgive me.

[ 7 : 56 ] And on one hand, we have God who is this tyrant who's just waiting for us to mess up so he can crush us with a hammer. And on the other side, we've got a God who's nothing more than an impotent genie who's just there to make us feel good, to soothe our emotional state.

And, you know, I think as I look out here, I don't think that many of you are on either one of those extremes. But we find ourselves somewhere in the middle, somewhere in between those things. And even the middle can be a dangerous place.

I know that the way that I interact with God puts me in a very unhelpful middle place. Because, you know, I know that God will forgive me.

I know he loves me and that he forgives me. I also know that God takes sin seriously. And so there are times when I think that, you know, I can be forgiven for my small sins.

You know, the little white lies, you know, the candy I stole from the shop as a child. God can forgive me for those things. But, you know, the big things like, you know, knowingly letting your colleague get fired for a mistake that you made or maybe an affair.

[ 9 : 09 ] God can never forgive those things. Or sometimes I feel like God can forgive me and he has forgiven me for all the things I did before I became a Christian. But all the things I've done since then, and I am responsible for those.

But I need to find a way to earn his grace. I need to find a way to earn his forgiveness. I need forgiveness.

We need forgiveness. We all need forgiveness from God. It's this longing that I think that God has put in our hearts for us to be right with him.

For us to have a right relationship with him. And that's why Jesus comes. Jesus comes to fulfill that longing in our hearts for forgiveness.

We're given a child at Christmas. We're given the Son of God. This man who would grow and who would do amazing things to ensure that his children, that those who put faith in him, do receive forgiveness.

[ 10 : 22 ] Who are made right with God. Who are brought into that relationship. That's not here. He didn't come to, you know, make us feel good. To feel warm and fuzzy because of Christmas time.

He didn't come to leave us with resentment in our hearts. But he came to forgive. He came to bring hope and joy. He came to give life with his forgiveness.

And so today, we're going to look at the story of the paralytic in Mark chapter 2. And I really want you guys to see that God is able to forgive. That he's willing to forgive.

That he loves to forgive. And that when he forgives, he doesn't offer it by itself. But he offers with it joy. He offers with it hope.

And if you've been around church, you've probably heard the story. Especially if you grew up in the church. And it's a great one because it has everything. It's got suspense. It's got adventure. It's got friendship. It's got a happy ending.

[ 11 : 25 ] It's really one of these great stories that is really nice to tell little children. But I think as we hear this story so many times, a lot of the significance is lost on us. And I think even as we think about forgiveness, we forget actually how deep and meaningful forgiveness is.

As I read around this topic and reading different commentaries, I found that there are so many different focuses that different people took. There's one author who spent a lot of time talking about these friends.

These man's friends and their bravery. And doing property destruction. And destroying a roof so that his friend could get in. And their bravery was really the star of the story.

And I read another writer who said that actually, you know, the roofs are made of sticks and mud.

So actually, it's not a big deal to break it because you can fix it. And if there's heavy rain, you'd have to repair your roof anyway.

So them tearing up the roof was not a big deal. There are a lot of people who read these stories and they find different bits to focus on. And I think the guys that I read where it captured me, which spoke to me, were the guys that focused in on God's forgiveness.

[ 12 : 38 ] That focused in on Jesus forgiving this paralyzed man. So let's start by looking at this.

It starts with Jesus and he's returned from Capernaum. And he's at home. And many people have gathered there. Many people have got together and they're crowded in and they're listening to Jesus.

It says that Jesus is preaching them the word. We don't know exactly what he was saying, but it must have been good because there was a huge crowd. The house was filled. The door was filled.

And the only way that these guys could bring their friend was through the roof. These four men, they come and they carry them, his friend, up the stairs, which would have been outside the side of the house.

And they go to the roof and they begin dismantling it. And they lower him down into the room where Jesus is teaching. And the Bible says that Jesus looks at them and he sees their faith.

[ 13 : 38 ] And he says, son, your sins are forgiven. It's interesting. You know, in the Bible, you can see other places where faith plays an important part in God's miracles.

In Mark chapter 5, you see there's a woman who's been bleeding. And when Jesus heals her, he turns and says, woman, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. But responding to their faith in this circumstance, Jesus says, your sins are forgiven.

The faith of this man, the faith of his friends is what causes God to respond to them. And I think this is where the average church person says, great, forgiveness.

We've received it. You know, let's go for the healing and move on. But instead, this is where the scribes come into the narrative. If you read this account in Luke, it says that they were Pharisees. And that will probably give you a little bit of the idea of what they were there for. You know, they weren't really listening to Jesus because they wanted hope, because they wanted to hear the good news. They were listening to Jesus because they were trying to catch him out.

[ 14 : 49 ] They were trying to figure out what it is they could do to accuse this man, to get him out of their way. The scribes come in, and they say, well, they don't say anything.

Perhaps they're shocked at what Jesus has said, because by saying, son, your sins are forgiven, he claimed to be God. By saying, son, your sins are forgiven, he said, I have the authority to make these kinds of announcements.

And in shock, they don't say anything, but in their hearts, they question. In their hearts, they ask.

And you look in verse 6 and 7, it says, they say, why does this man speak like that?

He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? And I think with that last question, who can forgive sins but God alone, they're beginning to get somewhere.

They're beginning to get to the heart of what Jesus is doing here on this day. Jesus goes on, and he speaks to them. And he says, why do you doubt?

[ 16 : 00 ] Why don't you believe? Mark tells us that in his spirit, he knew the words that he was saying. And, you know, I think I would have really liked to be there, because, you know, we're in this crowded room, and there are people all over the place.

The roof begins, you know, being picked apart. But somebody's lowered down on his bed, and Jesus says, son, your sins are forgiven. And then he turns to the Pharisees, and he says, why don't you believe?

Now, for anyone else there, that would have been a very, very strange transition, from forgiving this man to talking to those people over there. I think that people would have probably been very confused about what was going on.

But the Pharisees knew. They knew that when Jesus spoke to them, he wasn't just looking at their faces, that he was looking into their hearts. That he was looking, and he saw the doubt that was in their hearts.

Jesus asks a puzzling question. He says, is it easier to forgive these man's sins, or is it easier to heal him? Is it easier to say your sins are forgiven, or to say get up and walk?

[ 17 : 12 ] He follows that by saying, that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins. I say to you, pick up your bed, and go home.

And the man does. And the crowds are amazed, and they probably leave in this amazing little party.

The scribes probably slink off, having been beaten with their tail between their legs, and the disciples probably give each other high fives, very excited, another miracle.

And the paralytic and his friends, for the first time in a long time, walk off together. And that's a great story. It's forgiveness, and there's healing. And everyone except for the Pharisees is really a winner. But I really want to look at a couple of things in this story that I think will unpack and help us figure out what it is that forgiveness is like when God forgives us, when God forgives his people, when God forgives his children.

And the first thing is to do with the man. The Bible says that in the beginning, in the fall, that Adam rebelled against God. He ate the fruit from the tree, and through his rebellion, through his sin, sickness and death and decay enter the world.

[ 18 : 33 ] The Bible says that because of sin, we have sickness and death. And in this time, it was very common for people to believe that if somebody had any kind of serious sickness or serious injury, that it was because of a sin in their life.

And so this man, having been paralyzed, is coming to God. And I think that he felt that his paralysis was a result of his sin.

If he didn't think it, maybe his friends did, but definitely the Pharisees. They'd have looked at this man and they'd have seen this guy is a sinner because bad things only ever happen to sinful people.

Now, we don't know why it is that this man was actually sick. The Bible doesn't tell us that. But it does tell us that when Jesus looks at him, he says, your sins are forgiven.

When Jesus looks at him, he thinks, and he says, that the most important thing in your life right now is for you to have a right relationship and right standing with God.

[ 19 : 41 ] in the midst of his poverty and his paralysis, in the midst of all the things in his life, Jesus says, you need to be forgiven.

And I think this man would have been overjoyed by that because he's paralyzed. He couldn't go to the temple and offer sacrifices to make right his relationship with God.

As a guy who was paralyzed, he could do nothing. He was helpless. He was completely at God's mercy. And so when Jesus says, son, your sins are forgiven, he's giving this guy hope.

He's giving him life. He's giving him joy. He's giving him something that he could not have obtained for himself in any other way other than God coming and saying to this man, your sins are forgiven.

I think that we are a lot like this man. The Bible says that we are a lot like this man, that we spiritually are paralyzed, that spiritually there isn't a lot we can do.

[ 20 : 58 ] But in this story, we see what God offers to this man. He offers it to us as well. He offers forgiveness, hope, and life. He's saying that you may be poor and starving and helpless, but here is forgiveness.

He's saying, I can give you hope. Jesus is saying to us that he can be the solution to our heart's deepest problem.

And people respond in different ways. In this story, we see that the scribes that they don't believe. And their response is one of two responses that I want to look at.

But I also think it's interesting that Jesus asks this question, what is it easier to say? Is it easier to forgive or is it easier to heal? Now again, as I was reading about this, many people have many different answers.

Some people will say that actually the healing is harder and they give their explanations why. Other people say forgiving is harder and they give explanations why. But I think that when Jesus asks this question, he's saying they're both hard.

[ 22 : 11 ] Today, standing before you guys, with all the medical technology in the world, I cannot heal a paralyzed person. And I'm no closer to doing that than I am to forgiving your sins.

I can't forgive the sins that you have done against God. By asking this question, Jesus is saying that both these things are hard things.

Both these things are difficult things. Both of these things are things that God must do. God must be the one who forgives sins.

And God is the one who heals this man from his paralysis. But these guys, they doubt. The Pharisees doubt his ability to forgive.

They doubt his authority to forgive. They doubt God's love and mercy. They doubt God's grace. Their response is doubt and I think sometimes my response is doubt as well.

[ 23 : 23 ] I doubt that God can forgive all of my sins. I doubt that God does it willingly. The Bible says that if you have faith, if you're like this guy and his friends, if you have faith that God will do what he says, then your sins are forgiven.

The same words that God says to this man, son, your sins are forgiven, he says to us, son, daughter, your sins are forgiven.

And for me, I think this has been a very, it's been a difficult story for me to learn. It's been a difficult journey in learning this. When I was about 10 years old, my mother was diagnosed with MS, multiple sclerosis.

And from the time I was about 11, she's been in a wheelchair. And, you know, in those times, I think it was very stressful for our family, trying to figure out what was going on, trying to adjust to life.

And we sought, you know, medical help from all over the place. And one day, one of my aunt's friends came and visited. And she came, she sat us down at the table and she talked to us about God and his power to heal.

[ 24 : 38 ] And one thing she said is that, you know, your mother might be sick because of some sins that you haven't confessed. Some sins that God hasn't forgiven you for.

Right? And that stuck out in my mind. And she said, you know, is there any sin that you guys have confessed? That you guys have not confessed? And I sat there and I was quiet because I was definitely, definitely not going to admit to any of this, you know, some of the things that I hadn't confessed yet.

But I went to my room and I prayed. And I prayed and I asked for forgiveness and I confessed sins that I'd done. I confessed sins that I'm not sure if I'd done. I confessed sins that I'd, you know, I made up sins to confess because I wanted my mother to get better.

I confessed all these things and my mother was still sick. My mother was still unwell. And I think for many years I struggled with whether God loved me or whether God truly forgave my sins.

I think it's only been in the past couple years that I'm beginning to see that God does forgive. And even though my mother isn't well yet, that when I pray for my mom's healing I can pray with this certainty and this joy that while my mother is still in a wheelchair that the most important thing in our lives has been taken care of.

[ 26 : 00 ] That while there is still sickness that the disease of sin has been cured that God has forgiven her that God has forgiven that God has forgiven me.

I think that we don't believe that God can forgive sometimes. In my life I'm learning every day that God does forgive that God will forgive.

that he forgives our small sins and our big ones. You know and he's forgiven us for the sins that we're going to do tomorrow and next week. I love the response of this crowd because of what they rejoice in and what they're amazed at.

In verse 12 it says after the man got up it says that the crowds were all amazed and they glorified God saying that we never saw anything like this.

that we have never seen anything like this before and this is why we're going to rejoice and praise and glorify God. Now I don't think that they rejoiced because the man was healed.

[ 27 : 17 ] They had no shortage of opportunities to see people getting healed. God had used prophets in the Old Testament to heal people. Jesus had done it. In Mark even before we get to this chapter 2 there are two instances of different people being healed.

There's a guy who's exorcised who has an evil spirit cast out of him and there's a whole crowd of people who come to Jesus and Jesus heals all their sicknesses and ailments. These people had seen Jesus healing people before.

I don't think that is why that they rejoice. I don't think that people are amazed that the roof got destroyed. I don't know why they would glorify God for that. But I think they're amazed because up to this point forgiveness meant taking a sacrifice to the temple.

It meant the blood of an animal and it meant going again and again and again for your sins to be forgiven. I think that this crowd saw in this story that they saw in this interaction between Jesus and the paralyzed man forgiveness.

they saw the hope that brought to their lives. They saw God forgiving and God proving that he had the authority and the love and the grace and the mercy to forgive our sins.

[ 28 : 44 ] so what about us? What is our response when God says our sins are forgiven?

Do we doubt or do we believe? Do we respond with hope and joy? Do we respond with sadness and despair?

I really enjoy it. I like what Matthew has to say when he talks about this interaction. It will be up there in a second. In Matthew 2 when Jesus says to the paralytic he says take heart my son your sins are forgiven.

Take heart. Different translations say have courage cheer up be of good cheer that's the King James. but Jesus is calling for a response of joy with forgiveness.

He's saying that forgiveness isn't just something that okay we're forgiven and we're going to go and be sad for the rest of our lives because you know we're not allowed to do fun things. Jesus is saying to this man that this forgiveness is not just life for you.

[ 30 : 06 ] It's not just rightness with God. but it should be a source of hope of joy of happiness and you know I think for the first time this guy is in right standing with his heavenly father but he doesn't just say take heart he says he calls him son he says child he brings him into this family forgiveness forgiveness isn't just the wrong things that were done cancelled forgiveness isn't just bad things put under the carpet it's a new identity as God's children it's a new hope new life in being with Christ imagine imagine for a moment that you're a thief you're a thief of the worst kind you've stolen candy from children you've stolen from museums you've stolen gold and diamonds and billions of dollars

and eventually you're caught and you're put on trial you're put on trial and the judge looks at all these things that you've stolen and he thinks this is ridiculous we're not going to put you in prison we're going to sentence you to death and so you go and you sit in your cell and you're waiting for the assigned date and they bring you your last meal and the guy sets it before you you've asked for jelly beans and ice cream but as you look at it you realize that your death that's coming is too much to bear you can't even stomach at it you push it away and you're carried and you're led up to the gallows and you know the executioner is there and he puts the noose around your neck and you know just you catch a glimpse of your family over there and you try and hide your face from your children and the guy with the big trumpet and the scroll starts reading off your charges and says for these crimes of stealing candy and billions of dollars you're sentenced to death and he turns to the executioner who's about to pull the lever but then there's this commotion there's this commotion there's a man who's running from the castle he's running from the castle to the king and he's running and he's running and he's running and he goes to the crowds and he comes and he comes closer and you realize that this isn't a messenger this is the king's son the king's son is coming with a message and he says your sins are forgiven imagine your relief imagine your joy imagine what it's like to be on the brink of death but the king's son not a messenger the king sends his own son to say that you're forgiven that the noose is going to be removed from your neck that you are free that you can be with your family that you can go and enjoy jelly beans and ice cream that your life is going to be transformed because of the king forgiveness is good news forgiveness is amazing news forgiveness is why

Jesus came this is why we celebrate Christmas because God sent his son to pay the price for our sin because God sent his son to say to us while on the brink of death your sins are forgiven the story it offers forgiveness and it calls us to be a part of God's family but it also calls us to have faith the former paralytic and his friends they set an example for us in faith and it's not that they had to do some amazing feat like climb a mountain or whatever amazing things you do to demonstrate faith but all they had to do was come they came not knowing what God was going to do they came because they had a hunch because they they had hope they had faith that this Jesus could do something for their paralyzed friend this Jesus do something and I think the Bible says the Bible says that it says come come with faith come trusting that God will do the things that he promises come trusting that on the cross

Jesus has paid for your sins come faith because Jesus has done what it takes to forgive your sins this story this paralyzed man Jesus healing them and his interaction with the Pharisees it calls us to live a life transformed by God's forgiveness to live a life of faith I think we're all in different places spiritually emotionally you know I don't know what your week has been like what it's been like at the office or what tensions you have at home the people who have been hurting you the people who have been offending you but I know that 2,000 years ago a king sent his son to give forgiveness and freedom to give us joy that will change the way that we look at God that changes the way that we relate to God and that flows out and changes the ways in which we interact with people are we looking to God for our forgiveness are we looking to Jesus and putting our hope in him or do we do we doubt do we doubt that when God says

I forgive you that we can follow through sometimes I do sometimes I doubt but this Christmas I want to invite you to come and to believe have faith to look at Jesus in the manger to look at him healing this man to look at Jesus on the cross to look at Jesus and to believe that that he's paid the price that he offers forgiveness that he offers opportunity to be his child that he offers that to us with joy let's pray heavenly father

I confess that I doubt that I doubt your forgiveness I confess that that when I look at the cross I wonder if you really can forgive me that if you really have forgiven me that if you really will pay the price for my sin God I thank you for Jesus I thank you for this story I thank you for the faith the life of this paralyzed man that him and his friends went and said we believe we believe that God can do something we believe that this Jesus guy is for real I pray father for us as we as we walk through life as we as we interact with different people as we are hurt as we hurt other people as we forgive our friends our family members our co-workers our children as we receive forgiveness from them that we will be reminded of you that you've called us to open our hearts and faith and to receive forgiveness to receive a promise of joy to receive a promise of being your child to be made right with you

[ 39 : 04 ] Jesus thank you for Christmas and we thank you for your forgiveness I pray this in your precious name Amen that we