

Encountering the One You Need

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Introduction

I'm so excited that today we're beginning a new series called "Encounters with Jesus." What we're going to do over the next several weeks is to look at selected stories from the gospels where people have personal encounters with Jesus that change their lives forever. And the reason why I'm excited about this is because sometimes as Christians, we need to be renewed in our personal relationships with Jesus. When you become a Christian, you enter into a real relationship with God through Jesus. But sometimes, instead of a vibrant, living relationship, our Christian lives can become a matter of routine. We go through the motions, we go to church and Bible studies, but if we're being honest, we're not living in daily relationship with Jesus. But by looking at these stories of encounters with Jesus my hope and prayer is that you'll encounter Jesus anew each week through His Word so you are refreshed in your relationship with Jesus. My prayer is that you'd know Him better, trust Him more dearly, and live in real, daily relationship with Him. And we're going to begin this morning by considering an encounter early in Jesus' ministry that shows us some truths about how we can encounter Jesus. And as we look at this passage, I'd like us to consider what Jesus is speaking to each of us.

So, in our lives we need to ask, "Have I been personally encountering Jesus?" And if so, how is my personal encounter with Jesus shaping my life? Am I learning to know and trust Him more? Am I living in daily relationship with Him? Or am I stuck? Today, we're going to look at the story of someone who was literally stuck before he encountered Jesus. But after he encountered Jesus, he went away with a totally new lease on life. And as we look at this man's encounter with Jesus, we're going to see four truths about what it means to encounter Jesus. We're going to consider four truths that will allow us to walk away with a new lease on life as we encounter Jesus.

Let me give you a bit of background before we dive into our passage. The passage we'll look at this morning happens towards the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, when the wave of his popularity was beginning to crest. A few days before this, in Mark chapter 1, Jesus was in Capernaum, and he established Peter and Andrew's house in Capernaum as a home-base of operations. And during that time chapter 1 tells us **Mk. 1:32-34 ESV** ³² That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴ And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. Jesus had become a local celebrity in Capernaum. And he responds to this by getting alone with His Father and then leaving the city to go preach in other towns. **Mk. 1:35-39 ESV** ³⁵ And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷ and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." ³⁸ And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." ³⁹ And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. Jesus' priority is not to be a local celebrity, but to preach the truth widely. Then the passage tells us that he healed a leper, who then spoke openly about how Jesus had healed him, and so it tells us in 1:45 it says, **Mk. 1:45 ESV** ...Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter. And at this point Jesus decides to head back to his home base in Capernaum. And you can imagine the commotion when people realize He's back. Everyone wants a piece of him. Everyone wants to be healed. Everyone wants to see a miracle. Everyone wants a piece of Jesus. And what is Jesus' priority?

Well, to see the answer open your Bibles to Mark 2. And what we're going to see is that...

Encountering Jesus happens primarily through God's Word.

Read with me in verse 1, and let's see what Jesus' priority was:

Mk. 2:1-2 ESV And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.

Jesus' priority was to preach God's Word. Listen, there are lots of things we do in church—we fellowship with each other, we love each other, we eat donuts together, we do life together, we pray for one another, we worship our

Savior—and all of those things are necessary and good, but when we come together, what is center stage? It must be the preaching of God’s Word. We see this pattern all through the Bible. In the verse I read just a few moments ago, in Mark 1:38, Jesus said **Mk. 1:38 ESV** "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." In the early church, the disciples appointed deacons, and why? Because they were prioritizing the preaching of God’s Word. **Acts 6:4 ESV** we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Jesus prioritized the preaching of God’s Word—He was sharing with them the message of the Kingdom of God—that God’s kingdom was present among them. He sat and taught people truth—and what we’re going to see is that even as Jesus was healing people and doing miracles—he was doing so to teach people—it was all instructive and revealing of who He is. So, we prioritize the preaching of God’s Word, and we should prioritize God’s Word in our own personal lives. There’s no set formula for spending time with Jesus in His Word, but taking a moment to get away by yourself each day, and opening your Bible and asking Jesus to help you to know Him is the primary way you will encounter Him. If you don’t have a Bible, grab one from the back table and take it home. If you do, then spend time with Jesus in His Word—ask Him to help you understand, to know Him more, to teach you. The primary way you will encounter Jesus is through His Word.

Now as we continue, I want you to picture the scene. Jesus is back in Capernaum. And there’s a huge crowd in Peter’s house—people are crammed in like sardines so that the crowd is spilling out into the courtyard. And in the distance four men hear that Jesus is in town. Everyone’s talking about it—they see the crowd, they hear the commotion—and instead of rushing off by themselves, they grab a friend—literally. These guys pick up their quadriplegic buddy and carry him to Jesus.

Now we don’t really know what was wrong with this guy. All we know is that he was paralyzed. It could have just been in his lower legs, but since he’s pictured as lying down, it’s probably his full body. And we don’t know what caused this, whether a disease or an injury or if he’d been this way from birth—maybe it was polio or spinal bifida or a spinal cord injury—we’re not sure. We don’t know—but what we do know is that this guy can’t move his body. And I want you to think about what this would be like. I don’t know about you, but I stub my toe or get a cold sore, and I’m complaining for a week. If one little part of my body gets hurt, it’s a major annoyance that I can’t use that body part. But this guy’s body is limp. He can’t work. He can’t contribute. He can’t get up, he can’t move around. Can you imagine what it would be like to not be able to feed yourself? To lie there until someone else can get you food? Can you imagine not being able to control when you needed to use the restroom? This guy really has a hard life.

But he has friends—and his friends pick him up and start carrying him to Jesus. The whole time they’re walking, they’re hoping. Maybe Jesus will heal him. Maybe Jesus will restore his health. Maybe Jesus will cure him. The man lies on a mat, bobbing up and down, as his friends carry him through dusty streets towards Jesus. They eagerly run towards the house where Jesus is preaching, and as they turn the corner towards their house, they see that a mob has surrounded Jesus. They struggle at the back of an impenetrable thicket of people, but no one will let them through. "Please, let us through! We want Jesus to heal our friend!" one of them says. But the crowd simply won’t give way to four men carrying a stretcher—there’s just no room. Their minds race thinking about how they could get to Jesus. "Maybe we could push our way!" through one says. "We can’t give up!"

Then one of them has an idea. He sees the staircase that goes up to the roof. You see, back then they had staircases on the outside of the home, and they used the roof as a second room of the house. "Let’s not go through them—let’s go over them!" So they take the man upstairs, and then they begin to dig through the roof! Roofs in Capernaum were made of grass straw covered that was set over wooden beams and then mud was pushed over the top. Sometimes tiles were used underneath the mud for extra sturdiness. And every winter they’d refresh the roof of the house to prepare it for the coming weather. These men start digging, and before long, they’ve made a hole in the roof.

Jesus and the crowd now have dust all over them, and they peer through the hole above as a ray of bright daylight floods the room. Then something—or someone—begins to pass through the hole. The crowd shrinks back as a stretcher is set down right in front of Jesus. No one says anything, but it’s obvious what’s going on. Four men have brought their friend to Jesus for healing. This is the loudest unspoken request Jesus has ever had. The men above look through the hole—hoping, praying that Jesus will heal the man. "What’s happening?" one says. Everyone in the crowd looks at Jesus, wondering if he’ll heal him. Jesus sees what the men have done. He sees the lengths they have gone to bring this poor man to Him. The man himself must be bewildered and wonders what will happen. He’s helpless, laying

in front of Jesus, immobilized and unable to lift a finger. All eyes are on Jesus, and what does he say? Let's read beginning in verse 3.

Mk. 2:3-5 ESV ³ And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

"Son, your sins are forgiven." Forgiven?! Jesus was supposed to heal this guy—that's what everyone there was expecting! Look at him! He's a quadriplegic for crying out loud! I'm sure that if you took a poll of everyone in the room, they would have said that this man's greatest need was healing. But Jesus looked at this man, and saw the real deepest need of this man's soul. And what was that deepest need? It was the gospel of forgiveness available through Jesus. The gospel was his greatest need. And listen—that's our greatest need as well. The second point on your outline is this:

Encountering Jesus begins by recognizing our great daily need for the gospel.

We come into this room today, and we come with many different needs and concerns. Some of us are concerned about our health—we've been struggling, and we don't know how things are going to go. Some of us are concerned with the future—we're concerned about who we're going to marry, or a boyfriend or girlfriend. Some of us are concerned with our financial situation. Our work has not been going well, the car broke again, we can't seem to get ahead, and we're not sure how we're going to get by. Some of us are concerned with a relationship issue—there's someone we care about who is making poor decisions—and we feel helpless. We have all sorts of concerns today—but we need to remember that our most pressing and urgent need today is the gospel of Jesus. And sometimes we think of the gospel of Jesus as the message that gets us into heaven, and we need to understand it when we're converted, but then we don't need it anymore. But that's not true. Romans 1 says this: **Rom. 1:17 NIV** ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed-- a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." From first to last—from the beginning to the end of your life your greatest need is the gospel of Jesus. Listen—you never outgrow the gospel.

Let me explain how this works. The starting point in the Christian life comes when I first become aware of the gap between God's holiness and my sinfulness. And when I am converted I trust and hope in Jesus, who has done what I could never do: bridged the gap between my sinfulness and God's holiness. But the more I grow as a Christian, the more I grow in my appreciation and awareness of God's holiness and my own sinfulness. I feel convicted by issues I didn't even realize were issues before. And at the same time, as I get to know God, I see His holiness and perfection more and more. And what happens is that I begin to realize just how far the gap is between God's holiness and my sinfulness as I grow. And so as I'm growing as a Christian the cross should loom larger and more central in my life as I rejoice in my Savior who died on it for me to bridge that gap. But unfortunately, sanctification is not always that neat and tidy. Often, I think too lowly of God. And a lot of the time I think too highly of myself, elevating my own righteousness. But the gospel helps us with that too—it reminds us of the price Jesus had to pay for our sin. It reminds us that there's nothing we could do to earn our way back to God. It simultaneously shows us the depravity of our hearts, the holiness of God, and the mercy and grace shown to us on the cross. And as we consider the great love shown to us on the cross—the way God valued us and loved us, it pushes again and again to trust Jesus with great courage and to know Him with greater depth.

And so more than anything this morning, you need the gospel of Jesus. And you may think—you don't understand what I'm dealing with Nathanael. I'm in a financial mess. I may lose my home—I've got real needs! Listen—I'm not minimizing what's going on in your life—but I'm telling you that you have an even greater need. And that need is the gospel of Jesus. If the cross of Christ is so central to your life that it defines who you are and where you derive and define your value, then you may face difficulties, but you'll do so from a place that's totally secure.

So Jesus gives this man the unexpected gift of forgiveness. And the crowd may have been confused, but my guess is that Jesus' words of forgiveness were like a cool glass of water to his thirsty soul. Jesus' eyes met this man's eyes with such intensity, and he spoke with such authority, that as Jesus said that he was forgiven, it sank in that this was really true. And he didn't know how that would work, but he knew that his sin was forgiven—wiped clean. And as it began to sink in that he was totally and completely forgiven, the paralyzed man began to feel a deep sense of relief that was better than

walking. He felt the paralysis of guilt and the immobilization of shame leave his soul. He began to feel free for the first time. But not everyone in the room was pleased with this—because not everyone trusted in Jesus. As we go on, we’re going to see that...

Encountering Jesus demands that we decide if we believe that He is Lord.

Let’s read the response of the religious leaders in verse 5.

Mk. 2:5-7 ESV ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

As Jesus pronounces forgiveness upon this man, it raises the hair on the necks of the religious leaders in the room. You see, these men understood the implications of what Jesus had just said. Jesus claimed to do something that only God had the authority to do. He claimed to forgive sins. You see, when Jesus claimed to forgive sins, implicit in that claim was his assertion of his authority to be able to forgive sins. And these religious leaders knew that the only One with that kind of authority was God. So this was an implicit claim of deity. Jesus was saying, I can do what only God can do. And these religious leaders understood him. In fact, it’s interesting how it’s worded in verse 7. Their question is “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” In Greek, the way this is worded does not use the Greek word for “alone,” but instead uses the word for “one.” So literally translating this it would say, “Who is powerful to forgive sins but the One God?” And when it says “one God,” it’s alluding to a famous verse in the Old Testament, **Deut. 6:4 ESV** "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You see, these guys understood that Jesus was implicitly claiming to be the Lord—Yahweh, God incarnate.

And this is offensive to them—because it meant that Jesus is Lord and has unique authority. Whenever you encounter Jesus, there will be a decision point of whether you will accept His authority over your life, or if you will reject Him. Jesus doesn’t leave any middle ground open to us. You see, if Jesus is Lord, then that means that He has absolute authority and rights over your life. He decided when it begins, and He’ll decide when it ends. He has the absolute right to tell you how to live. He may put you in a position that makes no sense to you. The radical thing about the Gospel of Jesus is that His Lordship means that He may call any one of us to obey Him in ways that don’t make earthly sense to us.

A few years back, I was catching up with an old friend having a cup of coffee, and as we were chatting, he mentioned to me that he had come out as being gay. And at first I was kind of shocked, but as we proceeded to talk, he told me that he thought that the Bible was okay with someone having a homosexual lifestyle, and he wanted to talk with me about how he thought the Bible allowed for this. And I told him I’d be happy to get together and talk with him about that. But I told him before we did that, he needed to make a decision. He needed to decide whether he would forsake this lifestyle, forsake any homosexual relationship he was engaged in, if he’d turn is back on it if the Bible teaches that homosexual behavior is against the teachings of the Bible. You see, if he didn’t recognize Jesus’ Lordship over his life before searching the Scriptures to see what they said, then this was just an exercise in him justifying his bad behavior.

And the same applies to you and me. If we recognize Jesus as the Lord of our lives, that means we should decide ahead of time that we’ll obey Jesus, no matter what He may call us to. You see, if you say, “I’ll obey you Jesus in everything except this area of my life”—then you’re not treating Him as Lord. You can’t say, “I’ll follow you no matter what, as long as you do this for me.” That’s not how it works. Jesus being Lord means that He’s going to call you to do things that you don’t want to do. He’s going to call you to things that are difficult and uncomfortable. He’s going to call you to forgive that person who had hurt you so badly. He’s going to call you to apologize to that person you hurt, even though they also hurt you. He’s going to call you to be honest with your spouse about your struggles. He’s going to call you to have difficult conversations with people you love. And He’s going to call you to step out in faith and share the gospel with others. You see, when we approach the Bible each week, we don’t approach it like you might approach any other book. The Bible has unique authority because it’s inspired by the Lord of the universe. And so we come under it’s authority as we seek to learn what it says. We start from a point of saying, “God, I’ll obey you. Jesus, you’re the Lord of my life. Now show me how I can live a life that brings you honor!”

I want to warn you—if you don’t decide that Jesus is the Lord of your life, and that you’re going to submit to His authority in your life, then you cannot be His disciple. You can’t be a Christian and still hold onto the reigns of your life.

Because what will happen is eventually a situation will arise where you'll have to chose between Jesus and something you care deeply about. And if Jesus isn't the Lord of your life, then you'll chose against Jesus every time. Eventually you'll reject Him—and it will begin subtly. It will begin with a little trickle of entitlement, this trickle of thinking we're above the rest, and before long, we're rejecting Jesus' Lordship in our lives. That's what would happen to these religious leaders—they didn't think of themselves as really needing Jesus. Just a few verses later in Mark 2, it says this: **Mk. 2:17 ESV** ¹⁷ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." They didn't want to submit to what Jesus said about them. If Jesus isn't Lord of all, He isn't Lord at all. The gospel of Jesus means that Jesus is Lord, and we are not—and we must accept that as we encounter Him.

So in this passage, we see encountering Jesus happens primarily through God's Word, it begins with recognizing that the gospel is our greatest daily need, and we see that encountering Jesus demands that we decide if we believe that He is the Lord. Now we really get to the heart of this passage and what we're going to see is that...

Encountering Jesus is our only hope of being forgiven because of His unique authority.

Read with me in verse 8—and look at how Jesus will prove His authority:

Mk. 2:8-11 ESV ⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-- he said to the paralytic-- ¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."

I love this so much. Jesus knows in his heart what they're thinking—and He decides to use this as an opportunity to reveal Himself to them. Let me tell you, when you read the gospels, begin with the assumption that Jesus is WAY smarter than you are. Jesus uses an argument here from the lesser to the greater. It's like if I said, "I can't do 100 pushups, so do you think I could do 200?" Of course not! You start with something that's easier, and then you move on to something that's harder—and if the harder is true, then of course the easier is true. And he does so by asking a question that is pure genius. **Mk. 2:9 ESV** ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? And notice what he asks: Jesus does not ask which is easier *to do*, but rather which is easier *to say*. Of course, the forgiveness of sins is a greater feat than physical healing. Only God alone can forgive sins. But Jesus did not ask which is easier *to do*. He asked which is easier *to say*. What's the point? The point is that it's easier to say that someone is forgiven because it's not possible to empirically verify this. It's easier to say "your sins are forgiven" than to do something that requires external proof. If Jesus had said, you are healed, then this could be confirmed or denied by whether or not the man could move, but forgiveness is not something that can be tangibly measured, and so it was easier *to say* that the man was forgiven.

I can just see the scribes saying to one another, this man forgives sins? Who does this guy think He is? They were indignant at Jesus' bold claims. They were incensed at his audacity. Does he have the right to say such things? Yes, He does. As Jesus is about to tell us, not only is the gospel of forgiveness the deepest need we have, but He alone has the unique authority Himself to meet that need. Look with me what He says in verse 10.

Mk. 2:10-12 ESV ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-- he said to the paralytic-- ¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

In Matthew's gospel it puts says it this way:

Matt. 9:8 ESV ⁸ When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Jesus just said what was harder to say. He told the man to get up and walk and HE DID! He healed the man physically to demonstrate His authority to forgive the man. And so what do we see from this passage? We see that Jesus is the Lord of forgiveness. Jesus alone has the authority to forgive. He has the unique power to pardon our sins. In Mark's gospel this is the first time that Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man. And this is a unique description that Jesus uses of Himself. It simultaneously points to his humanity—he's the *Son of Man*, and it points to his divinity. It is ambiguous enough that Jesus could fill it with His own meaning, but it also would bring to mind the Old Testament book of Daniel

where someone referred to as the Son of Man is mentioned in a prophecy. This mysterious Person was given all power and authority.

Dan. 7:13-14 ESV ¹³ "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

And so when Jesus says that he wants them to know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive—it would raise all these thoughts in their minds. The Scribes assumed that forgiveness was strictly a heavenly prerogative, but Jesus shows this authority extends to the earthly man Jesus. What a thought! That God would allow a man to forgive others. Perhaps this Jesus was more than just a man—perhaps He was the imbued with the power of heaven—perhaps He was God incarnate!

Listen—the good news of the gospel is that Jesus is willing and able to forgive you. To wipe your sins clean. To give you a fresh start. That **Isa. 1:18 ESV** though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. That **1 Jn. 1:9 ESV** ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And do you know what's genius about Jesus' question here? As we reflect on it, it points us to the cross. **Mk. 2:9 ESV** ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? You see, the only way that Jesus could truly say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" is if there was some mechanism by which our sins could be atoned for. The Jews knew that sin must be atoned for. There had to be a sacrifice. God had taught this to the Jewish people through establishing a temple and a whole system of sacrifices. Forgiveness wasn't free—it was costly. And so the only way for Jesus to truly forgive is if a cost would be paid. And as Jesus makes clear later in Mark—He would pay that cost. You see, ultimately, it wasn't easy for Jesus to say "Your sins are forgiven"—that was the furthest thing from easy. Healing a man would be easy in comparison—because forgiving this man meant that in just a couple of years Jesus would be willingly pinned to a wooden cross. He would bear the sin of this man. He would bear his guilt and his shame. And he would face God's holy wrath towards sin. Though he was innocent, God would pronounce the guilty verdict on Jesus instead of on you and on me.

Mk. 10:45 ESV ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

And as we see towards the end of Mark, forgiveness would cost Jesus everything. And then He was raised from the dead by God's power—proving once and for all that He has beat sin and death. It is finished, and Jesus has won. So does He have authority to forgive? You bet He does!

Today, some of us in this room may be carrying around a burden of guilt. There's a sin we just haven't dealt with. There's an issue in our minds right now that the Spirit of God is awakening us to, and we haven't dealt with it. It's been holding us down like a paralysis to our soul. Guilt can even begin to cause physical symptoms. Headaches, stomach problems, anxiety—all can be caused by guilt. Jesus offers us forgiveness—He has the authority to do so from the cross, He's willing to forgive. So will we turn to Him and let Him deal with our sin? Or will we reject His authority to forgive?

So—as we close, we're going to see one final point—how should we respond to Jesus when we encounter Him? And what we're going to see is that...

Encountering Jesus should propel a response of faith.

Look with me at how this man responds in verse 12:

Mk. 2:12 ESV ¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Can you imagine with me, if Jesus had healed this man, and told him to get up, and this man said, "No Jesus, I'm quite comfortable here." "I know I'm healed—thank you very much—but I've really grown accustomed to this mat." "If you guys could make way, my four friends will come and carry me home—that would be much nicer than me having to walk." That sounds crazy doesn't it! But that's what you and I do sometimes. Jesus says we're forgiven, He says we're

redeemed, we're made new, we have His Holy Spirit living in us to empower us, and instead of getting up and acting in faith, we stay lying down on our comfortable old mat.

Faith shows itself in actions. This man's determined friends believed Jesus had the power to heal—and they showed that by bringing their friend to Jesus. The man himself believed that Jesus could forgive and heal him. He could have just accepted the judgment of the scribes and said to himself, "This man cannot forgive.... I can't get up... how does He expect me to get up." Instead, this man obeys Jesus command, and "immediately" it says—he stands up picks up his mat and walks out. Can you imagine the joy this man must have felt? Can you imagine the jumping up and down, the running around, the delight as he jumped into the sea of Galilee? This man responded in faith to Jesus.

This week, in your life, when you pick up the phone and get bad news, will you lash out in anger, or will you trust in Jesus? When your boss scolds you for something that wasn't your fault, will you become embittered, or will you trust in Jesus? When you're sitting at your computer or looking at your phone, and you're tempted to click on a link that would compromise your integrity, will you trust in Jesus? When you're exhausted, and you see an opportunity to serve someone and show them love, will you trust in Jesus? When you're in a conversation with your neighbor this week, and you see an unexpected opportunity to speak of Jesus and how he's changed your life, will you boldly trust in Jesus? You just might be the one who brings your friend to Jesus to receive forgiveness like the men did in this story!

Conclusion

Encountering Jesus happens primarily through God's Word. It begins by recognizing our daily need for His gospel. It demands that we decide if He is the Lord of our lives. Encountering Jesus is our only hope of forgiveness—because He has authority. And encountering Jesus should propel us to respond in faith that lives for Him and gives Him glory!

That man encountered Jesus almost 2000 years ago. But this morning, Jesus is present with us. He is a living Savior. And we've been able to encounter Him through His Word. So now we need to decide if we're going to respond to Jesus in faith. Faith doesn't stay on the edge of the crowd. Faith acts. So dig through God's roof and find yourself in His Presence. True faith won't stay in the stretcher. So push on to encounter Jesus daily this week. And when you do that, you'll be forgiven, your soul will be healed, and God will receive glory. Let's pray.

