*Reece Frith 15 – 5 – 22*

**“Your Greatest Need”**

**Mark 2:1 – 5**

If you were in my place this morning, and this was the passage that you’re given, what would you talk about?

Tell the person next to you.

In some ways it’s a straight forward account.

There’s these four mates.

They have this friend who’s doing life hard. He’s paralytic in a society where there is no social welfare or health system and so his future prospects are bleak.

They hear Jesus is in town, they know he is a worker of wonders in the power of the Holy Spirit, and so they want to get him to Jesus.
They arrive at Jesus’ home and there are people everyone and they can’t get in.

So they go up onto someone else’s roof and they a dig hole (which I don’t know about you, but I think I wouldn’t appreciate that, let alone that’s highly illegal and anti-social behaviour).

And they are able to lower him down.

Then, did you notice – and it’s always stood out to me – that when they brought this guy to Jesus, the first thing that Jesus did was not talk about him being in a paralytic state.

This guy thought the real issue was his being paralysed.

The guy did a bit of self-diagnosis. His self-diagnosis was, my most pressing, presenting issue is being paralysed.

Jesus saw something quite different.

You see when Jesus addresses this guy, what he did was look deep down into his being… into his soul.
And what Jesus saw was something else.

What Jesus saw was long buried wounds – there were wounds in his soul that needed the healing cure of forgiveness.

The first thing Jesus talked about was forgiveness.

That was the greatest need.

And this act of self-diagnosis is common.

In fact, at the moment, it’s regular activity – you know what I’m referring to.

Or have you ever done this?

You have some symptoms, maybe a bit unusual, that you’re a little concerned about, so you go and get a consult with… Dr Google.

(No need for a show of hands☺).

The latest research says that 25%, one in every four people, will do a Google search first and foremost in those situations and that is where they will get their primary information from.

It is not recommended because misdiagnosis is common.

You know, when it comes to our interior world, it’s similar.

My point is this: all of us can at times misdiagnose what is happening in our lives.

We think the presenting is the real issue when there is something else going on.

We’re all familiar with the icebergs, and you’re probably aware that the bulk of an iceberg is hidden – correct?

Here’s one on the screen.



The question for you is, how much, percentage wise is below?

On average only 10% is above the surface of the water.

You get it?

So what happens is we self-diagnose and we address the presenting issue but nothing changes.

It’s so common.

A couple of stories.

For many years Melanie and her husband had been struggling to conceive. She was told that in all probability they would never have a child of their own. Then remarkably – miraculously – Melanie discovered she was pregnant. The pregnancy carried to full term but then tragically during labour, her much wanted child died.

So Melanie did what she thought was a good thing to do, she and her husband sought answers from a Bible teacher they knew and respected.

So this teacher started coming out with all these spiritual sounding phrases: “God has a reason for everything”; “There are no accidents in God’s providence”; “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, and you just have to trust that God knows and always does what is best. The hand that smites is also the hand that heals. You just have to trust him.”

When Melanie asked what good the Lord might have intended by taking her baby and now leaving her without a child, the teacher suggested there was a lesson she and her husband were to learn from this event.

“When the timing is right—and God’s timing is always right—and when you’ve learned what God wants to teach you, perhaps then God will bless you with another child. Or perhaps it’s simply not his will for you to have children.”

The effect this teaching had on Melanie was that she felt guilty because she had difficulty trusting “God’s plan”. Not only that but her passion for God and her relationship with husband started to deteriorate.

Thankfully Melanie confided in someone with compassionate insight.

As they talked this person with insight was able to say, that God is not a god who teaches us through some kind of cruel lessons. Instead his compassionate heart is revealed in His Son Jesus.

Melanie thought that the presenting issue was that she wasn’t able to understand God’s plan but the real issue was a distorted image of God.

Chloe was a smart, personable, and devoted Christian student from South America whom I had the pleasure of teaching in several theology classes. In one meeting, Chloe confessed that, despite the confident appearance that she projected, she actually lived with a sense of guilt and had never felt like a good Christian.

In fact, Chloe said she had never been confident she was “truly saved.” She knew that salvation is based on our faith, and she knew that the essence of faith is trust. But trusting God was something Chloe said she always struggled with. “Everyone else at this college seems to trust God for everything in their life,” she said, “but I just can’t!”

Chloe seemed baffled when I asked her what she felt she was supposed to trust God for. “You know,” she said, “I’m supposed to trust God to bring the right man into my life to be my husband, and I’m supposed to trust that he’ll lead us into the right ministry together and that he’ll bless and protect our family.”

“Protect?” I asked. “As in, protect your children?” We sat in silence for a moment before I continued. “You’re having trouble trusting God to protect your children… as in, protect them from things like child molesters?”

Tears began to well up in Chloe’s eyes, as she had shared with me that when she was nine years old she was molested by a well-respected missionary friend of her family.

I leaned forward, grabbed Chloe’s hand, and said, “Chloe, maybe it’s time to stop beating yourself up for not trusting God for something you already know he can’t be trusted for. If God didn’t protect you when you were nine, it’s little wonder you have trouble trusting him to protect you and your future children when you’re twenty.”

Chloe thought she had defective faith issue where the real issue was that terrible events from the past had wounded her soul.

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So to finish.

For one, some of us here, you may be able bodied but when Jesus looks into soul he sees the same wound – the wound that needs forgiveness.

The thing is, you may be in church for all of your life.

You may have been attending services for 4, 5, or 6 decades – perhaps more.

You may have given yourself to being at every service, been involved in community projects and contributed financially.

Those are good things but not the best things.

You’ve never received the healing forgiveness that brings reconciliation with God who is our Father.

You’ve never received Jesus’ pardon – that is your greatest need this morning.

For all of us Jesus can be, wants to be a physician to your soul.

He is the one who sees below the surface, who looks deep into your interior world and brings healing.

That often comes, as we heard in the stories I told, through another – a person of insight because there are times when we get stuck.

It’s like we can’t get past the presenting issue.

That person may be a trusted friend. It could be a counsellor.
Could be pastor (I like flat whites…☺)
I’m happy to chat to people as much or as little as you want.

So it may be through a person of insight.

I also believe that Jesus speaks directly through his Holy Spirit to bring us insight.
There can be profound moments when we open ourselves up and let him go deeper.

The Jesus who spoke to the greatest need in the paralysed man is the same Jesus who is here this morning.

So this morning, we’re going simply take some time to wait.

The musicians are going play the one song once.

And if you have an aspect of your life that is troubling you, I invite you to offer it to him and ask for His insight.

We’ve done this before but I encourage you to adopt a posture of reception, which can also be a posture of release.

As we do so allow Jesus to speak.