All Things New – Part 3

# A New Sense of Identity

## (Mark 2:1-12)

Welcome, it’s great to have all of you with us today. We’ve been in a message series entitled “All Things New” and I hope it’s been encouraging to you to recognize all that God has done for you in Christ. What I want to explore this morning is God’s forgiveness, because it’s not just something in the past, but his mercies are new every morning. And so, his forgiveness is part of that new thing that he is doing in us and that he continues to do in us today.

The challenge is that forgiveness isn’t a one-way street. In other words, it’s easy to receive God’s forgiveness while still holding on to the pain, the hurt, or the bitterness of an offense. But no matter whether it’s forgiving someone else, or forgiving God when you feel like he’s let you down, or even forgiving yourself when you’re carrying the guilt and shame of something that you did in the past, but God wants you to let it go so that he can heal you and set you free from carrying that burden. The problem is that it’s easier for me to hold on to a grudge. It’s easier to just not talk about it and hold on to that unforgiveness. But God is doing new things in us, he’s not only given us the grace to receive his forgiveness, but he’s given us the grace to forgive others.

You see, it takes faith to receive God’s forgiveness, but it takes great faith to extend his forgiveness to others. In other words, it takes faith to realize what God has done in us through Christ, but it takes great faith, an empowering faith, an enabling faith to choose to overlook an offense and offer to others the same thing that God offered to you. We can only do this according to his grace as we put our faith in Christ, because in him we have redemption through his blood, in him we’re sealed with the Holy Spirit, in him we’re new creations becoming the righteousness of God. And so, it’s a new thing that God is doing in us, as he gives us, and here’s the title of today’s message, he gives us “A New Sense Of Identity” in Christ.

There’s a wonderful illustration of this in Mark’s gospel, when Jesus was teaching in a certain house, but there were so many people gathered there that you couldn’t even get to the door to hear what he was saying. It was into that situation that four men came carrying a paralytic on a mat, but because they couldn’t get to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above, and gently lowered the paralyzed man into the room with Jesus. The Bible says in verse five that,

*“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:3-5).*

Now, we’re not told this man’s name, but we do know his condition; that he was a paralytic. Which illustrates the fact that often our identity is found in an illness, a disorder, a painful situation, an addiction or a problem that we’re facing. In other words, you can become known more by what’s wrong with you than by what you have the potential to be because you’re just so overwhelmed by your status, your problems, your life in general, and it’s those things that become your identity. The good news is that God is making “All Things New” and for some of you that’s the best news ever, because you’re at the point in your life where you no longer have a real sense of who you are.

This is so powerful, it’s so important for us today, because God is doing a new thing. Speaking through the prophet Isaiah he said,

*“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:19).*

In other words, God is telling you that he’s what you need in those moments, those times or difficult seasons of your life. When you feel like you’re in a dry time, no matter what comes next, no matter what you need, you need to know that God’s already there. And so, before you even know your need, you may not perceive it, but God is doing a new thing and he’s what you need. The Bible tells us,

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

These four men carrying the paralytic knew that Jesus was the answer to their friend’s problem and so they were committed to getting him to Jesus no matter what. I wonder how many of you are that committed to bringing your friends and family to Jesus? You see, you might know what they need, you’d love to give them what they need, but you can’t, because only God can give them what they need. And so, we’ve got to bring them to Jesus.

## 1. Named by a Condition

This is what the paralytic, this man who is named by his condition, would come to understand. Up to this point, his true identity had been masked by his physical condition. He was paralyzed, he was unable to move, and the Bible simply says that some men came bringing to Jesus a paralytic. And so, this was a man whose life had been consumed by his condition, he’d been confined to a mat and was unable to experience the freedom that Christ came to bring.

Number one, some of us have found ourselves in a similar place, a situation or circumstance which has become our identity. And so, we resign ourselves to being named by our condition because there’s always the temptation to identify with whatever issue we’re facing in life. Now, I don’t know what that may be for you, for some of you maybe your name, your identity is addicted, hungry, unemployed, or divorced. But whatever it is, today I want you to know that God is making all things new and he wants to give you a new name.

He tells us, for those of us who overcome,

*“You will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow” (Isaiah 62:2).*

And this is so significant, because this man with no name was brought to Jesus who was the name above every name (Philippians 2:9). And there are some of you today who need to know that whatever has become your identity, whatever name has plagued you, burdened you, and held you down, that there is a name that is above that name. And so, if you can name that problem, that circumstance, that disease, disorder, or condition, there is a name that is above it. The Bible tells us,

*“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11).*

And so, I don’t want you to wait until one day, but I want you to use your tongue right now and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord over that whatever. Jesus Christ is Lord over that name and that’s exactly what this unnamed man’s friends did. They came believing and confessing that Jesus was Lord over their friend’s paralysis. And so, they came in faith, stepping on some toes, forcing their way through the crowd, breaking through this guy’s roof, and they were doing so many things that were just wrong. But the Bible says that they were doing one thing right; it says that when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic,

*“Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5).*

You see, a great faith will come to Jesus in spite of all the obstacles. A great faith will come to Jesus in spite of the impossibilities. And yet, there are some of you, you’re not paralyzed on the outside, but you’ve got secrets, fears, and different things that have paralyzed you on the inside deep in your soul. Others of you, you may have things that can be seen, certain addictions and sins that manifest themselves in obvious ways, but it’s often those things on the inside, it’s those things that are secret that often keep us paralyzed, frozen, stuck in the same place for a lifetime.

When you’re paralyzed on the inside, maybe by your doubts, your fears, or your anxiety, you can be in church, but that name keeps you from seeing God as he really is. You come to church, but never truly experience God’s forgiveness. You can come here week after week and feel the presence of God, but you hold back your emotions, you fight to keep your composure, and you pretend like you’ve got it all together. And so, number two, you’re hiding behind a name, but it’s the wrong name. It’s not the name above all names. It’s a counterfeit name and therefore it doesn’t have any power.

## 2. Hiding Behind a Name

You see, the problem is that shame always causes us to hide, putting on a mask so that others don’t see who we really are. It was that shame that caused Adam and Eve to hide in the Garden when they fell into temptation and sinned. Suddenly their eyes were opened and realizing that they were naked, they were ashamed and so they hid. There may be some of you that are here, you’re at church, but you’re not really here because you’ve learned how to hide behind this mask so that nobody can see the real you. It’s that mask concealing that name that keeps you from being exposed, but it also keeps you from seeing the gracious hand of your God.

Mark tells us in chapter 1, that just before this account of the paralytic, that…

*“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. He also drove out many demons, but he wouldn’t let the demons speak because they knew who he was” (Mark 1:32-34).*

The devil has many of us hiding behind a name, keeping quiet about whatever it is, so that we don’t bring it to Jesus. You see, the demons know exactly who he is and so they don’t want you to come to Jesus because they know that when you personally experience his grace you will be free from that weight that you’ve been carrying. The demons know who Jesus is, they know there’s power in his name, and they don’t want you to experience his healing touch. So, they deceive you into doubting the promises of God, causing you to think that you’re helpless, you’re paralyzed, and unable to move.

Others of you need to grab a friend, a family member, or a neighbor that has been hiding behind a name, paralyzed by guilt and shame, and you need to take them by the arm, maybe you need to pick them up and carry them, but you need to bring them to Jesus. You see, these four men had heard that this man named Jesus was preaching in the synagogues, that he was healing the sick and driving out demons, and so they believed that if Jesus could do all that he could certainly heal their friend’s paralysis. And so, it was that kind of faith that caused them to drag their friend through the crowds, up onto the roof of that house, pulling it apart so that they could lower their friend down to Jesus.

Mark tells us that some teachers of the law were sitting there in the house as this was happening, and they heard Jesus tell the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven,” and they were 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…” (Mark 2:7-8).*

And so, he responded to them, basically saying, “Why do you doubt?” and he said in verse eight,

*"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…" (Mark 2:8-12)*

Today, I’m believing that God is going to challenge some of you to let go of those things, those names that have paralyzed you, and you’re going to step out in faith. Others of you, you’re paralyzed because of your inability to forgive; maybe you’re struggling to forgive yourself or others have hurt you deeply and your life has been impacted by the sins of others. Whatever it is, we need God’s grace, we need him to increase our faith, building us up and empowering us to do what we can’t do on our own.

## 3. Walking in Grace

Number three, we need to learn to walk in grace. This itself is the gift of God; it’s the will of God, and so we need his grace to forgive. We need the ability to offer the same forgiveness to others that we’ve received ourselves, because the temptation, honestly the temptation is to step outside and yell at those guys on the roof. You know, “you’d better fix that hole and get off my roof right now” because it’s easy to stand in judgment over others. It’s easier to just condemn others because of whatever, you know whatever that name is, but as followers of Christ of all people we should be walking in grace.

And so, we need to learn how important it is to forgive, especially when we don’t feel like forgiving, because Jesus tells us it’s not an option. In Matthew chapter 6 he said,

*“If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15).*

Now, I know that some of you are probably thinking, “Well…” and you’re making all kinds of excuses, “You just don’t know what so-and-so did.” And that’s right, I don’t, but forgiveness isn’t fair. In fact, there was nothing fair about God’s Son Jesus Christ coming to earth, living a perfect life, doing so much good in the world, only to be executed for a crime he didn’t commit. There’s nothing fair about that, but that’s exactly what he did because he loved us so much that he took our place, he died taking our punishment so that we don’t get what we deserve. He paid the price so that we could be forgiven and that’s why the Bible tells us,

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).*

This is God’s will, that we would offer people the same grace, the same forgiveness that God has offered to us. I know it’s not fair, but I imagine that there are at least a few of you here who aren’t perfect, you’ve been forgiven for something, and you’ve experienced God’s grace in a way that you didn’t deserve. In fact, I’d be willing to bet that’s why a lot of you are here this morning worshiping Jesus, because you’ve been forgiven of a debt that you couldn’t pay. I know that’s my story; I’ve been forgiven of much; I’ve experienced grace that I didn’t deserve time and time again.

You see, Jesus continues making all things new, giving us a new sense of identity, and promising that if we mess up, if we fall, and this is so important, because we all mess up time and time again; but if we confess our sins, if we tell him we’re sorry, if we admit that what we did was wrong, he’s faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). And so, having received such grace, such undeserved favor, how could we not give to others the very same grace he’s given to us? That in itself is the power of the gospel, it’s not just something that’s received, but it’s something that’s given. And that’s why Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew chapter 6,

*“Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us” (Matt 6:12, NLT).*

Because we’re praying and speaking a spiritual reality over our lives. As followers of Christ we’re walking in grace, we’re living our lives as conduits of his grace, and so his grace is not just flowing to us but it’s flowing through us.

Jesus proved that he had authority to forgive sins. To the teachers of the law he said, “Just so you know” and then turning to the paralytic he said,

*“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!" (Mark 2:11-12).*

It was a new thing; they’d never seen such grace, but Jesus proved to them not only could he forgive sin, but he could heal the whole body.

Many years ago, a close friend betrayed me, and I wrestled with anger and thoughts of revenge, but I knew I needed to forgive him, and God gave me that grace. It wasn’t easy because forgiveness didn’t change what he did, but it allowed me to heal, I was set free, and today I’m free from the pain of that offense. You see, forgiveness allows you to take on a new identity, forgiveness changes your soul because it doesn’t allow that offense to rob you of your future.

As we close, we remember that Jesus came, he died, and rose again so that we could know his forgiveness and have a new sense of identity in him. Jesus is making all things new and today he’s still writing your story. You can be confident that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion. And so, whatever it is, whatever name it has, you just bring it to Jesus who is the name above every name. You confess it, you turn from it, and you find freedom walking in his grace because he will give you a new sense of identity in him. Let’s pray together.

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