



WILLIAM CAREY

Mark 2:1-12

Over recent weeks I've been doing a series on all these pictures around the church. They are about how we can be Jesus to one another and the community around us. Jesus is our example. And what do we notice about Jesus. He didn't just speak good news to people – He *was* good news because lives were radically changed. In our story this morning. Jesus was good news to the paralysed man.

It's this realisation that the same Jesus who radically changed this man's life can change people's lives today, and if we know Jesus as Saviour and Lord, He can use us to both be good news and bring good news to other people.

250 years ago a man called William Carey was born and as a young man he realised that God wanted to do amazing things in people's lives. Unfortunately, many of the senior Baptists at that time didn't believe that God could or would use us to do His work of change lives of people the world over. That completely went against what had already happened outside of Baptist circles where men like George Whitefield, John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards were part of a move of God's Spirit where the things God were calling Carey had actually happened.

Carey started to share what God was calling him to but when he started to share his vision with the old guard he got the brush-off. This is what one man called John Collett Ryland said to him in a public meeting: "Sit down young man! If God wants to convert the heathen, he will do that without consulting you and me."

The worst struggle sometimes comes from people who are most religious. Jesus found this as he started to do God's work and found his strongest opponents people who should have been giving Him the most enthusiastic support.

Carey eventually found support from other younger ministers who shared his vision for what God could do both in Britain and in the nations and they became leaders in an evangelical movement that had a significant influence on the growth of not just the Baptists but generally of the evangelical movement of the nineteenth century. So what, you may ask? Well, this church is a product of the same movement.

This group of people founded the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792. What was the significance of that? The BMS was the first modern missionary society and right up to the present time Christian missions are still using the same model.

It had been a long time since Christians had actually had a vision to go out to lands where the good news had either never been preached, or certainly not preached for a very long time. For Carey it was a huge challenge because unlike today, no-one had done it before.

So how can this story of Jesus healing the lame man help us understand what was going on and apply it to ourselves.

1. Not to be deterred by the size of the task (vv2-4)

A few days later Jesus went back to Capernaum, and the news spread that he was at home. 2 So many people came together that there was no room left, not even out in front of the door.

The crowds pressed in on Jesus, coming to him from every direction it seemed! Yet still he showed compassion, strength of character and resilience in the face of an overwhelming need. Jesus reveals his power to meet the man's need visibly by healing him. He also proclaims the forgiveness of sins, speaking to the man's spiritual need as well as his physical condition - both are the concern of the Saviour. Whilst Carey had calculated that there were over 500 million people who as yet had not heard the gospel, he believed that only by taking personal responsibility for the task could he begin to break into this darkness with the light of the gospel. It was the belief of Carey, and those who partnered with him in the early days of BMS World

Mission, that there was going to be a glorious golden age of non-- Christians accepting Jesus Christ. He refused to believe that it would require anything other than a persistent effort of faith. The task was great - but so was his God!

2. Be Prepared to challenge human power and institutions

Some teachers of the Law who were sitting there thought to themselves, 7 How does he dare talk like this? This is blasphemy! God is the only one who can forgive sins! 8 At once Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he said to them, Why do you think such things?9 Is it easier to say to this paralyzed man, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Get up, pick up your mat, and walk?

Authority never likes to be challenged! Teachers of Jewish law who heard Jesus proclaim the power of God to forgive sins did not like their own powers being challenged so openly. They were right that only God could forgive sins, but they refused to recognise Jesus' power as coming from God, much less that he himself was God! Jesus' public ministry often showed us in a particular time and place what God was going to do for all peoples in every time and place. For us the challenge is to work out in our local situations - what is it that we can do that will reveal Jesus' Claim to be Lord of all? In the history of BMS World Mission, it was difficult not just to get people onto a ship and go, but to get a captain to sail it!

Once the decision by Carey to set sail for India had been made, even making the journey itself was opposed by the powerful business, the East India Trade Company. Their officials told the captain of the ship on which Carey was to set sail that his credentials as captain were under threat were he to sail. What disruption to the rich businesses and the conditions of poor workers might be caused by mission workers seeking to encourage people to please God before their earthly masters?

Speaking confidently in the name of the Christ to those who exercise power and authority might not always be comfortable, but it is the way of Christ. What are the injustices that need to be challenged in our communities? What would lead people from doubt to faith and from despair to hope? We do not need to travel to India to exercise this ministry, but it is needed in every place.

3. Confidence in the power of Christ

I will prove to you, then, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. So he said to the paralyzed man,11 I tell you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home! 12 While they all watched, the man got up, picked up his mat, and hurried away. They were all completely amazed and praised God, saying, We have never seen anything like this!

Those who brought the paralysed man to Jesus demonstrated their faith in his power to heal. But in getting the man to Jesus, there were obvious obstacles and these could have been final and prevented the healing if the men had not been so stubborn in their determination. There are no guarantees of total success for those eager to serve in mission today. Carey's words are worth remembering:

"I know not what to say about the mission. I feel as a farmer does about his crop; sometimes I think the seed is springing, and then I hope; a little time blasts all, and my hopes are gone like a cloud? .I preach every day to the natives, and twice on the Lord's Day constantly, besides other itinerant labours; and I try to speak of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and of Him alone; but my soul is often dejected to see no fruit."

Yet, eventually the work grew, often through the scattering of seeds in preaching, many times through the translation of the Bible and through his engagement with the ordinary people he went to serve. Carey had such a strong sense of the tasks to which he was called by God to do that on completing a final revision of the Bible in Bengali, he says,

"There is scarcely anything for which I desired to live a little longer so much as for that". Carey was a man of unending energy and perseverance. May we as Christians learn from him as he followed his master Jesus and learn to do as he did.

*Preached by Mark Reid
MRBC Felixstowe 21/8/11
Based on a BMS World Mission outline (c) BMS World Mission 2011*