

Mark 2 Guess who

Guess who the person is...

They play football...

They score lots of goals...

7-0...

(Mo Salah)

They fly a pink helicopter...

Their favourite line is "This pup's got to fly" ...

They are part of the Paw Patrol...

(Sky)

He's an Italian plumber...

He likes to race Karts against his brother...

He has adventures rescuing princesses in the mushroom kingdom...

(Super Mario)

There are different ways to tell who someone is. You can do it by what they look like – what colour their hair is, how tall they are, what they wear... But that only gives you a surface level of what they are like. You can change what you wear or how your hair is.

A better way to tell who someone is, is by looking at what they do. That will tell you a lot more about who they are as a person.

Mark's Gospel is a big game of Guess who? Mark introduces us to someone called Jesus and then through stories invites us to guess who he is. Mark gives us stories about things Jesus did and invites us to guess who he really is. This story today is another clue to who Jesus is.

The story starts with Jesus in Capernaum, a town on the shore of Lake Galilee. He's in a house (possibly Peter's house near the shore) and so many people have heard about the things he's said and done that Jesus has become a local celebrity. They crowd into the house to hear what he has to say. There's not even room outside.

And as Jesus is speaking to the crowd, suddenly people start to brush dust off their clothes, and they hear scratching coming from above and, before they know what's going on a face appears through the roof. There's a hole in the ceiling and it keeps getting bigger and then a man is lowered down in front of Jesus! A man who is paralysed. He can't walk and his friends are hoping for a miracle from Jesus.

It's audacious and it's extraordinary. But it's nothing compared to what happens next... Far from telling anyone off, Jesus looks at the man and his friends, sees their faith and says, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Now, hold the front door a second, that isn't what he was supposed to do. The man is looking to be healed but be given a spiritual lesson. And the teachers of the law, the big wigs from the synagogue down the street, they're thinking, "what's this man on about? How dare he say that this man's sins are forgiven!"

Would it not have been easier and more in keeping with what everyone wants for Jesus just to say, "Be healed!" and leave it at that?

But who is Jesus? Is Jesus just a miracle worker, a super doctor who can heal without the need for medicine or operations? Is Jesus someone who came to just bring hope in this life?

Jesus knows what's going on in people's heads at this time and so he asks the people a question: Which is easier? To forgive someone's sins or to make them walk again?

Which is easiest?

The answer is that both are impossible for ordinary people!

I can't forgive people for what they've done wrong – only God can do that

I can't make someone walk again if they're paralysed (can a nurse/doctor/surgeon... possibly only with high tech equipment and real cutting edge stuff are we beginning to be able to do this)

"To show you I have authority to forgive sins", Jesus says, "Get up, take your mat and walk home."

Bam! you can imagine the shocked silence before the rejoicing breaks out.

Who is Jesus? He's not just a miracle worker. He's someone with the power to heal the soul, a healing that goes deeper and lasts longer than any healing of the body.

Baptism is a sign of the forgiveness and hope that Jesus offers to everyone. Matthew may only be little, but it is a sign and symbol going forward that Jesus loves him and that Jesus can forgive him for anything that he does wrong later in his life. It's a sign and symbol the same for everyone else here.

Mark asks the question, who is Jesus? The answer in this story is someone with the power and authority to forgive and offer fresh hope.