

- **\*READ Mark 1:39-45\*** Last Sunday night we noted that Mark doesn't tell his story of Jesus's ministry as if our Lord just eased into things. No, instead we find Jesus getting right to work following His baptism and temptations in the wilderness. I made mention in the previous lesson here in Mark that I really want us to take note of the different times that Mark speaks of Jesus preaching, teaching, or proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The first time we find this in **1:14,15**, but we will continue to see this being the focal point of Jesus's ministry. Some would like to think that Jesus was simply an all-powerful humanitarian, but this simply isn't the case. Mark very clearly shows that His emphasis was on teaching the coming of the kingdom of God.
- Take note of **1:21,38,39 & 2:2,13** as proof of this being the case. Yes as we just read, He healed the man of his leprosy and casting out demons, but why was Jesus in this synagogue to begin with? He was there preaching! Therefore, we must understand that everything else that Jesus did was simply a byproduct of His efforts in teaching and preaching. Now, someone might challenge me on this because it goes against what I believe are caricatures of Jesus that some people actually see as being who Jesus actually was. Some believe He was purely a humanitarian with miraculous abilities, but I firmly believe that what we will see this morning, from our continued study of the Incredible Jesus that is described by Mark, is that Jesus was so much more and he was about so much more. Let's consider **Mark 2:1-17** and I believe to be the Servant's True Power & Mission.

## **The Servant's True Power & Mission Mark 2:1-17**

### **I. The True Power Of Jesus (Mark 2:1-12)**

**A. The Situation:** Friends of a paralyzed man dig through the roof of a crowded house in order bring him to Jesus for healing, but Jesus forgives his sins without addressing the man's physical ailment. (**2:1-5**)

1. We first find Jesus going into Capernaum (along the northeastern shoreline of the Sea of Galilee) in **1:21**, and then He departs into other areas of Galilee in **1:39-45**. **2:1** tells us that "*After some days*" Jesus returns to Capernaum, and He simply continues to do what He has been doing up to this point...He is "*speaking the word to them.*" And as has been the case with just about every place that Jesus has been up to this point, word quickly travels that He is in town and the masses arrive. There were so many people in this doorway that there was no way that anyone else could enter the residence to see Jesus.
2. This presented a difficult situation for four men who were trying to make sure that there paralyzed friend had the opportunity to come before Jesus for the possibility of healing. But these men were bound and determined to make sure that this happened, so they decided that going through the roof was the proper way to go. This would not have been the feat that we might expect considering that the vast majority of our roofs are slanted climbing up and through would be quite an adventure. The homes of Jesus's day were mostly one story with flat roofs and normally a set up steps that went up onto the roof because the roof was used as a place to accomplish a number of different tasks. This would have been easier to navigate, but it doesn't mean that it was still an easy thing to do.
3. Though they were able easily get up onto the roof, they still had to do the whole getting through the roof portion of this semi-crazy plan. There were no shingles to pull up, so they instead had to dig through wood beams that were covered with branches, thatch, and mud. What a scene this must have been! Imagine Jesus standing in this room teaching away and suddenly the roof begins to crumble above your heads. Surely debris must have been falling, and the people must have been completely distracted by what was going on. And yet, I can totally see Jesus continuing to teach away until the man is finally lowered down in front of Him

and the moment of truth arrives. He looks at the paralyzed man, sees his faith and the faith of those who served him in this incredible way, and Jesus opens His mouth only to say, ***"Son, your sins are forgiven."*** (2:5)

**B. The Conflict:** The scribes, who are present to scout out Jesus, are offended by Jesus's words and question in their hearts how anyone who make such claims. (2:6,7)

1. If ever there was something that could have happened that would have brought the occasion to a screeching halt...it surely would have been exactly what Jesus did. Instead of doing what He has done up to this point (and certainly what had prompted these men to bring their friend before Jesus in the first place), Jesus simply tells the man that his sins were forgiven.
2. This prompts a strong response from some of the Jewish scribes who were present. There is no doubt that the religious establishment had heard of this rabbi from Nazareth who had not only been teaching in their synagogues, but who had also been teaching authoritatively and even performing miraculous deeds. This opportunity was everything they were hoping for. They were able to hear Him teach, and they even had this situation where he could heal an obviously paralyzed man. However, there is no way that they were expecting for Him to flip the script by telling the man that his sins were forgiven. Jesus doing this filled their minds with all sorts of questions with the primary one being, *"Who does this guy think he is?"*
3. Let's take just a moment to recognize that the reaction of these men to what they saw wasn't uncalled for. In fact, I would think that any one of us would react the same way if we were in their shoes. Their immediate thoughts and questions were, ***"Why does He speak like this? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*** Again, these were appropriate and even warranted questions and thoughts! To try to elevate one's self to the place of God was blasphemy that the Law stated was worthy of death (Leviticus 24:16), and this was actually the same charge that they would eventually pin on Jesus in order for Him to be killed. They were correct in saying that this was something that only God could do, but what they failed to understand is that this was surely purposeful on Jesus's part as an early declaration of His deity.

**C. Jesus's Response:** He seeks to prove His ability to heal broken souls through forgiving sins by showing His power to heal the paralyzed man's broken body. (2:8-12)

1. I believe this can be clearly concluded by Jesus's response to their thoughts. But again, let's remember that these were internal thoughts amongst the scribes, and yet Jesus gives another proof of His incredible nature and power by telling them of the thoughts that they had not even outwardly expressed. ***"Right away, Jesus perceived in His spirit that they were thinking like this within themselves, and He said to them 'Why are you thinking these things within your hearts?'"*** (2:8)
2. I can't hardly image the thoughts that must have gone through the heads of these scribes at this point, but they don't have much time to respond for Jesus begins to explain why it is that He has done what He has done. ***"Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat, and walk'?"*** (2:9) The answer would easily be to say that his sins were forgiven since that required no tangible evidence. There is nothing that is seen, touched, heard, smelled, or tasted when it comes to sins being forgiven, but there sure would need to be something seen if someone claimed that he could heal a lame man of his paralysis. So the answer would be the former. It is much easier to simply say that sins are forgiven.
3. However, Jesus goes on to use His miraculous ability as the proof that they can believe in His claims that He has forgiven sins. ***"But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he told the paralytic—"I tell you: get up, take your mat, and go home." Immediately he got up, took the mat, and went out in front of everyone.*** (2:10-12) It is at this point that those who are gathered are truly shocked, amazed, and astounded by what has taken place. So much so that they proclaimed. ***"We have never seen anything like this!"*** (2:12)

4. It is at this moment that Jesus's true power can be understood. He has made the claim that He can forgive sins which puts Him on par with the likes of God and God alone, and He does so by referring to Himself as the "**Son of Man**" which was a title found only in **Daniel 7:13,14** which speaks of this person as being all powerful in every way, Jesus implying even power to forgive sins. This is a claim of the ultimate power of forgiving sins simply couldn't be tangibly substantiated, but He sought to give evidence for it as being true by showing His miraculous ability to heal the body. His power to heal this man's body was simply the outward sign of His power to heal the broken soul by forgiving sin. This was the true power that Jesus possessed. Healing bodies was well and good, but that wasn't the full extent of what Jesus was truly capable of doing. In fact, His true power transitions us perfectly into what was actually His true mission and purpose for coming to earth in the first place.

## **II. The True Mission Of Jesus (Mark 2:13-17)**

**A. The Situation:** Following Jesus's call of Levi the tax collector, Jesus shares a meal at Levi's table with both tax collectors & sinners. (2:13-15)

1. Following the incredible scene in the overcrowded house, Jesus goes on a walk along the shoreline of the sea of Galilee, and as the crowds continue to follow Him...He continues to do what He does best which is teach. As He continues along His way, He comes across a tax collector named Levi (Matthew) who Mark tells us is the son of Alphaeus. Just as He had done with Simon, Andrew, James, & John, Jesus tells Levi to follow Him and Levi does exactly that.
2. Again, we can probably assume that Levi would have been at least somewhat familiar with Jesus based upon the time that He had already spent around Galilee and specifically in Capernaum. This would explain his willingness to follow Jesus because him leaving his post like this would have more than likely meant the end of his job as a tax collector for the Roman government. But even what Levi did in following after Jesus probably wasn't the craziest aspect of this story. That probably belongs to Jesus for calling Levi in the first place.
3. This would have been so crazy because tax collectors were notoriously hated by the Jewish people because they were seen as co-conspirators with the Romans. The Jews had no interest in being ruled by another power, and anytime a fellow Jew sided with the enemy was only an opportunity to hate that individuals. Additionally, tax collectors were known for their corrupt and dishonest dealings with those they were taxing. Since Levi was sitting at a toll/tax booth by the sea of Galilee, we can probably assume that he was the one whom people had to pay taxes to as they came in off the water or into Capernaum. The thing about Roman tax collectors is that there was no uniform tax code that they had to follow. They could tax as much as they wanted which only led to them being hated all the more. Therein lies the issue...why would Jesus call such a pariah of the Jewish community to come and be one of His closet followers? How does this make any sense if He is wanting to build a following?
4. The reader is probably left asking these questions at this point, but the questions only keep coming in as Jesus is now found to be gathered around Levi's table to share a meal with not only him but a number of other tax collectors and people who Mark refers to simply as "**sinners.**" If calling a sinner to be His follower was bad...it only got worse for Him in the eyes of some as He sat down to share a meal with bottom dwellers of Jewish society.

**B. The Conflict:** The Scribes are astounded that a rabbi would eat with such people, and they question His disciples as to why He would do such a thing. (2:16)

1. Those who really took offense to this were some scribes of the Pharisees who again were present here with Jesus. The investigation into this man needed to continue, and we can imagine that these men were probably already on pins and needles considering what had happened with the paralyzed man and Jesus making claims of being able to forgive sins.

2. Therefore, to see Him gathered around sharing a meal with a number of pariahs within the Jewish culture would have been shocking because a rabbi simply wasn't supposed to spend time with people like this. He was supposed to be a holy man who didn't associate with such people who were publicly known as being violators of God's laws. They must have seen Jesus as openly condoning their sinful behavior which would simply be another strike against Him.

**C. Jesus's Response:** He states that was exactly where he needed to be which was among the sinners whom He had been sent to serve and heal. (2:17)

1. However, Jesus hears what is being said and uses this opportunity to clearly state the whole reason for Him having come to earth. *"It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."* (2:17) The scribes saw these types of people as being unworthy of the presence of someone of the religious stature of a rabbi, but Jesus completely challenges that type of thinking by stating that these were the exact people who were in need of a rabbi to teach them.
2. He makes this point by comparing what he was doing with those who are sick and in need of a doctor. He states that those who need doctors are those who are sick. The healthy don't see the doctor for care, but the sick do. Therefore, here before Him are a number of sick people who are in need of a doctor. Who is that doctor? Of course, that would be Jesus. Just as He was able to forgive the sins of the paralyzed man, so would He be able to forgive the sins of any spiritually sick person who would come to Him.
3. While focusing on the reality of His statement, we cannot ignore the fact that Jesus was also taking a jab at the self-righteous attitudes of the scribes who were present. When Jesus speaks of those who are righteous, we might be tempted to think that he is referring to the scribes as being righteous, but instead we need to see this as Jesus taking a shot at their pompous and prideful attitudes. These tax collectors and sinners had come to follow Jesus as disciples because they saw their need for Him, but these scribes were the "righteous" who didn't see their need for Jesus when in fact...Jesus had come for them just the same. The difference between the tax collectors/sinners and the scribes was the fact that the first group saw their need for Jesus when the scribes saw no need for Him. Jesus had come to give soul-saving aid to those who recognized themselves as being in need of a Savior.

### **III. Application Questions**

**A. Do we acknowledge Jesus for who He truly is as the Messiah of God?**

1. As I mentioned earlier, there are a number of caricatures that have been made of Jesus that are popular in today's world. Some see Jesus as simply this incredible miracle worker who simply went about addressing the physical needs of the people of His day. Others see Jesus as simply having been a good teacher who wanted to give what He believed to be sound moral advice. While we do see Jesus addressing those physical needs and giving good moral teachings...we must recognize that He was more than a humanitarian and teacher.
2. Jesus was among the people of Israel as the promised Messiah of God who had been promised thousands of years before as being the man who would crush the head of the evil one by delivering mankind from their sins. (**Genesis 3:15**) Yes, Jesus loved and served people and He taught good lessons that will help us to be better people, but He came to do so much more than that! He came to offer us immortality through the forgiveness of sins that He made available through His blood that He would eventually shed on the cross.
3. If we want to be people who are truly acknowledging the incredible nature of Jesus then we must recognize Him as being incredible in a way that is the most incredible of all...being God Himself in the flesh. Our text this morning has shown that to be the case through His ability to

forgive sins which He provided proof for by telling a legitimately paralyzed man to get up and walk...which is what He did. We can't be forgiven of our own sins if we don't see Jesus as Lord & the One who is truly in a position to forgive us of those sins by being God in the flesh.

**B. Are we humble enough to acknowledge our need for the healing that He desires to give to us?**

1. On the subject of being forgiven of sins, we need to recognize that only those of great humility will be the ones forgiven of their sins. This isn't to say that Jesus can't forgive the sins of the prideful, but it is to say that the prideful will never acknowledge their need for such so long as they are puffed up about themselves. These tax collectors and sinners acknowledged their broken souls and believed that Jesus could fix what they lacked. Do we see ourselves as lacking to the point of being willing to go to Jesus for healing?
2. This seems to be the first three characteristic that Jesus mentions in the sermon on the mount (**Matthew 5:3-5**) that were needing to be possessed by those who would come into this great kingdom. Those who are poor in spirit are those who recognized their brokenness. Those who are mourning are those who are heart broken because of this brokenness. Those who are humble are those who will come to Jesus recognizing that only He can give what they need.
3. Are we those type of people? Do we mourn over our broken souls to the point that we will humble ourselves at the feet of Jesus begging to be made whole again? If we are willing to do that then Jesus says that we will receive the kingdom of heaven, comfort, and the earth. Everything that Jesus desires to give us, He will give us if we recognize who He is and are willing to come to Him for what He truly wants to give...forgiveness of sins & spiritual peace.

What an incredible man Jesus of Nazareth is turning out to be in the story of His ministry that Mark is telling. He is willing to prove His ultimate power to forgive sins by healing the broken body of a paralyzed man, and He does this to simply prove that He is able to do exactly as He says. May we be so impressed with Jesus that we are able to lay our lives completely at His feet recognizing Him as being the only one who can cause us to be made whole again. We are not worthy of His saving grace, but our recognition of such a truth puts us into a position where we become exactly who He came to save. May we be impacted to our souls what Jesus said in response to the self-righteous scribes, *"It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."* (**Mark 2:17**)