

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 31ST–JUNE 1ST, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

## POWER TO FORGIVE & HEAL (MARK 2:1–12)

After Jesus' trip throughout Galilee, He returned to the village of Capernaum (v. 1).

- When the news that Jesus was in town spread, great crowds gathered outside the house (possibly Simon/Andrew's house).
- The crowds were so great and overwhelming not one person could squeeze into the house or even the doorway (v. 2). Yet Jesus lovingly and patiently taught them the Word.

In this part of the world, homes at that time would have had flat roofs that were made of wood beams, cross-laid with branches and packed with a thick layer of grass, mud, and clay.

- Roofs like this could have been walked on, and "unroofed" by someone digging through it.
- During Jesus' teaching, four men show up with their friend who is paralyzed and lower the man down to Jesus through a hole in the roof (vs. 3–4).

Even though His sermon was interrupted by a shower of dirt and sticks (and now there is a hole in the roof), Jesus commended the faith of these men (v. 5a).

- There was a boldness to their faith. It was a stunning display of courage to interrupt Jesus like that and tear a hole through the roof.
- There was a determination to their faith—the crowds were not going to prevent them.

So often our faith looks like a passive blend of apathy and fatalism. We shrug our shoulders at suffering or unmet needs and say, "Well, if God wants to do something, He will!"

- We confuse trust in God's sovereignty with calloused passivity and know little of what it means to contend in prayer, community, and courage like these friends in Capernaum.
- What if God wants to use us to help others?

The paralytic was lowered to Jesus for healing of his body, yet Jesus looks at him and says, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (v. 5b).

- The thing that brings us to Jesus initially is rarely our greatest need. What good would it do for this man to get two good legs and go to hell?
- Our greatest need is the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of our soul.
- Only God's Son, Jesus, can offer this to us.

After Jesus forgave the man's sins, the religious leaders (the scribes) started piecing together what his pronouncement meant—only God can forgive sins (vs. 6–7).

- In a shocking display of His authority, Jesus revealed that He knew what was going on in their hearts.
- "Which is easier?" For people, both healing a broken body and forgiving sins is impossible.

But to display that Jesus (the "Son of Man," Dan. 7:13) has an authority that mere human beings don't have, He called out to the paralytic to get up, take up his mat, and go home (vs. 10–11).

- Immediately, the man was healed, and he went out of the house in front of everyone (v. 12).
- This was a power and an authority that no one had ever seen! Only God could forgive sins and raise a broken body. Jesus is fully God.

## FRIEND OF SINNERS (MARK 2:13–17)

Tax collectors were notorious in 1st-century Judea and were hated by other Jews as traitors and extortioners of their own people.

- They served Rome (the Gentile occupying power of Israel) and were often dishonest and known for overcharging the people for their own profit while they lived in great wealth.
- The Mishnah and Talmud put them in the same category as thieves and murderers.

Jesus is walking beside the sea of Galilee with a great crowd trailing behind Him, probably watching His every move and hanging onto His every word (v. 13).

- In a stunning move, Jesus goes to the office of a tax collector and invites this hated outcast to become one of His students (v. 14).
- Imagine Jesus inviting a casino executive, a corrupt D.C. lobbyist, or a white-collar criminal.

When Jesus issues the command to Levi (later known as Matthew, "God's gift") to come follow Him, it is an invitation to not only repent and leave behind an old way of life, but to be a part of a greater mission.

- Imagine everything that Levi had to give up and the risk connected to his obedience.
- Yet, he got up and followed Jesus away from his comfortable, lucrative life into the unknown.

Jesus came to Levi's house and there shared a meal with Levi and some of his friends who were also tax collectors and "sinners" (v. 15).

- "Sinners" is a loaded term and is used to describe a group who was viewed as spiritually unclean, morally compromised, or socially outcast/shunned by the religious elite.
- Those who dealt with Gentiles/Romans, prostitutes, drunkards, adulterers, or irreligious.

In 1st-century eastern culture, to share a meal with someone signified fellowship, acceptance, and intimacy.

- Here was Jesus, holy God in human flesh, sharing a meal with these people! (v. 16)
- This was radical, scandalous, and boundary-breaking. Teachers of Torah were not to associate with people like this! They were supposed to dine with the religious!

Here we first meet some of Jesus' greatest enemies during His earthly ministry, the Pharisees.

- "Parush" (set apart); a group who radically embraced a rigid observance of the Law of Moses through the oral traditions and ritual cleanness and often viewed themselves as spiritual gatekeepers for the purity of the Jewish religion.

Jesus' practice of dining with "outcasts" would have been reprehensible to them!

- As the "set apart/separate ones," they separated themselves from everything they thought was unholy, and they thought everyone (except themselves) was separated from the love of God. There are many Pharisees in the Church today. Their "spiritual elitism" excludes, judges, divides, and opposes Jesus' mission.

## "I DIDN'T COME TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS."

Jesus' acceptance of sinners is not an endorsement of their sin. He loves us enough to call us away from our sin and heal our spiritual sickness as the perfect spiritual doctor! We are ALL sinners.

- But how can someone be healed of their spiritual sickness by God's touch if we do not think they deserve a seat at the table?

## NEW WINE (MARK 2:18–22)

The Old Testament only required one fast a year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:28).

- But both John the Baptist's disciples and the Pharisees had built weekly fasting into their spiritual disciplines.
- Fasting regularly is not a bad thing, but apparently some believed any person who fell short of this standard was less devout in his or her faith.

Some Christians today do the same thing—we form personal convictions for ourselves and our families and then judge others who do not share the same personal convictions.

- There are some issues on which different followers of Jesus may have different convictions.
- Not all issues are black and white, and not all issues can be traced back to a clear biblical guideline.

So, Jesus is essentially asked, "Why don't your disciples fast like the others do?"

- Jesus' response was that fasting while He (the bridegroom, the guest of honor) was present would be inappropriate (v. 19).
- But after He was taken from them, they would fast as they longed for the day of His return (v. 20).
- This statement made it clear that Jesus wouldn't reign as King in this 1st coming, but in the 2nd.

Then Jesus gives a two-part parable about patches of cloth and new wine (vs. 21–22).

- A new patch does not work on an old garment and old wineskins do not work for holding new wine—the old garment is torn, and the old wineskins burst.
- Jesus was essentially saying, "Something new and different is happening—a new era and day are dawning."

New wine and garments represent joy and wholeness.

- The old orthodoxy, represented by the Pharisees and disciples of John, cannot contain the new reality of the Kingdom.
- As citizens of the Kingdom, we fast, pray, and pursue God differently. We do not do these things so God will approve of us, we do them because He already has!

## LORD OF THE SABBATH (MARK 2:23–28)

It is the Sabbath, and Jesus' hungry disciples are eating and picking raw grain as they walk through a grainfield (v. 23).

- They are perfectly within the boundaries of the Jewish law according to Deut. 23:25, which allowed a person to pick the grain from their neighbor's field with their bare hands and eat it.
- But their actions infuriated the Pharisees! The disciples were breaking a rule (v. 24).

To the Pharisees, the act of rubbing the heads of grain between the palms to separate the kernels from the hulls was seen as "harvesting."

- As legalists, they had added to the requirements of the law.
- The disciples weren't breaking the law of Scripture, only the Pharisees' interpretation of it. The Pharisees saw it as their job to make it known!

Jesus responds by citing the example of David from 1 Sam. 21:1–9, when he fled from Saul to the city of Nob, where the tabernacle was at the time.

- So David and his men could survive and be sustained, they ate the consecrated bread that was set apart for the priests (vs. 25–26).
- God's command to observe the Sabbath was an expression of mercy (v. 27).

The legalism of the Pharisees missed the very heart of the law.

- God gave His people the Sabbath to be a blessing; it is a day to rest, to spiritually grow, and to be restored physically and mentally as we cease our work.
- The Sabbath was never intended to be a means of controlling or limiting people's lives, or a way by which we prove our piety and judge others.

Jesus then boldly declares that He is "Lord even of the Sabbath" (v. 28). That is the reason He had the right to determine what was appropriate or inappropriate on the Sabbath.

- The irony of this scene is astounding—human beings trying to correct God by accusing Him of breaking the very law that He gave.
- All of this is a set up for Jesus' next miracle that we will see in the beginning of Ch. 3.

## NEW WINE

- Jesus invites us into a new reality of a life of bold faith where nothing is impossible (vs. 1–12).
- Jesus invites us into a new outlook of compassion, love, and acceptance toward the brokenness of humanity, even outcasts (v. 15)!
- Jesus comes to us as we are yet calls us to leave everything and follow Him (vs. 13–14).
- Jesus invites us into a new way of believing and thinking about what it means to relate to Him and live our lives (vs. 18–27).

## MODERN-DAY PHARISEES

- The greatest enemies of Jesus' work in the world (and even in the Church) today are those who miss the heart of God, the move of God, and the people Jesus died to save because their value and significance are tied up in their rules, legalism, and spiritual performance.
- "Do I care more about loving God and loving people or do I care about just being right?"
- "Am I so enslaved to my own ideology, mindset, or mentality that I am willing to even argue with God's Word and His work when it is challenged?"
- "Is my heart still soft and receptive to the Spirit of God? Or am I hardening my heart?"