



Mark - Lesson 2B

Chapter 2:13-17

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- Last week, we began Mark Chapter 2.
 - It was here where we were introduced to four men and a paralytic man.
 - The intention was for the paralytic man to get to Jesus by going straight through the front door of Peter's home.
 - However, due to the barricade of people gathered in the crowd, more specifically, the religious leaders, that path became impossible.
 - The paralytic's friends decided that the next best means was to dig a hole through the roof in order to get their friend to Jesus.
 - The faith of these men were noted by Jesus and in seeing their faith Jesus forgives the sins of this paralytic.
 - This was a bit unorthodox because no one had authority to forgive sins but God.
 - It was here that Jesus baits the Pharisees by using a rabbinical teaching method called the *kal v'chomer* which is "lesser to the greater"
 - Jesus proves to the Pharisees and the people that He has the authority to forgive sins by healing the paralytic man.
 - By proving the harder or greater thing, Jesus proved that He was able to do the lesser.
 - He lets them know that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins.
 - Jesus ultimately proves that the greatest need that humanity has is spiritual paralysis and the only way to fix it is dealing with sin.
 - Tonight, we will see Jesus recruit another disciple that will take many by surprise.
 - Not only does Jesus' choice of disciples become more interesting, but it becomes all the more telling of His mission and ministry.
 - If I were to put a tag on the text tonight, it would be "The Scandal of Grace".
 - Let's read the text. Mark 2:13-17

Mark 2:13 And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.

Mark 2:14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He *said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

Mark 2:15 And it *happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.

Mark 2:16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?"

Mark 2:17 And hearing this, Jesus *said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

- Let's Pray
- Scottish Theologian, Thomas Boston said this regarding grace:

“Surely corruption is ingrained in our hearts, interwoven with our very natures, has sunk deep into our souls, and will never be cured but by a miracle of grace.”

- Grace is the means by which we divinely receive something that is undeserved.
 - Grace is not received on the count of merit, but rather the mercy of God.
 - We find grace is fully personified in the incarnation of Christ.
 - Jesus appearing in the world at the right moment and at the right time is a miracle from Holy God.
 - That He thought about us and loved us so that He drew near to the broken hearted so that we may see His love fully expressed.
 - Love is best witnessed in action and not words.
 - Tonight we will witness Jesus draw near the least and the lowly of society by means of fellowship through the lens of grace.
 - With that being said, pick me up in verse 13.

Mark 2:13 And He went out again by the seashore and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.

- It is after the miraculous healing of the paralytic that Mark tells us that Jesus goes back again to the shores of the Sea of Galilee.
 - It is here that the text mentions that all the people were coming to Him.
 - This simply shows us how popular Jesus and His ministry had become especially with more and more evidence being provided.
 - Men and women are marveling and amazed at all that Jesus has done in the region thus far. In just this short period of time, Jesus has:
 - Preached in the synagogue with authority like no one has.
 - He has expelled a demon out of a man in the synagogue.
 - He has healed Peter's mother-in-law as well as met the healing needs of the other people.
 - He has performed a miracle that no one has ever seen been done: The healing of a Jewish Leper.
 - And now He has healed a paralytic man and on top of that forgiven his sins.
 - At this point, you may be saying to yourself, I would have been following Jesus too, especially with knowing all that He has done.
 - I love what the end of verse 13 mentions, because this detail connects back to verse 37 which is **“the purpose of Jesus' teaching ministry”**.
 - The text says, **“and He was teaching them.”**

- This phrase should ring true in the ears of everyone that has ears to hear.
 - Although the healings and miraculous signs were great and magnificent works, He did not see them as His primary ministry focus.
 - **Jesus' primary focus was to travel and make known the glorious gospel of God.**
 - And that was so men and women would come to repent and to receive the Kingdom of God for it is at hand.
- I stress this point once again because there are particular denominations that believe that the miracles, signs, and wonders are what is truly needed to experience Jesus' presence.
 - However, Jesus Himself makes it abundantly clear that to know Him truly is to follow and obey His words and commands.
 - **Signs and healings are simply tools that can point you to the person of Jesus.**
 - **But they are not the things that will keep you at the feet of Jesus.**
- If the signs and miracles were to have stopped and Jesus only focused on teaching, the numbers of followers would have dropped drastically.
 - **Why? Because people seek to be entertained and amused rather than to be fed.**
- This will be a way in which Jesus will separate those who are truly following for the sake of being with Jesus versus those who simply want to know Him for what He does.
 - Check out verse 14.

Mark 2:14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He *said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

- It is here that we are introduced to the next of Jesus' disciples.
 - In Mark's gospel we see that his name is Levi. However, when we read Matthew's account, we see that Levi is actually Matthew.
 - It is estimated that Levi also could have been Matthew's pre-conversion name.
 - The name "Matthew" means "gift of YHWH".
 - For those who may doubt if Levi and Matthew are the same person within the gospel accounts, we can examine the parallel accounts in the synoptic gospels.
 - In comparing the experiences between Levi and Matthew in the synoptic accounts, it is clear to conclude the apostle Matthew and Levi are the same person.
 - Mark provides us with a detail that Matthew is the son of Alphaeus.
 - Not much is provided regarding Matthew's father.
 - However, it is important to note that there are no sibling relations connected to that of James, son of Alphaeus, better known as James the lesser.
 - As Jesus is passing by the Sea of Galilee, He spots Levi sitting at a tax booth.

- This detail will provide insight as to more of who Levi (Matthew) is.
- The text states that Levi is sitting in the tax booth – which only means one thing, he was a tax-collector.
- A tax-collector was a person that collected taxes for the Roman government.
 - Within Jewish society, Jews who took on a role as a tax-collector were considered to be Roman sympathizers.
 - They were corrupt in the sense that they collected more money than what was necessary.
- Being a tax-collector was forbidden to Jews by Jewish law.
- Based on Jewish writings, there were considered two types of tax-collectors:
 - 1. Income Tax officials.
 - 2. Customs or toll-tax officials.
- Capernaum was known for its major tax polling station.
 - Because of the location of the tax booth where Matthew was sitting, it is estimated that he was in the service of Herod Antipas.
 - So as merchants and fisherman were coming into port for their goods, it was more than likely that they had to deal with Matthew.
 - Knowing this reality gives us insight as to what type of publican Matthew was; **He was a toll official.**
- So here we have a Jewish tax-collector who is minding his own business at the tax booth.
 - Known by Jewish religious leaders as being equal to the worst of sinners as they come.
 - More than likely, Matthew is working through his mind how to maximize his profits by attempting to extort the fisherman that day.
- But all of a sudden, Jesus passing by sees Matthew, knowing what he does and gives an authoritative command.
 - Jesus tells Him, “Follow Me.”
- Remember, the statement “Follow Me” is a summons which informs us that it is not a suggestion or question for Matthew to “possibly consider”.
 - Jesus is literally calling Matthew from the things that he is accustomed, to now following Jesus.
 - The text then mentions that, without hesitation, Matthew gets up and follows Jesus.
- This becomes yet again a similar pattern for those in who Jesus is calling as His disciples.
 - They are all leaving behind what they had, their vocations, their careers, their belongings, and they give it all up for the sake of Christ.
 - **If this shows us anything, it shows us, once again, that there is a cost that comes to following Jesus.**
- The question that comes to the forefront is, “How was Matthew able to give this

up knowing who he was working for?”

- We saw with Peter and Andrew, James and John, that these four men were working as fishermen and worked for their relatives.
- Whereas Matthew is working for the Roman government.
- For a man in Matthew’s position, it was uncommon for him to just up and leave his post as the toll-official.
 - **Forget him messing up his means of income, he was interfering with the Roman government’s money.**
 - The typical process for someone in Matthew’s position would have been to make prior arrangements before leaving for the day.
- Imagine if you are on the job working for someone and you are on “company time” and all of a sudden you leave work without any notice to your superiors.
 - More than likely that would result in a write up at best or at worst, being fired.
 - And here we have Matthew, being summoned by Jesus to Follow Him, and Matthew doesn’t even think twice.
 - As a matter of fact, Luke 5:28 says:

Luke 5:28 And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.

- **Matthew sees that Jesus’ call and authority is much greater than that of the Roman government itself.**
 - No man in their right mind would abandon their post within the government knowing the risks.
 - However, Matthew is more concerned with following Jesus than he has concerns about what his superiors will think.
 - **The superior Himself, Jesus Christ has called him and he has no other choice than to get up and follow.**
 - I think this sheds light into how the Father calls men and women to Himself.
 - Being drawn to God is not a drawing that you can resist.
 - It is not a drawing that you can reject.
 - **It is a drawing that compels you without the need to explain to you why, you simply respond in obedience.**
 - Check out what Matthew now does in response to being called by Jesus. Look at verse 15.

Mark 2:15 And it *happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.

- We now find that after Matthew has responded to Jesus’ call to Follow, he responds in a celebratory way.

- What better way to celebrate a new direction in one's life than to welcome Jesus, His disciples, and some associates over for dinner.
 - We see here that the location of this celebration is at Matthew's home.
- The text lets us know that Jesus and His disciples join Matthew for dinner, however, they are accompanied by some interesting guest.
 - They are accompanied by "tax-collectors and sinners".
- Mark makes a very clear distinction here between the tax-collector and sinners.
 - A question that comes to mind is "What kind of sinners were a part of this gathering other than tax-collectors?"
- It's important to note that the term here for sinners in the Greek is *hamartolos*.
 - It means an "irreligious Jew".
- In other words the people that are gathered at Matthew's home with Jesus and His disciples are individuals who have no regard for the Torah.
 - Their behavior and lifestyle do not line up nor support the expectations that the law of God has established for God's people.
- Those who fall under this particular category of "sinners" were the following:
 - Gamblers
 - Moneylenders
 - Folks that raced doves for sport
 - Thieves
 - The list could go on.
- And it is here that the text mentions that Jesus is "reclining at the table" with these individuals.
 - This detail provides yet a peek into the focus of Jesus; ministry which will provide much consternation and irritation with the religious leaders.
- **According to ancient teaching, sharing a meal was embedded with ritual meaning and signified the most solemn and intimate of social relations.**
 - Dining together created a bond amongst the diners.
- **In the Greek tradition, table etiquette was a part of ethical instruction and was especially based in the ethics of friendship.**
 - That is to say, rules of etiquette at the table were defined in terms of behavior that enhanced the enjoyment of the occasion for all present or contributed to the "friend-making character of the table".
- This sharing of a meal together and sitting at the table in a reclined position demonstrated Jesus' desire to connect and draw near the outcast.
 - Jesus, who is a Jew, is associating with people within the Jewish community who are considered the outcast and lowly.
 - What a beautiful picture of Jesus making himself available to those in whom amongst the religious leaders consider unworthy.
 - **Yet Jesus demonstrates this scandalous grace!**
- **This is in fact the purpose of Jesus' ministry. To draw near to the needy and to**

make Himself and His life available for them to see.

- Remember, the people in the Galilee have not seen teaching or interaction like this before.
 - A man with authority and the ability to rightly divide the scriptures yet is drawing near to those who have no regard for it?!
 - This was unprecedented! And this was the issue that the religious leaders had.
 - Let's keep moving. Check out verse 16.

Mark 2:16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, “Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?”

- Mark mentions that the “scribes of the Pharisees” have officially spoken regarding Jesus and the Messianic claims being made.
 - Keep in mind that the religious leaders are investigating these claims and have moved from simple observation to interrogation.
 - Here is where they can ask pointed questions in an effort to trip up Jesus and His followers in an effort to sabotage the messianic movement.
 - But most importantly, to make it seem as though Jesus is not who He claimed to be.
 - Now before we move too quickly into the questioning of the scribes, we need to look closely at the text.
 - Mark mentions an interesting phrase, he says “scribes of the Pharisees”.
 - Why the distinction in the particular religious groups?
 - Interesting to note, scribes were not confined to Israel.
 - Scribes are noted to have worked in many different vocational capacities, for instance:
 - Religious, political, judicial, social, and even economic areas.
 - **In this case, these scribes were functioning as wise sages and interpreters of the Torah in an effort to trip Jesus up.**
 - Think of the scribes as independent contractors or consultants for different companies.
 - These individuals have acquired a certain set of skills and those skills fall, primarily, in the realm of teaching and interpreting Jewish law and copying manuscripts.
 - So when varying entities need a “legal expert” or consultant as muscle to tighten up the company, these scribes would be sent to do just that.
 - And the text lets us know that this group of scribes are serving in the interest of the pharisaical party.
 - In other words, they represent the Jewish Law, therefore their line of questioning will be bent to that end.
 - So as the scribes of the Pharisees are observing what Jesus is doing and are

witnessing Him interacting with those who deliberately disobey the law, they began their line of questioning.

- And here is what they ask: Check out the later half of verse 16:

“..they said to His disciples, “Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?”

- Understand that the one in whom is in question is Jesus, not His disciples.
 - However, the investigation is looking into the entire movement regarding Jesus and His disciples and followers.
 - And to understand why Jesus is associating with who were considered “The worst of the worst”, the scribes ask the disciples the question.
 - “Why is Jesus (Your Teacher) eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?”
 - Last week, we discussed how the religious leader’s presence at Peter’s home during the healing of the paralytic played as a barrier for him to get to Jesus.
 - **Where grace appears, it is often blockaded by religiosity and pride.**
 - **Jesus fellowshiping with the irreligious was a demonstration of His mercy and grace to those who were considered the least of these.**
 - And if we are to look at this picture for a minute, the reality is that today you and I tend to find ourselves in one of the two categories.
 - In one sense, we are the tax-collectors and sinners; in need of God’s grace and extension of love in our brokenness.
 - **On the other hand, we can become like the scribes at the table, that we have the propensity to prompt up our religion as a badge of honor as if it is our own righteousness.**
 - We have a tendency to think that Christ’s righteousness is our own rather than recognizing that it is Christ who puts His righteousness upon us.
 - We can hide behind bible study and church as a means to protect and guard what we deem is our righteousness.
 - Yet all the long not realizing that we too share in this fellowship of grace at the table because we too are in need of the Love of Jesus.
 - So the scribes ask Jesus’ disciples “Why is Your Teacher associating with “these” people?”
 - And you have to love Jesus because He doesn’t even provide His disciples the time to answer the question.
 - Nor does He give the scribes the joy in relishing trying to “one-up” Jesus in His gathering of grace.
 - Check out how Jesus responds in verse 17.

Mark 2:17 And hearing this, Jesus *said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call

the righteous, but sinners.”

- This is classic Jesus; Straightforward to the point.
 - Jesus begins by saying “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.”
 - Jesus’ response makes a few things clear in the onset.
 - It only makes sense that those who are in need, due to physical ailment, be taken care of by the one whom can bring proper aid.
 - **The only way someone can be made well is if there be a proper diagnosis of their prognosis.**
 - And as we witnessed last week, the prognosis that every human being faces is sin.

Romans 3:9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

Romans 3:10 as it is written,

“There is none righteous, not even one;

- No person in this world is righteous.
 - No one can stake claim to their works, their actions, or their attempt at “being a good person”
 - Romans 3:23 tells us this:

Romans 3:23 or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- The religious leaders created their own standard of righteousness and demanded that others live up to their failed level of righteousness.
 - **Friends, even on our best day it still pales in comparison to the perfection of the Person of Jesus.**
 - Recognize that the scribes were considered experts in the Law.
 - The moment that the Law was not abided or regarded, the scribes had legal grounds to call it out as having “missed the standard”.
 - To understand the weightiness of the Mosaic Law, we need to understand the purpose of it.
 - The purpose of the Law was to establish for the children of Israel that God had set aside a people for Himself.
 - And in that, they would be Holy and set apart.
 - It provided instruction for how the people should govern themselves in order to please God.
 - **The Mosaic Law, in other words, set the standard of righteousness and holiness for the people of God.**
 - This is what we know as the written Law also known as the Torah which

contains the first 5 books of the bible; called the Pentateuch.

- In order for the written instructions of God to be understood, rabbis later took the written law and provided commentary.
 - This later rabbinical work became prominently known as the Mishnah and Gemara, which together became the Talmud.
- **The Talmud explains and expounds upon the statutes recorded in the written law (Torah).**
 - The focus of the Rabbis were to teach what was passed down to them.
 - **What began to take precedence within the hearts of the religious leaders is “the more I know, the more righteous I become.”**
- The focus of the religious leaders was “I must work myself to righteousness by what I know”
 - **However, grace tells us that I can never work myself or learn myself to become more righteous.**
- This is why we see Jesus speak up and say what he says regarding the sick needing a physician.
 - **Friends, Jesus is the physician that is able to provide the righteousness that you and I need and that unbelievers need.**
 - Jesus is the One who that leads the unbeliever to repentance and forgives sins.
 - **And Christ is the means through whom grace is made available and that is through faith alone by grace alone.**
- As Paul mentions in Galatians, the Law simply served as a tutor to lead to Christ.
 - Check out Galatians 3:24

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

Galatians 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

- The only way in which the Law could be fully fulfilled was in Christ perfectly fulfilling it by demonstrating the perfect love of God and being our substitute.
 - Only a perfect person could live and walk out holy and perfect commands.
 - Don't forget that God's standard is Holiness. Meaning that one cannot miss the mark.
 - **Religiosity requires a constantly moving target because the standard always changes, whereas relationship requires perfect love and submission.**
 - And the only one that could accomplish perfection in word and deed was

Jesus Christ, Himself.

- This is why Jesus says “It is not those who are healthy that need a doctor, but those who are sinners.”
 - **Jesus did not come for the righteous because there are none who are righteous.**
 - He came for the sick and the shut-in, the low down and the forgotten.
 - And if you were to be honest with yourself, every believer in Christ fell in that category.
- Don't get so beside yourself that you forget that if it were not for the righteousness of Christ, we would still be under the weight of sin that leads to death and total separation.
 - I want to draw our attention quickly to Matthew 9:13, because Matthew's gospel contains some information that the other synoptic gospels don't.

Matthew 9:13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

- Matthew's gospel mentions a response that Jesus tells the religious leaders that Mark doesn't include.
 - I believe this is the case because Mark's gospel is focused on the action of the believer in Jesus.
 - Faith was just made mention of in the previous teaching.
 - However, because Matthew is addressing a primarily Jewish audience, it makes sense that he would include this.
 - Because the Jewish people would have understood the role of the scribes in that time.
 - Remember these were men that prided themselves on learning, teaching, and growing in information.
 - Jesus' response here is almost as if He is checking them on what they know: It's a challenge.
 - In other words, “Since you are such learned men, go and learn what the scriptures teach.”
 - We see that this quote that Jesus uses is a quote from Hosea 6:6.
 - Check out what Hosea 6:6 says:

**Hosea 6:6 For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.**

- The word for loyalty here is the Hebrew word *hesed*. It means steadfast love, kindness, or faithfulness. It is a loyal love.
 - When this word is used in the Old Testament it is often times manifested by God's acts of redemption, His mercy and forgiveness (e.g., Numbers 14:19), and His

faithfulness to the covenant with this people.

- Check out Numbers 14:19.

Numbers 14:19 “Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.”

- Jesus lets the scribes know using Hosea 6:6 that God’s steadfast love is visibly demonstrated in following Him through perfect obedience.
 - **Knowledge without true commitment in obedience indeed breeds complacency.**
 - In other words the goal was never intended to use the ceremonial laws as a means to continue on in the pattern of sin.
 - This is why Paul tells us in Romans 6:1

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

- May it never be the case! Having the caveat of ceremonial offering is not the excuse to continue on in unrighteousness.
 - God desired that men and woman would come to personally know the very mercy of God through the life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of His Son.
 - **Jesus Christ is the visible embodiment of the Father’s verbal expression of ultimate love for His children.**
 - You want to know the Father and His nature – look to Jesus.
 - You want to know how to obey the Father in all His ways – look to Jesus
 - You want to know how to grow in righteousness – look to Jesus
 - You want to walk in wisdom – look to Jesus
 - You want to know eternal life and abundant life – look to Jesus
 - You want to honor the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength – look to Jesus.
 - Jesus came so that all who were far from Him would come to intimately know Him and to truly see the Love of God.
 - Where the Law seemed to have separated us, Christ paved the way across the chasm.
 - The Father required perfect holiness and perfect obedience; the Law made it evident that no one could.
 - So God who is rich in mercy, condescends by way of His Son so that those in whom He calls may come to know Him and draw near.
 - Luke’s account will provide the means by which this way of spiritual restoration takes root, and it begins with repentance.
 - The only way in which one can put on the righteousness of Christ is if they

repent of their sins.

- Friends, Christ is all in all and He is the only way to the Father.
- Mark shows us here that simply knowing about God and His word does not equate to truly knowing God relationally through His Son.
 - This is why consistently participating in a bible study to grow in knowledge means nothing if you are not living what you know.
 - We can easily be fooled by the outward appearance of people doing good for God rather than being with God.
- Being with Jesus and learning the word of God requires Jesus fellowshiping with you and making Himself known to you.
 - The greatest scholars in academia can have pontificated upon the deep things of God, but can easily miss Him due to a lack of following Him.
 - Means of works can not save a person.
 - Only faith in Christ alone and a repentant heart can inherit the Kingdom of God.
- Next week, we will see how the scribes of the Pharisees will attempt to interrogate the ministry of Jesus regarding the question of fasting.
 - Join us next week as we walk through Mark 2:18-22. Let's Pray.