

Christ Community Covenant Church
Mark 2:1-3:6, Jesus is in the House
Pastor Dave Scherrer - November 9, 2014

Interview with Cathy Campobello, Covenant missionary to Colombia, SA

Jesus is in the house

We are going to step on the accelerator a bit this morning. We have spent the last several weeks in the Gospel of Mark and have not been able to break chapter 1. Today we will move forward quite a bit faster. All the way to chapter 3. I know!!! But let me say this. I don't really have a schedule that I have to keep so I don't intend to rush through the life of our Savior. What I try to do is stay true to the intentions of the writer of this account. When we get to this story Mark has time machined forward - almost a year and half into Christ's public ministry (also found in Luke 7 and Matthew 9). Mark then slams on the brakes of his time travel and finds a set of stories that happen in short order, perhaps in a single day that have a single black thread that runs through them and serve to set the drama for the death of Christ by his adversaries - the Jewish religious authorities and the Romans.

Mark 2:1-12

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³ And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?" ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹ "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹² And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

As we can see from this narrative, amazing things happen when Jesus is in the house:

Amazing things happen when Jesus is in the house

Teaching flows, v2
Faith is stirred, v12
Miracles happen, v12
Sins are forgiven, v5
Enemies circle, v6

We come this morning to the second chapter of Mark. Twelve (12) marvelous verses that begin this chapter: Mark 2:1-12. You'll notice there's a phrase at the end of verse 4 that I would just draw to your attention as a beginning point. The Lord speaks and says, "Son, your sins are forgiven." The theme of this particular record is Jesus' power over sin. Last week we saw that it was important, really important, for Mark to establish the authority of Jesus. Remember he only has 16 chapters in his whole account and 8 of them are dedicated to the last week of Jesus' life. That means Mark has to hit the most important things in the first 3 and a half years of Jesus' ministry in the chapters leading up to the crescendo of his death. Here in chapters one and two we see Mark establishing Jesus' authority. Last week we saw his authority over truth and disease and the spirit world. And now in chapter two, we see perhaps His most important authority. And I want to begin our look at it with just a basic question: What is the most distinctive thing that Christianity has to proclaim? And I've already given you the answer. Clearly and unquestionably the most distinctive thing that Christianity has to proclaim is the reality that sin can be forgiven. That is the heart and the very lifeblood of the Christian message. Although the Christian faith

has many values, many virtues, and has endless applications, the most essential message that God ever gave to man is that man, a sinner, can know the fullness of forgiveness for that sin. That is the heart of the message of Christianity, and that is exactly the message of this miracle in chapter 2 verses 1 through 12.

Now Mark has been focusing on various miracles of our Lord in chapter 1 and chapter 2, and these miracles are intended to present to us, first of all, the deity of Jesus Christ. It is not just that Mark gives us a lot of miracles to prove that He is God, it is that He gives us specific miracles designed to introduce into the world the kingdom of God. So there is a very Jewish character, there's a very Old Testament character to the kind of miracles that Mark selects to narrate under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Now there is a climatic (orchestral) kind of arrangement on Mark's part, also. As we go back, for example, it began when Jesus taught with authority (strings). Then by the touch of a hand, he cleansed a leper (woodwinds). Then He showed not only His power over nature but His power over supernatural forces when He cast out the demons (brass). And now He goes even beyond that in the ascending of the drama of the miracles and He shows that He has power over the root of all man's misery, which is sin and separation from God (cymbals and tympani). Jesus deals with human guilt and human shame and the evil that separates man from his maker. And so the great physician cannot only heal the sick, and deal with demons, but He can bring to the human soul the thing that it needs the most, the healing of the forgiveness of sin.

"Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. It meets the greatest need; it costs the greatest price; and it brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting results."
~ Warren Wiersbe

The Old Testament tells us also that the kingdom will be marked by forgiveness. Ezekiel 36 talks about that, Isaiah 33 and 35, Isaiah 40, Isaiah 44, Isaiah 60; all of those texts talk about forgiveness in the kingdom brought on by the Messiah.

And now we find in chapter 2 of Mark that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, God in human flesh, is able to forgive sin, thus is fitted to establish the kingdom of God in the earth and throughout eternity. This act of forgiveness by our Christian Heavenly Father separates our faith from all others. In every other faith, salvation, if it exists, is earned by human endeavor. But God through Jesus Christ has met us where we are and saved us from our helpless condition while we were yet sinners.

Then Mark finds a way to rev it up for the readers, especially first century readers! We discover Jesus to be a very unusual rabbi who chooses the most uncharacteristic followers:

Mark 2:13-17

¹³ He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them.

¹⁴ And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

¹⁵ And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Jesus: Friend of Sinners

Tax collectors are among the most reviled people in Jesus' day because of the corruption associated with the office. Customs duties on goods transported through Galilee are among the taxes collected, and it is likely that Levi, also known as Matthew in the gospel of Matthew, whom we meet in today's passage, gathers these fees. In his work he collects a set amount for Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, who in turn sends it to Rome. Levi is free to assess the value of the goods carried through his region and, like

other collectors, demands a tax higher than what the government requires and keeps the difference for himself. This offers ample opportunity for unjust taxation, giving the people reason to hate tax collectors. Galilee also views the tax collectors as traitors, for they are representatives of Rome's oppressive government. The name Levi makes it likely that he is a Levite. According to the Pharisees, this would make his collusion with Rome much worse because God set apart the Levites for Himself, not service to the pagans and gentiles. In any case, the Pharisees are upset when Jesus calls Levi as His disciple and then dines with him and other sinners. As we have said from this pulpit before, eating a meal with someone in the first century shows intentional relational intimacy, and our Savior reveals His love for tax collectors and others deemed beyond forgiveness when He dines with them.

Christ responds to the Pharisees' objections by telling them that, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

In the Matthew account of this story Jesus tells the Pharisees to go back and look at their Scriptures. Telling the Pharisees to go study some more is ironic because the Pharisees, of all people, should know the Bible, which says our Creator is eager to forgive the repentant. Jesus has come to affect this pardon of sinners; the 'righteous' have no need of His work.

Of course, in saying this, Jesus is not asserting that the Pharisees are righteous. All men are sinners. The point is that only those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy can even begin to understand what righteousness really means. In effect Jesus is saying, "Pharisees, you of all people should know that the Messiah comes to save sinners, and, in fact, you would also see your desperate need for forgiveness if you knew the Scriptures as well as you claim."

The fact is we are all recovering Pharisees aren't we? We must get over our tendency to frown only upon certain sins. John Calvin comments that we must "never think it strange that he should gather to salvation those who have been the worst of men, and who have been covered with a mass of crimes." Our churches must welcome *repentant* abusers, and *repentant* gossips and *repentant* cheats, *repentant* takers and *repentant* materialists, *repentant* murderers and *repentant* adulterers and others often seen as beyond God's forgiveness. We deserve His pardon no more and no less than they do.

I noted before that when Jesus is in the house the enemies begin to circle. I don't know if you have noticed but our church grounds are the curious home to a flock of turkey vultures. I have been reminded by this in the past that the work of Jesus done in the power of Jesus will bring out the enemies of Jesus. Like vultures they circle and hope for failure. The enemies of Jesus circle him and seek his death.

Enemies circle

Jesus does seem to be picking a fight. Mark is quick to point out the account of Jesus clarifying that He is Lord of Sabbath and that He is the new wine and that they are the old wineskins, about to burst. Mark wants all to know that Jesus is the Enemy of the hard hearted and the religiously proud. He is their enemy because they have made themselves His enemy by their attitudes and judgmental life-style.

Jesus: Enemy of the Proud and Hard Hearted

Mark 3:1-6

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. ² And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." ⁴ And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. ⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

The hatred and villainy of the scribes and Pharisees is the black thread that I was referring to and you will see it in the chapters ahead as we continue to read. But for now for all of us there is good news, Jesus is in the house!

There is Good News my friends! Jesus is in the house!

In this house the Spirit of Jesus Christ is more than welcome, the Spirit of God is Lord and King and He is here. I want to see if you agree. I want you to consider standing if you agree with one of these testimonies.

- I know that Jesus is in this house because our faith has been stirred to fresh places that only God could take us,
- I know that Jesus is in this house because the worship is clear and Christ centered, full of power and the Spirit Himself,
- I know that Jesus is in this house because miracles of great faith that are profound and give evidence of transformed lives,
- I know that Jesus is in this house because the teaching here is bold and true and gives Jesus Christ the Glory,
- I know that Jesus is in this house because I have experienced the forgiveness of sin,
- I know that Jesus is in this house because I have seen the evil one push back hard against us, but we have seen the victorious right hand of God's great power.

Because of His faithfulness and your testimony, I know that Jesus is in this house!

Isaiah 35:4-7

Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God will come with vengeance,

with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

- Good news friends, there is hope for you and those you love from the helpless state of sin.
- Good news friends! Jesus is in the house and he loves you very, very much.

Prayer

The best news you could ever give someone is that God can forgive sin and does forgive. When Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven," I wonder if in that moment, there was the coppery taste of blood in His mouth, the taste of the blood of Calvary, because He knew that the only way He could forgive the man's sin was to bear the man's sin. I wonder if He tasted the bitterness and the agony of the cross all through His life. Every time He forgave sin He knew full well He would bear the punishment that He had removed from that helpless soul.

Small Group Discussion questions

Christ established his authority over truth, and the spirit world, and disease. Now he is establishing his authority over the soul.

What do you think of these friends?

Would you have been disappointed if you were hoping to be healed and instead your sins were forgiven?

Why are these scribes so suspicious and hard hearted?

Who are the religious 'scribes' and 'Pharisees' of today?

Jesus took sin under his authority. Holiness swallowed up unrighteousness. Is this miracle sometimes lost on us?

In what ways are we likely to be hard hearted?