

Mark 2-3 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Last week in our introduction to the Gospel of Mark we saw that Mark's intended audience was Roman, if not in actual ethnic background, then at least in culture.

The Romans were such a powerful force throughout the Mediterranean world many of the people they conquered took on aspects of Roman culture.

Mark's Gospel was aimed at those who were a part of this dominant social philosophy.

Last week we saw how Mark presents Jesus as the humble yet efficient & effective servant.

We see this in two main ways: 1) in Mark's sense of immediacy and urgency with which he writes, & 2) how he constantly shows Jesus telling those He touched miraculously to be quiet and not make a big to-do about their healing.

The humble use of power in the service of others was one of the chief virtues of the Roman mindset.

In fact, there was a Roman coin in circulation at that time that showed an ox pulling a plow on one side, and on the other, an ox being offered on an altar.

Around the edge of the coin were the words; "Service or Sacrifice: Ready for Either."

This perfectly captures the Romans sense of duty and the right use of power. It also well sums up Mark's Gospel – for he presents Jesus as the Servant who came to offer Himself as a sacrifice.

Our Outline for Mark is . . .

I. JESUS IN GALILEE CHS. 1-9

II. JESUS IN JUDEA CHS. 10-16

But really, we could just as easily outline it this way . . .

I. JESUS, THE SERVANT CHS. 1-9

II. JESUS, THE SACRIFICE CHS. 10-16

Here's where we are . . .

I. JESUS IN GALILEE CHS. 1-9

A. Jesus' Ministry Begins Ch. 1

B. Jesus' Ministry Upsets the Authorities Chs. 2-3

1. Jesus claims deity 2:1-12

¹And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house.

Remember that he'd already been in Capernaum but left to preach in the other villages and little burghs of Galilee.

Now he's back. The house that's mentioned here would be the same one He'd been to before – Peter's house.

In Capernaum today there's an ultra modern church suspended in mid-air over some ancient ruins dating back to this day.

The ruins give evidence that a very early Christian church met there, so many archaeologists believe it's the home of Peter.

Not wanting to destroy the ruins, they've built a church several feet above it.

Now that Jesus was back in Capernaum, it didn't take long for the word to get out that he was back.

2Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.

The house filled up, then people jammed the door and hung outside, pressing forward to try to hear what Jesus was saying.

3Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. 4And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

Get the scene; the news Jesus is a healer Who bats a thousand has spread far and wide.

These 4 men had a friend who was a quadriplegic.

They ached for him to be healed so when they heard Jesus was back in town, they decided to take their paralyzed friend to see him.

But as they approached Peter's house, they saw there was no way they were going to get in the front door.

All houses in Israel at that time had flat roofs, and for a good part of the year, that's where people spent most of their time.

The roof was accessed either by a ladder or a set of stairs on the outside of the house.

These guys hauled their friend onto the roof, figured out about where Jesus would be inside, and began digging.

The roof was made of dirt, laid on top of thatch and a cross-weaving of sticks and branches.

It was a good 6 to 8 inches thick but it would have been a fairly easy thing for these guys to dig through and then later to repair.

But imagine what it would have been like in the room below.

At first there's some noise from the roof, then the sound of scrapping and scrabbling.

In just a short time everyone realizes someone is digging through the roof.

Little pieces of dirt and broken twigs begin to fall into the room. Light begins to show through little holes in the thatch.

An opening several inches across is made & 4 pairs of hands can be seen tearing at it, making it larger.

Finally, when the hole is a couple feet wide, they stop and disappear.

Then as everyone in the room looks up, they see the short end of a stretcher being lowered into the room.

Several men stand up to catch it – at the upper end are the 4 men who are

lowering it through the hole.
On the stretcher is a man obviously paralyzed.
The stretcher is lowered to the floor in front of Jesus.
He looks up and sees the faces of the 4 friends peering through the hole.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, **“Son, your sins are forgiven you.”**

There are a couple things here we need to look at –

1) Marks says that Jesus **“saw”** their faith.

These men believed Jesus could heal their friend, the only need was to get him to Jesus.

The faith of these men had gone beyond simple wishing or hoping.

It had become a settled belief that moved them to action.

Could Jesus have healed this man at a distance?

Could one of them have gone to Jesus and said, “We have a friend across town who’s paralyzed and with this crowd he can’t get near you. Would you heal him?”

Yes – He healed the centurion’s servant at a distance. [Matt 8:8-13]

But these men had only seen those who’d actually been in Jesus’ presence who were healed.

They didn’t have a whole, well-thought out theology on healing or who Jesus was.

They just knew that those who came to Jesus sick, went away whole.

This simple belief moved them to specific and determined action.

And that’s the lesson for us – you don’t have to have a whole theology of God worked out and be a scholar in the Greek & Hebrew before you can have a faith that will loose the power of God in your life and the life of others.

You just need to act on the little faith you **do** have – and God will move.

When teaching on faith, Bible teachers will often say something like, “We say to God, ‘Show me and I’ll believe.’ But God says, ‘Believe and I’ll show you.’”

In light of what we see here, maybe we should change that to, we say to God, “Show me and I’ll believe.” And God says, **“Show me you believe**, then I’ll show you My power.”

The test of real faith is that it moves us to action. If it doesn’t affect our choices and alter our decisions, then it isn’t real faith.

2) Once these 4 men had lowered their friend into Jesus’ presence, what were they expecting, what had their faith anticipated?

That their friend would be healed.

What do you think they expected Jesus to say?

“Be healed! Take up your bed and walk.”

Jesus’ words to the paralyzed man seem out of context and not appropriate to the situation. Were they?

The Jews of that day connected sin and suffering.

They said that if a man was suffering he must have sinned.

That’s the whole argument Job’s friends used on him.

They kept trying to get Job to ‘fess up to what horrible thing he’d done

that could have led to such drastic suffering on his part.
When Job claimed innocence, Eliphaz scoffed, “Who that was innocent ever perished?” [Job 4:7]
The Rabbis had a saying, “There is no sick man healed of his sickness until all his sins have been forgiven him.”
To the Jews a sick man was a man with whom God *was angry*.

Jesus moved to clear up this misconception.

Yes, it’s true, *some* sickness *is* the result of sin, either the foolish choices of the one who’s sick or the evil choices of others that inflict suffering on the innocent.

But the *necessary connection* between *personal* sin and suffering was wrong, and Jesus wanted to correct it.

He knew that as the people in that room sat there, rather than seeing a poor man who suffered terribly, they saw a wretched sinner who deserved what he’d received.

So Jesus uses the tenderest words and says, “Child, son, your sins are forgiven.”

He was letting the man know that God was not angry with him. ^[1]
But there’s another reason why Jesus said this to this man – He wanted to challenge the scribes who were there with their skepticism about who He was.

6 And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, **7** “Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

As soon as Jesus told the paralytic his sins were forgiven, the scribes, the legal experts of that time, reacted strongly against Him.

They knew that to forgive sins was a divine prerogative; no one can forgive sins but God.

By telling the man his sins were forgiven, Jesus was claiming a right and power that belonged to God alone.

They considered this blasphemy of the highest order.

Note that none of them *said* anything – they all just reasoned this way in their hearts.

8 But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?”

That has to be a bit unnerving – when someone who has just done something you consider blasphemous, looks you in the eye and begins to speak forth what you’ve *only been thinking!*

9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’?

V. 2 tells us that up to this point, Jesus had been teaching.

The scribes had come because as Jesus’ fame began to spread across Galilee, it was up to them to determine whether or not He was truly from God.

They were a tribunal, there to judge Jesus, *they thought*.

They didn't realize that their judgment was of themselves, not Him. Jesus turns the tables on their inquiry by asking a question – “Which is easier *to say* to one who's paralyzed: ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Be healed.’”

If Jesus were *just a man*, it would be easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven,” because no external proof or follow through would be necessary.

But if He were just a man and said, “Be healed” and nothing happened then He'd be judged a crackpot.

While it may be easier for a *mere man* to *SAY* “Be forgiven” than “Be healed,” the fact is, it is no harder for God to do one than the other, which is what Jesus proceeds to do.

To the scribes Jesus said -

10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, **11**“I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” **12**Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

The scribes were confronted with the *fact* of Jesus' power.

The miracle of the man's healing stood as clear evidence of Jesus' authority to forgive sins.

And as they were right in their belief that only God can forgive sins, they ought to have realized that – Jesus was God!

That's why Jesus first said to the man – “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

He wanted to use that moment to heal a deeper and more common need that was in that room that day than that one man's paralysis.

It was the unbelief and skepticism that was in the hearts of the people as to who Jesus was.

Some people read this story and conclude that the man was paralyzed because of some sin he'd committed.

That isn't the case. If it was then as soon as Jesus pronounced his forgiveness, he would have stood and walked.

Jesus even corrected the faulty theology of that day that attributed suffering to sin by telling the paralytic in tender and compassionate words that God was *NOT* angry with him.

And even though his paralysis was not the direct result of some sin he'd committed, God still used his infirmity as the means to manifest His glory and power and to teach many about Who He is.

Friends, as difficult as sickness, suffering, disease, illness, and adversity are to bear, as we look to the Lord in the midst of them, He can turn them from mere suffering into *something redemptive*, something valuable, something that will bring glory and honor to His name and teach us even more about how good and loving He is.

Don't let sorrow sour you to the Lord as it did these scribes.

Ask the Lord to turn sorrow to the sweetness of His revelation as the Son of God & the Son of Man.

2. Jesus takes a tax-collector as a follower 2:13-17

13 Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them.

The crowds seeking to be near Him were too vast to be accommodated in town so He had to go outside of town.

Notice that Jesus placed the emphasis on teaching.

While the people loved to signs and wonders, loved to witness the miracles of healing and deliverance that were so abundant, Jesus spent more time teaching than healing.

He knew that all the healings He performed, as important as they were, were ultimately doomed to be undone in the corruption & death of everyone of the bodies He healed.

His words, on the other hand, would change hearts and accomplish something in human souls that was eternal.

14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office.

Levi was Matthew's *Jewish* name.

And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.

Since we covered vs. 13-14 on Sunday, will forgo comment tonight.

If you have ever been curious as to why the disciples dropped what they were doing to immediately follow Jesus, get a copy of the study from last Sunday and find out what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus.

15 Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him.

Matthew invited Jesus to his house for the evening meal.

Assembled round were many of Matthew's friends who were culled from the fringe of Jewish society.

Up to this point, people like this would have felt little attraction to a rabbi.

Rabbis were the elite religious figures of Galilee, the most pious people of all.

If there was any group of people they scrupulously avoided and consigned to the fires of hell it was tax-collectors, tanners, and merchants who sold products considered un-Jewish & worldly.

With Matthew's invitation to follow Jesus, word spread quickly that the new rabbi was different, and many of those who'd felt themselves judged and condemned came near to check Him out.

16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?"

Sharing a meal with someone was the most intimate form of social intercourse in that culture.

To eat a meal with someone was to become one with them.

They thought that since this same bread we're eating is becoming a part of you and a part of me, we are becoming a part of one another in a *spiritual* sense.

So the Pharisees were ultra careful about who they ate with and about whose

house they entered.

They didn't want to be defiled by the moral pollution of people like Matthew and his friends.

Such contact might jeopardize their standing with God, they thought. Seeing Jesus, a rabbi they have heard speak with authority and heal with great power sitting at the table with people they loathed really upset them. He wasn't going along with their program and fitting into their expectations and it made them angry.

17 When Jesus heard *it*, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call *the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*”

If you had asked the Pharisees, “Who needs to repent?” they would have said “Matthew's crowd.”

Jesus confronted the Pharisees with the error of their thinking.

If God wants sinners to repent – then as God's agents of righteousness, shouldn't the Pharisees have been doing the right thing and instead of ignoring and shunning them, building bridges to them that would enable them to make an effective call to repentance?

By *not* doing the right thing – maybe the Pharisees weren't as righteous as they fancied themselves!

But they thought they were – they considered themselves to be ultra-pious, God's best friends.

They had no need to repent because they were okay, they assumed.

Jesus makes it clear – He came to and for those who acknowledge their need.

One of the marks of true spiritual maturity is an increasing sense of need for Jesus.

At the same time that God works genuine holiness in us, He awakens an awareness of our deeper brokenness.

Spiritual maturity is directly proportional to one's dependence on God.

The Pharisees were self-righteous. They thought they were okay because they had redefined God's law in such a way that they could keep it *externally* while *inwardly* they were filled with deceit and immorality.

3. Jesus not concerned with “fitting-in” to what's expected of Him 2:18-22

In Ch. 2, Mark shows how very early in Jesus' mission, He ran contrary to His critics, the Pharisees and religious authorities of the day.

They had set up a whole system of piety that Jesus steadfastly refused to fit into.

But not by defying or violating it so much as living out a righteousness that was so genuine, so honest and simple it revealed the sham religiosity of the Pharisees for what it was.

18 The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?”

Fasting was a regular part of the pious lifestyle in that day.

The idea was that one learned to exert dominion over the flesh by denying its

demand for food.

In the Scriptures, only one day a year was a compulsory fast – the Day of Atonement.

But the Pharisees had *added* 2 days of fasting *every week*; Monday & Thursday from sunrise to sunset.

They didn't say it was something that was *required*, but because they were the religious people of that day, whatever they did ended up becoming accepted as the way to live to be accepted by God.

Jesus & His disciples didn't fast, and this caused the followers of John the Baptist and the Pharisees to wonder what was going on.

19 And Jesus said to them, **“Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. 20** But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.

According to the Jewish Talmud, which is a collection of commentaries on the Law, there was one event that overrode the normal rules of religious life – a wedding.

A wedding was such a joyous affair that the requirements of fasting and even prayer were suspended.

The wedding feast was something so important guests were *expected* to sate themselves on food and drink.

All other duties were suspended and only one requirement was made – to rejoice!

Jesus likened His coming to a wedding; He was the groom, the disciples were His attendants & guests.

While He was with them it was a time of feasting, not fasting. When He left, *then* they would fast.

Jesus was speaking of the time just after His death, before His resurrection when He was taken from them and their world collapsed.

But after the resurrection and later the Day of Pentecost, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus took up *permanent residence* in them.

So even now, this ought to be a time of joyous celebration for the people of God.

This is not to say that we don't experience seasons of hardship and difficulty, but through it all, Jesus is with us!

No matter what comes into our lives, we have the confidence of knowing in the end, we win!

Where it ever came about in the history of the Church that Christians ought to be grumpy, cheerless, sour-pusses beats me.

It was certainly not the way Jesus said we were to be.

When we come to church, it should be more like a wedding, not a funeral.

We're called to a relationship or gladness, not a religion of sadness.

Everyone who has a bumper sticker on their car identifying them as a follower of Jesus ought to also have a smile on their face!

I've had an easy life compared to many people.

And as easy as my life has been, the last couple years have been pretty tough. There have been plenty of times when I was tempted to despair and to crawl into a pit of depression – but through it all, Jesus lifted me and reminded me that this is not the end of the story.

I know how it all ends – It's Glory and I will stand in victory with Him in the beauty of heaven.

You don't stay down long when you're reminded that this moment's trials are brief, but glory is forever.

Does *coming* to church make you happy? Does the prospect of *going* to Church excite you? It should! Because church is a gathering of the followers of Jesus who are rejoicing in His salvation.

21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse.

22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins."

If you put new wine in an old wineskin that has already stretched, when the new wine ferments and let's off gas, the old skin will split open. Both the wine and skin will be ruined.

If you use a new piece of cloth to patch a hole, when the garment is washed and dried, the new cloth will shrink and rip the garment even worse.

Jesus was making it clear that He'd come to start a *new thing*.

This new thing could not be poured into the mold of the old thing.

What He'd come to inaugurate would not fit into *Phariseism*.

It wouldn't even fit into what Judaism *had become*.

Jesus didn't come to *reform* Judaism – He came to *revive* it, to bring back something that had died – and that was the original intent of the law.

God never intended the law to be used as a means to *being* righteous, as the Pharisees were using it.

God intended the Law to *reveal man's sinfulness* and *need* of forgiveness, which God would provide through His Son.

As Paul says in Galatians 3:24, the law is a tutor meant to bring us to Christ.

The Judaism of Jesus day had become hopelessly tangled up in the belief that the Law was the *means* of establishing righteousness.

So Jesus is making it clear here that He did not come to *reform* the religious scene of His day.

He came to *start something new* – the very thing the Law originally intended.

As you look at church history you find this principle of new wineskins seems to have been applied again and again.

The Spirit of God will move powerfully in a place and on a people. We call these *revivals*.

There's a profound sense of conviction that leads to repentance, which ushers in a deep sense of joy in the awareness of forgiveness.

People's lives are dramatically changed as they take on the evidences of holiness and selfless service.

Many social ills are addressed, new songs of worship and praise are written

and sung throughout the churches, and a new wave of missionary activity is spawned.

The revival *becomes a movement* when people start associating it with *certain names* and refer to them as the “*leaders*” of the revival.

The leaders begin to feel a need to *organize* the movement because, well, it just seems like the right thing to do. After all, if it isn’t organized, it’s *dis-organized*.

To organize the movement, leaders have to establish guidelines, make rules, define boundaries. They begin marking off an “us/them” kind of thing – and of course, now that there’s an us & them *we need a name*.

So the movement adopts a name – or is given one by the “Thems.”

So we’ve seen the development of the denominations; the Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians.

More recently we’ve seen the Pentecostals and Charismatics.

The Baptists, once a monolithic portion of the Church, has now split into many smaller groups; the Southern Baptists, American Baptists, Conservative Baptists, Progressive Baptists, Reformed Baptists, Bible Fellowship Baptists, Free Will Baptists, Primitive Baptists, & Seventh Day Baptists, to name just a few!

Many of these began as renewal & revival movements in which the Spirit of God was bringing conviction, repentance & joy.

The parent movement *had become an organization* that lost its sense of purpose and direction.

The revival that had sparked it was long gone and all that was left was a religious form.

Calvary Chapel came out of the Jesus People revival of the late 60’s in Southern CA.

It’s become a movement which is rapidly becoming an organization.

And I can’t say it’s a good thing.

Pastor Chuck Smith has long reminded us that we need to stay open and yielded to the work and moving of the Spirit of God, or Calvary Chapel will end up becoming just another old wineskin.

As I was driving the 101 FWY and crossed the bridge over the river, I spotted a man standing on the railing. He was disheveled and appeared ready to jump. I got off the FWY and ran back to him and began telling him that he shouldn’t jump.

He responded with, “Why shouldn’t I?”

I said, “Well, there’s so much to live for!”

“Like what?”

“Well . . . are you religious or an atheist?”

“Religious.”

“Me too! Are you Christian or Jewish?”

“Christian.”

“Me too! Are you Catholic or Protestant?”

“Protestant.”

“Me too! Are you Charismatic or Non-Charismatic?”

"Charismatic."

"Wow! Me too! King James only or Modern versions?"

"KJ only."

"Excellent! Are you Calvary Chapel, or Assembly of God?"

"Calvary Chapel."

"Praise God! Are you Calvary Chapel Oxnard, or Calvary Chapel Camarillo?"

"Calvary Chapel Oxnard!"

"Me too! Do you go to the first, second or third service?"

"Second service, of course"

"Me too! Do you attend the second service in the sanctuary or watch it on video in the Fellowship Hall?"

"I watch the service in the FH."

To which I said, "Die, heretic scum!" and pushed him off.

4. Sabbath controversies 2:23-3:6

Now Mark gives us several stories about how Jesus seemed to aim at defying the expectations the scribes & Pharisees were putting on him.

a. the grain field controversy 2:23-28

23 Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. **24** And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

The Talmud was a vast series of commentaries on the Law of God and its largest section was devoted to defining what constituted work and so was forbidden on the Sabbath day.

One of the forms of work that was forbidden was *harvesting grain*.

One Sabbath day as Jesus and the disciples were passing through a grainfield, the Pharisees saw them pluck a few heads, husk them in their palms and pop them in their mouths.

This was a common little snack people would do with ripe grain.

But it infuriated the Pharisees because they considered this work.

That Jesus, a rabbi! was let it go without rebuke really perturbed them.

How could someone who was being hailed as the greatest rabbi of the day not come down on His followers for such a terrible violation of the Sabbath law – they wondered.

25 But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: **26** how he went into the house of God *in the days of Abiathar the high priest*, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?" **27** And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

First of all, plucking heads was not a violation of the Law of God and the command of the Sabbath.

It may have violated the Pharisees interpretations and traditions, but it did not in fact break the law.

In Deut. 23:25 God said . . .

When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain. [2]

In other words – in the Law, God said, “If you are hungry and find yourself in a field that is not yours, it is not theft if you satisfy your immediate need for food by taking by hand from that which belongs to your neighbor.

The point is, the sanctity of human life is higher a *higher principle* than the sanctity of personal property.

Jesus uses an even more poignant example from their history to illustrate this.

When David and his loyal followers were on the run from Saul, they were out of supplies and in danger of fainting from hunger.

When they arrived at the tabernacle which was set up at Nob, he persuaded the high priest to give him something to eat.

The only thing available at that time was the ritual showbread, which Lev. 24:9 says only the priests may eat.

The high priest realized that human need trumps ritual law, and gave the bread to David. [1 Sam.21:1-16]

Jesus used this story to show the Pharisees that they ought to have understood this as well.

The Sabbath was meant by God to *bless* man, not to become a heavy burden and obligation, which is exactly what the Pharisees had turned it into.

That's something we would do well to remember – that every one of the commands of God are meant, *not to be a burden*, not to be some onerous weight that makes life hard, but rather they are intended for us to enjoy the fullness God intends for us.

Temptation loses its attraction when we remember that sin is actually a tossing away of the best for hardship and pain.

Jesus ended with a statement meant to challenge the Pharisees with their whole perception of who He was –

28 Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”

The Pharisees had seen Jesus and His followers as *under* and subject to *THEIR* interpretations of the Sabbath law.

Jesus lets them know that He isn't *UNDER* theirs or anyone's law.

He is the Lord, the Master *OF* the Sabbath. As such, He has the authority to say what is and isn't permitted in observing the Sabbath.

This was a statement so staggering it would have stunned the Pharisees and faced them with a challenge – Just who is this Jesus of Nazareth?

Mark 3

b. the healing controversy 3:1-6

1 And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. 2 So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

Don't miss this – as Jesus has now challenged them, they make their choice and

decide to reject His claim to being the Lord of the Sabbath.
Jesus enters the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath.
There's a man there with an illness that has crippled his hand.
The Pharisees know that whenever Jesus is confronted with a need like this,
because of His compassion, He heals it.
But in their minds, healing was a work and so forbidden on the Sabbath.
Work was forbidden on the Sabbath because work implies *effort* and God intended
the Sabbath day to be a day of rest for man.
Really, the Sabbath was to be *effortless* for man; that was it's whole goal.
Because of the Fall, the curse had caused man suffer with fruitless effort.
The Sabbath was intended to be a respite from the curse, God's covenant
people enjoying the benefit of being redeemed from the curse.
Question: When Jesus healed someone – was it work? Was there *effort* involved?
No! So there was no work.

3And He said to the man who had the withered hand, “Step forward.”

4Then He said to them,

After making the man present himself before them all -

“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they kept silent.

By having the man step forth, Jesus hoped His critics would feel some sense of
pity and compassion on the poor guy.
But they could only see the great opportunity there was in finding something
with which to *trap* Jesus.
To that degree they delighted in this man's infirmity and suffering!
It's a tragic thing when human misery becomes the platform upon which the
selfish promote their own agenda.
And yet this is something many afternoon talk shows and reality shows are
based on. TV Producers make millions off other's misery!

Jesus challenged His critics with a question – “Okay you Sabbath experts, tell Me;
on the Sabbath day, which is right – to do evil or good?”

You see, they wanted Jesus to heal the guy BECAUSE THEY KNEW HE
COULD and they wanted something to use as an excuse to officially
oppose Him and plot His destruction.

Jesus says if you have the power to do good and don't do it when the
opportunity presents itself, that is wrong!

Since Jesus cannot do wrong, of course He was going to heal the guy!

**5And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved
by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, “Stretch out your
hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole
as the other.**

Jesus was *ticked* at the Pharisees! They would rather a man in need be left with
that need be met than for their silly rules about the Sabbath be broken.

What was even more grievous, is that while they considered something like a
healing a terrible violation of the law, they could not see that their own
plans against Jesus were way worse than any supposed violation of the
Sabbath.

They thought it was better to *not heal* this man and *destroy* Jesus than to let Jesus go and heal this man!

Clearly their whole idea of righteousness was out of whack.

6 Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

The Herodians were those Jews who were working in Herod's administration of Galilee.

They were growing worried about the increasing acclaim the people were showing Jesus.

There had been other pretenders to Messiah who'd brought trouble to the land, stirring up the common people to attack the Romans and take the land back from rulers like Herod.

So they were watching Jesus closely.

To the Pharisees, the Herodians were part of that "sinners" crowd they'd seen at Matthew's house.

They'd criticized Jesus for eating with them then, but now they cozy up with them because the Herodians had actual authority in that region.

All the Pharisees could do was unofficially oppose Jesus and tell the people He was a dangerous crackpot.

The Herodians could actually arrest and imprison Jesus if they found Him guilty of a crime.

So, in their envy and hatred of Jesus, the Pharisees buddied up with the Herodians – people they loathed – because they hated Jesus more!

It's interesting to watch what allies in the world a hatred of Jesus makes.

5. Jesus' popularity grows great 3:7-12

7 But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea ⁸and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. ⁹So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. ¹⁰For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. ¹¹And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." ¹²But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.

Despite the growing official opposition of the Pharisees, the common people begin to come from all over Israel and Lebanon.

The crowd became so great Jesus told His disciples to ready a boat in case they had to use it because of the press of the crowd.

When Jesus would deliver the demon possessed, the demons would often want to yell out who Jesus was – but He silenced them.

Why would He do this? Didn't Jesus know that any publicity is good publicity?

Apparently Jesus didn't have anyone from Madison Avenue among His

disciples, counseling Him on how to craft His public image. Jesus would not accept or allow the remarks of the demons because He did not want anyone to give them any heed.

Demons are in the business of deceit – and they will even use an occasional truth as the bait to pass along a larger lie.

If Jesus had allowed these demons to be given attention to, they would have quickly turned their true confessions about who Jesus was into lies about Him.

I've always found stories of people who say they got information out of demon interesting.

What makes them think the demon was telling the truth?

Friends – it's best not to talk to demons, other than to silence them and send them packing.

6. Jesus calls the 12 disciples 3:13-19

¹³And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. ¹⁴Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, ¹⁵and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: ¹⁶Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; ¹⁷James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder"; ¹⁸Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite; ¹⁹and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.

Following the pattern of rabbis and their disciples in Galilee at that time, there were *many* who were tagging along, following Jesus where ever He went. Up to this point, He had not made His official number of disciples known. Now he does. This 12 were all the guys Jesus had gone to and personally invited to follow Him.

Now as the crowds of potential candidates has grown so massive, He wants to make it clear who He will take as His disciples.

7. Divided opinions about Jesus 3:20-35

a. his family 3:20-21; 31-35

²⁰Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. ²¹But when His own people heard *about this*, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

The phrase "His own people" means His relatives.

In vs. 31-35 we read that Jesus' own mother and brothers came to try to rescue Him from His own popularity and seeming unreasoned selflessness.

Here we read that other, more distant relatives, made an attempt at rescuing Him.

These may have been uncles and cousins who decided Jesus was causing the family name to be brought into too much attention before the

authorities.

They'd heard that the Pharisees were conspiring with the Herodians and this scared them, so they decided to go reason with Him.

Clearly there must be something mentally unstable with the guy to be doing and saying the things He was.

b. the scribes 3:22-30

22And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."

23So He called them to *Himself* and said to them in parables: "**How can Satan cast out Satan?**

They attributed His power to the demonic – Beelzebub was the Lord of the flies, one of the demons who was thought to be the devil's chief officers.

What they accused Him of was incredibly dangerous. In fact, it was downright blasphemous.

The very thing they had accused Him of in 2:7 they are now guilty of.

But rather than just blasting them, He tried to reason with them and help them see the utter foolishness of what they were judging regarding Him.

His means of argument were illustrations -

24If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

26And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. **27**No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.

Everything that Jesus had done was to undo the work of the devil.

He'd delivered masses of the demon possessed, brought wholeness to thousands.

And the thing is, His opponents had witnessed it with their own eyes!

There was no doubt about His power or ability.

It's not like today where critics argue over the reality of healing itself – Jesus critics never denied He healed and worked miracles.

They just said He did it by demonic power.

But simply makes no sense – why would demons fight against themselves.

No – it was obvious – His power was divine not demonic.

But then Jesus moves to warn these guys that their remarks have exposed their hearts and they stand in very dangerous territory.

28"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; **29**but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"—**30**because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."

This is going to be my text for This Sunday so I'll leave further comment till then.

This message is going to carry a strong appeal to salvation so you ought to consider who you can invite.

31 Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. **32** And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.”

When Jesus’ uncles and cousins couldn’t dissuade Him from backing off, Mary and her other sons went to Him and tried to reason with Him.

But the house He was in was again so crowded, the people simply reported that they’d arrived.

His reply was interesting . . .

33 But He answered them, saying, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” **34** And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! **35** For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”

This statement, taken in isolation, might appear a bit harsh.

What Jesus said to John at the cross about taking care of Mary after He was gone helps us see that Jesus is not dishonoring her or denying her place as His mother.

Jesus used the call on Him that was implied in his mother’s and brothers’ request to see Him as a way to communicate to those around Him that while the claims of an earthly family are real and binding, the claims of our spiritual family are even higher!

Yes, He had a duty to His earthly family – but His duty to His spiritual family rose above that.

The spiritual family is composed of any and all who do the will of God.

And what is the will of the Father? To believe on the Son!

What Jesus says here ought to forever put the nail in the coffin of the idea that Mary has a *special in* with Jesus and we can direct our prayers to her so that she can intercede for us.

Jesus denies any special place of access to Mary – she has simply become one of our sisters in the faith.

[1] *The Gospel of Mark*. 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

[2] *The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982 (Dt 23:25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.