

## What Jesus Offers

### Mark 2:13-17

#### Introduction:

Good morning. It's so good to be with you this morning, and let me be one of the first people to welcome you to Coram Deo Bible Church. And also those joining online this morning. My name is Adam Bailey and I am the Pastoral Resident here at Coram Deo, which means that I have been in the process of learning and training to plant a church, another Gospel centered, Bible preaching, Christ exalting Church in the very near future. Grateful and honored to be able to open God's Word with you all this morning.

So if you have your Bibles, turn to Mark 2:13-17. If you don't have a copy of God's Word, get the attention of one of our ushers and they will be happy to get you one in your hands. Mark 2.

And since we are jumping right into the Gospel of Mark, one thing you need to know is that Mark doesn't spend a ton of time talking about each event in Jesus' life. He hops from one story to the next rather quickly.

You will see that in our passage today. It's only five short verses. But what Mark is doing is actually quite beautiful.

Because the book of Mark is like a trail. As you read the book, you go along at a fairly quick pace, and all along this trail, you see all these little breadcrumbs, some bigger than others, some smaller. But all these breadcrumbs tell one story. And they give you a picture of the Gospel.

But their just a taste, because where is this trail of breadcrumbs leading us to? Well spoiler alert here, this trail is leading us to the greatest display of Jesus and the Gospel. The cross and the empty tomb.

And so in our passage today, we are picking up just one small breadcrumb, but we will see the beautiful story that Jesus came to save sinners. That's the Gospel.

And that's my goal today for us. To highlight the fact that Jesus came to save sinners, and we will do that by examining three Gospel truths declaring what Jesus offers.

But just like any breadcrumb, we need to digest it. And we will do that by asking several intentional questions to reveal the state of our hearts.

So, 3 truths, with several questions of response

I trust that you have found Mark chapter 2 in your Bibles... follow along as I read starting in verse 13...

*Mark 2:13...*

*"He [being Jesus] went out again beside the sea [the sea of Galilee], and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them.*

This is all early on in Jesus' ministry.

So far we have seen the healings of a demon-possessed man, the healing of a paralytic dropped down from a roof, and a leper. Jesus heals them all.

So Jesus has gained quite a following at this point. And He has wowed the crowd so far.

In fact, in verse 12 right before it says that the people declared, *"We never saw anything like this."*

He has them on the edge of their seat.

But then verse 14 hits.

Look at verse 14...

*"And as he [this is Jesus] passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth"*

Most scholars believe that Levi is the same person as the Disciple Matthew, the one who wrote the Gospel of Matthew.

Two different names, but same person. Very common in the first century. Peter, was many times referred to as Cephas. Two different names, same person.

And it says, that Jesus said to this Levi...

*"Follow me." And he rose and followed him."*

Seems harmless to our 21<sup>st</sup> century ears. Not a big deal. Why does verse 14 hit like a ton of bricks?

In first century culture, this Levi is scum. Pure scum. And since Levi lived in Galilee, he worked for, none other, the hated Herod Antipas. So Levi, worked for Herod, sent money to the Roman government, and stole people's money to become rich.

So to put it into modern terms, if you were putting together a b-ball team, the cat is getting on the team before this guy.

In fact, one commentator says that they were "some of the most hated people in Israel." No worth, no value in the eyes of a Jew. Completely marginalized.

And here enters Jesus. Doing something that no one would have expected.

...which brings us to our first truth that I don't want you to miss...

That Jesus offers...

#### **Grace to the marginalized (v. 13-14)**

Grace. Undeserved Kindness.

This "Follow me" would have rung out like a gong in the ears of those first century Jews listening. "Follow me" is a command that a Rabbi, a Jewish teacher, would say to a young student in order for him to become one of his disciples.

So this "follow me" is not simply a request for Levi to just join his crowd.

No, Jesus intentionally looked at Levi, saw Levi, acknowledged Levi, and then made an intentional invitation. "Come Follow Me."

And Levi, it says *"got up and followed him."*

The most striking thing about this passage, the thing that should stand in awe for is the profound grace that Jesus offers.

Think about it...he could have picked anybody. The up and coming star of the day, the guy who everyone liked. Anyone, but a tax collector. A marginalized runt.

Did you notice where Levi is at? Did you catch that Levi is currently sitting in the tax booth? He is literally surrounded in his sin. Lining his pockets with cash. Deceiving people to their face. Sinning, in the moment, as he hears those two little words... "Follow me." Drop what you are doing Levi, leave that life. Follow my ways, follow my path.

Church, that's grace. It's the definition of it. Kindness to the undeserved.

And I want you to hear me on this, you might be in the room today and this is exactly what you need to hear. You might have limped into this room this morning and you feel like no one sees you. Maybe you feel like you are caught in the chains of your sin and you are currently sitting in your tax booth. Hear me. Jesus looks at you, doesn't see your status, and offers you a new life. Offering you a new name. To give you hope. If that's you, don't go another second. Because what Jesus offered Levi, he is offering you. Grace. Turn to Jesus, and receive what He's offering.

And for the rest of us who have tasted that sweet truth that Jesus offers grace to the marginalized, don't let it become numb to you. Because I believe that there are many in this room that struggle the same way I did when I read this passage.

Which leads me to this first question, I want you to ask yourself...

### **Do I extend grace or do I exercise judgment?**

Place yourself there in that moment.

Can you imagine the grumblings in the crowd as people passed Levi? I can, especially after what is said later on.

If you were walking by at that moment, strolling by the sea, would you have even seen Levi? Would you even have given him the time of day? Would you have extended the grace of Christ or would you have scoffed at the tax collector?

What would you have done? Better question... what have you done in these situations?

I'm reminded of a story I heard not that long ago, by a friend and professor, Dr. Jim. He shared a story about a time he was in Israel early on in his ministry life. Dr. Jim was walking along the road in Israel and saw a few gentlemen selling fruit by the side of the road. So, he struck up a conversation. And in the course of the conversation, Dr. Jim established that one of these men had a back problem. And he asked after a while, can I pray for you? And knowing these men were Muslim, said "But I must pray in the name of Jesus."

Well, that didn't necessarily start out that well because the crowd of men began to mock him, hurl insults, laughed at the expense of Dr. Jim. But for some reason the man allowed it. Dr. Jim prays to the Lord, in the name of Jesus for this man to be healed. He said he walked away feeling not too confident about God answering this prayer because of their mocking. He turned and before he got a few steps away, the man jumps up and says my back doesn't hurt anymore.

I had the honor to meet that man in Israel in January. Now a believer in Jesus, and no back pain since.

The reason I am telling you this incredible story is because Dr. Jim, a faithful Christian took the message of the Gospel and extended grace to a Muslim man in a fruit stand. He didn't walk past in judgment.

He saw an opportunity, stepped into the situation with them, and extended the grace of Jesus to someone who really didn't deserve it.

Church, I think if we are honest with ourselves, we many times don't see people the way Dr. Jim does. Think about it. When you are in line at the store, and you see someone that might look a little different, is your first thought one of judgment, or is it, man that person

needs the grace of Jesus. Many times we, me included, sit back on our high horses of judgment and cast stones at the people we believe don't deserve God's grace.

If that's you today, can I encourage you to go to the Lord right now and repent?

Now, admit that this attitude is not Christ like, ask God to remove that judgement in you, and replace it with a heart of tenderness.

Because the Gospel message found here is that it doesn't matter your background, your vocation, your income level, or your appearance.

Jesus freely offers grace to those who seek him, even the marginalized.

And we are called to respond by extending that same grace to all people. No matter their status.

But the story quickly progresses and we see that Jesus not only extends grace to the marginalized, but goes another step further and...

Offers...

### **Community to the outcast (v. 15)**

We see this second truth in verse 15.

Take a look, verse 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."*

So what's happening?

After accepting Christ's invitation, Levi responds by throwing a dinner party for Jesus with the rest of his tax collecting sinners. That's this idea here of "*reclining at table*," it's a meal.

This is a good thing, right? Jesus is drawing people to himself left and right. What's the problem? Well, the scribes don't like it one bit...

Verse 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?"*

This question from the Scribes is not one of intrigue, but a full-blown accusation from the Scribes.

It's like when you see your kids grabbing ice cream before dinner and you say, "What in the world are you doing?" You're not asking them what they really are doing. You know what they are doing. You want them to stop.

This question from the Scribes is not curiosity; it is a statement of condemnation. Because, get this, they were accusing him of defilement.

Jewish Rabbis don't act this way. They would be "unclean" if they ate, drank, and rubbed shoulders with these tax collectors.

But they missed the point completely! Because they missed who Jesus was completely.

Because Jesus came to rub shoulders with those same outcasts. Jesus came to give them a place where they could truly find their identity.

So he gave them community. Remember what I said in the beginning, Jesus came to save people. Yet the Scribes missed it.

But I don't want you all to miss it.

Because has he not done this with many of you? Given you community with himself first and foremost and then with others in what we call the church? Has he not been so gracious to give you a place to finally know yourself and your creator?

He has.

If that's so, I think we are faced with this question, when it comes to the people we deem as outcasts...

### **Do I interact or do I avoid?**

**In Galatians 2:11-12**, we read about an extremely low point in the Apostle Peter's life. Paul says this in Galatians...

*"I opposed him [Peter] to his face... [for] he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party."*

Remember in Acts 10 where God gives him a vision, saying Gentiles are a part of God's family. He is doing well. He is living in community with them.

But only part of the time.

Because Peter feared "the circumcision party," the Jewish Christians. He feared what they would say. He feared how they would react if they actually caught a glimpse of him sharing a pork chop with a Gentile.

Peter avoided the Gentiles for the sake of his reputation.

Where Peter secluded himself and backed away for fear of a name hit, Jesus leaned into the situation and communed with them. \*\*\*\*\*

We need to be interacting people. Interacting with the outcasts, and I'm not just referring to the people that are homeless, even though that is true. I'm talking about anyone that you have labeled an outcast in your life.

The Democrat, the Republican, the refugee, the single mother who has had an abortion, the neighbor next door. You fill in the blank.

If you find yourself avoiding people more than interacting, there is a good chance you have started to cease seeing them as people who bear the image of God.

And that is a dangerous place to be.

But the first step is recognizing that that is what you are doing. So try waking up each morning with this prayer... "God, will you open my eyes to people? Will you help me see the divine appointments you have created for me today?"

That's a bold prayer. But a prayer that looks like Jesus.

We must be a people with hearts of compassion and feet of interaction, even when it's hard, even when it's awkward.

Choose to interact in community, not avoid because that's what Jesus did.

And so the story rolls on. We have seen that Jesus offers grace to the marginalized. And community to the outcast.

And now lastly from verse 17, it comes to a point and we see that

Jesus offers...

### **Healing to the sinner (vs. 16-17)**

So the Scribes ask the question...

*"[Now look at verse 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.'"*

The accusation is hurled at Jesus. And He responds with a medical metaphor.

What's he doing?

Jesus is telling them, "Look, people that think they are well don't go to the doctor. Only sick people do that. The same is true of the self-righteous.

The Scribes' problem wasn't their keeping of the Law; their problem was their gloating self-righteousness.

And in this one verse Jesus declares, "I am the great physician and I have come... *"not to call the righteous, but sinners."*

But what is it that he is calling them to?

He's calling them to repentance and to himself.

Is that not what we have already seen in the case of Levi?

This is so vital to see, don't miss this, Jesus never just calls a person to follow him without calling them to repentance. Never. Jesus never leaves the sinner where he finds them. He will see you sin, in your hurting, in your pain, and will offer you a life change.

That's the offer; it's healing, spiritual life change. A dead heart that was pursuing their own desires gets replaced with a beating, vibrant heart for Jesus and his glory.

But here's the question, the question it all boils down to... ask yourself...

### **Do I see my need for a Savior or Do I see myself as righteous?**

Our culture craves pride. They believe they have everything they need to be successful. That all we need to do is brush ourselves off and we will be fine.

The Scribes thought they were fine. They did the "right" things. They went to synagogue. They kept the law. They prayed.

But they missed their need. They missed Jesus. And if you miss Jesus, you have missed the Gospel.

Church, one of the greatest things that I can tell you this morning is that apart from Jesus, you are sick with no hope.

Romans declares no one is righteous. The OT proclaims that man's heart is broken. That our hearts seek everything but the God who created us.

But the best truth that I can tell you is that we have now access to Jesus, and sinners like you and me can be made whole.

Do you see your need? Christian, do you still see your need?

Or are you in the same boat as the self-righteous person, who rests on their ability and their strength?

Or are you the humble person, who rests on the ability and power of Jesus?

Church, Jesus is speaking right now through these words. And he is telling you, come follow me, I have what you truly need. In fact, I am what you need.

## Summary

### Conclusion:

The reason that I love this passage of Scripture is because it shows our Savior's heart. In just five small verses sandwiched in chapter two of Mark, we see a heart that is soft to the sinner. A heart that welcomes the outcast. A heart that sees the marginalized.

A heart that overflows with grace, community, and healing.

And church, he offers those things. Freely. And you are called to respond.

Respond by receiving, and then by displaying.

Receiving what he offers, and displaying his love to a world that is lost and dying.

This story reminds me that no one else in the world offers this. Period. No one offers complete restoration. No one offers a place where you can find your true identity. No one in this culture will offer someone unworthy grace. No one will ever be able to change your life... except Christ alone.

Church, who else would you want to follow?

Let's pray...

God, we cannot comprehend your goodness to us. That you would love us. That you would welcome us into your family. That we would be called children. That you would provide a place where we can find true identity. That you would die for us. God, you are so good to us. May we be continually reminded that no one else offers what Jesus offers. May we never lose sight of the price you paid for us. And I pray that those things will overflow from our hearts into our lives. And we pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Close – Guest Central. Elder/Deacon Prayer.