



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 7: Someone Call A Doctor

This week's passage is full of hope for those who feel like they are not good enough for Jesus. It is also a stern warning for those who feel like they *are* good enough for him, as well as for those who think that they are better than others.

1. Jesus Calls The Worst Of The Worst

- Read Mark 2:13-14a

Tax collectors were the most hated men in Israel. They were barred from the synagogues, considered ceremonially unclean and breakers of the Law. They exploited their own people, gaining riches for themselves and for their Roman oppressors. Jesus broke all social norms and chose Levi, the tax collector, to be one of his disciples. No one is beyond God's reach.

- ❖ Q: Is there anyone that you can think of that would make you leave this community if they were to suddenly join us? (Who in your life do you find the most difficult, insulting, arrogant, selfish and 'beyond redemption'?)
- ❖ Q: How does Jesus's attitude differ to the way in which we accept or reject people?
- ❖ Q: Is there any indication in this text to show that Jesus called Levi reluctantly or with a suspicious glance, wondering how he would turn out? How does this model to us how we should treat people with terrible backgrounds, or even current circumstances/choices? Do we have any liberty to be anything but loving and inclusive?
- ❖ Q: What sort of people have you rejected in Christian circles because you secretly felt better than them? (Most of us are great at pretending to accept people, but in our minds we criticise and reject them). How is God calling you to respond to this attitude?

2. The Call To Follow Jesus Is A Call To Leave And A Call To Sacrifice

- Read Mark 2:14b, Luke 3:10-14

Levi left everything he had to follow Jesus. Not only did he lose out on wealth, but in leaving his business he could have been in deep trouble with Rome. Encountering Jesus was worth every cost to his life and he changed as a result. Levi, also known as Matthew in the New Testament, was most likely the man who wrote the first gospel. The gospel is supposed to radically change us.

- ❖ Q: Has following Jesus ever cost you something really dear? Has it been worth it?
- ❖ Q: What, if anything, has changed in you personally over the past year because of your daily decision to follow Jesus and put him first?
- ❖ Q: Is Jesus asking you to part with, let go of or change anything in order to follow him more closely?

3. Christianity Is Supposed To Be Messy Because Grace Is Messy

- Read Mark 2:15-16

The religious men of the day had no concept of God's grace. They judged Jesus because he spent time and energy loving societies' rebels. Our role is not only to try and preach to non-believers but to genuinely love and serve them. We should be following Jesus in his authenticity and grace towards any type of person, knowing that we need his grace and mercy just as much as they do.

- ❖ Q: Are we personally good at reaching out to and loving the rebels in our society? Do we love them without an agenda? Do we give them a few chances to change and then move on because they are "hopeless cases"?
- ❖ Q: Are our hearts open and warm to those that religious people shun? If not, how should we respond to this message?

4. Getting Better Starts With Getting Honest About Being Sick

- Read Mark 2:17, Romans 3:10, Romans 3:21-26

Jesus came for those who knew that they were unrighteous and needed saving. The Pharisees believed that in keeping the Law they were made righteous, but Jesus rejected this belief outright. He did not come to rescue those who believed that their own religiousness could save them. Paul explains in his letter to the Romans that we are all sinners and that our saving comes by grace alone. Repentance and faith are therefore wonderful gifts to us, opening the way of God's grace for us.

- ❖ Q: Why is being a good/religious person not necessarily evidence of salvation?
- ❖ Q: Are you deeply aware of your own sin and your daily need of God's grace? Why is this awareness a good thing?

