



A BETTER WORD

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

The Friend of Sinners

Mark 2:13–22

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus is the friend of sinners — even the worst of them. The only people he cannot help are the ones who are convinced they are already well.

SERMON SUMMARY

The announcement that the kingdom of God is at hand is now meeting resistance, and Mark stacks up five accounts of opposition. Two of them land here. Jesus walks past a tax booth and calls Levi — a Roman collaborator who grew wealthy taking from his own people. Levi rises and follows, then throws a feast, and Jesus and the disciples go. The scribes ask the question everyone is thinking, with accusation dripping off of it: why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Jesus answers with a diagnosis. Those who are well have no need of a physician. He came to call sinners, not the righteous. The Pharisees worked hard at purity, but self-righteousness blinded them to a sickness no effort could heal.

Then a second question: why don't your disciples fast? Because the bridegroom is here, and you cannot fast at a wedding feast. New cloth tears an old garment. New wine bursts old skins. The new is incompatible with the old — and enjoying the presence of King Jesus is now the way we express devotion to God.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Levi was a tax collector — a Jew who bought from Rome the right to tax his own neighbors, and got rich doing it. Read verses 13–15 again. What does it say about Jesus that this is the man he calls? What does it say about Levi that he “rose and followed him”?
2. The scribes' question in verse 16 is not neutral curiosity; it is an accusation. Why did a shared table scandalize them so deeply? What did eating together communicate in that culture that our word “dinner” does not?
3. “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” (v. 17). What is Jesus saying about the Pharisees? Why are people who believe they are spiritually healthy often the hardest to reach?
4. Scripture commanded fasting once a year; the Pharisees had made it twice a week. When Jesus points to the bridegroom (vv. 19–20), how is he redefining devotion? What does it mean, practically, that enjoying his presence is now how we show devotion to God?

5. The unshrunk cloth and the new wineskins make the same point: the new cannot be patched onto the old. What performance-based habits are you still stitching onto your life with Christ? Read Romans 8:1 — what changes if you stop trying to earn what he has already given?

LIVING IT OUT

Some of us grew up believing that religion is a joyless, solemn endeavor — that if we did enough of the right things, God would finally be impressed. That burden gets heavy. But Jesus did not come recruiting the righteous. He came to befriend the sick and lead them into joy. No sin is too great and no reputation too ruined for the friend of sinners.

Heart Check: Do you think that you are well? Where are you quietly trusting your decency, your attendance, or your track record instead of the great physician? And is there anyone you have written off as too far gone for the grace you have received?

This Week: Name your sickness to God specifically this week, without softening the language. Then do one thing that treats his presence as a feast rather than a duty — an unhurried hour in his word, a meal, a conversation — and include someone who would never expect the invitation.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

— **Mark 2:17**

Praise God that his kingdom extends even to the worst of the worst. Ask him for the prick of conviction that lets you see your own need honestly — then for the joy of knowing the bridegroom is here.

Your Prayer:

Find more sermon study guides, messages, and resources at ABETTERWORD.ORG