The Good News told by Mark

A Bible teaching commentary
on the Gospel of Mark
in easy-to-read English

Written by Fred Morris

Jesus eats at Levi's house with tax collectors and sinners

Mark unit 3 of 12

Chapter 2:12-3:34

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Unit 3: Mark Chapter 2:12 to Chapter 3

Jesus Makes Friends with Sinners

Everyone watched the man get up and go home. They praised God saying, "We have never seen anything like this!".

Then Jesus went out and spoke to the crowd beside the Sea of Galilee. He wanted to more find men who would leave everything and follow Him. On this day He found Levi, a taxman, who was also called Matthew. Taxmen worked for the Roman government. The people did not like them because they were not honest. They collected taxes from the Jews and charged them too much money. However, Levi left his tax job and followed Jesus.

Levi invited Jesus and the other disciples to eat at his house. Some Jewish teachers of the Law who were Pharisees were there. They asked, "Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus heard them and said to them, "Those who are healthy do not need a doctor. People who are ill do need a doctor. I have not come to call those who think they are right with God to follow Me. I have come to call sinners to follow Me". This is still the ministry of Jesus today. We are all sinners who need to follow Jesus.

Jesus wanted to help the people who needed the most help. He wanted to heal their souls as well as their bodies. These people welcomed Jesus but some of the religious leaders did not want to follow Jesus. They were looking for the Messiah but they did not want Jesus. This is why Jesus chose to work with people who would listen to Him. The hearts of many of the religious leaders were hard and their minds were closed.

Jesus Shows a Better Way of Doing Things

The Pharisees thought that they were good people. They fasted, that is, they did not eat food for a time. They tried to obey all of the Law of God. God warns that all people are sinners. "There is no-one who does good, no-one at all". The apostle Paul repeats these same words. "No-one is right with God".

The disciples of John were also fasting. The Jews fasted for many reasons:

- To show sorrow when someone had died.
- To think more about God and less about food.
- To help them keep the laws on special holy days.
- To spend more time in prayer for something important.

Some people wanted to know why the disciples of Jesus were not fasting. Jesus spoke about a Jewish wedding feast. Jewish brides and bridegrooms opened their houses for the guests to come in. The guests visited, ate well and were happy for the bridegroom and the bride. But when the bridegroom dies, they will be sad and stop eating food for that day. He said this because He would be with them for a short time and they would be happy. Later, He would be taken away and they would be sad. That would be the time when they could fast.

Jesus came to show the Jews a new and better way. Men, not God, made many of their religious traditions. They were afraid to change their ways.

Jesus gave them good advice:

1. Do not sew a new patch of cloth onto old cloth. It will tear and make the hole larger.
2. Do not pour new wine into old wineskins. It will burst the skins and be lost.

Jesus knew that some of the Jewish traditions did not mix well with the new life He offered to all people.

Jesus said that every teacher of the Old Testament law is like the owner of a house. He will bring out both old and new treasures from inside. Jesus wanted people to follow Him. He wanted to save them from trusting in their religious traditions. The Holy Spirit will teach the followers of Jesus about these old and new ways. He will teach them what is from God and what is from men. Then the world will see Holy Spirit power at work to the glory of God.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

One day the Pharisees saw the disciples of Jesus picking and eating corn. It was a Sabbath day, God's seventh day of rest. They said to Jesus, "Look! It is against the Law to do this on the Sabbath. Why are your disciples doing it?" He replied, "The Sabbath day was made for man. Man was not made for the Sabbath". The Sabbath was meant as a day of resting, joy and worship. It was not a day of fasting.

Jesus wanted to show mercy on the Sabbath, not sacrifice. He had authority to say this. He was Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus reminded the Pharisees what God said in the Old Testament. "I want mercy and not sacrifice". Jesus told them, "You do not know what these words mean. If you did, you would not bring charges against those who are not guilty".

Mark Chapter 3.

Jesus Heals a Man on the Sabbath

After this, some Pharisees looked for a way to find fault with Jesus. They watched carefully to see what He would do on the Sabbath day.

One Sabbath day, Jesus went into the synagogue. He saw a man with a weak and twisted hand. He asked the man to stand up in front of everyone. Jesus asked him, "What does the Law say we should do on the Sabbath day? Should we do good or should we do evil? Should we save life or should we kill?".

Jesus heals a man's twisted hand on the Sabbath day

Jesus became angry because no-one answered Him. He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and it was healed. 'Then the Pharisees went out and began to make plans… to kill Jesus'.

Jesus was kind to the man with the weak and twisted hand. He was angry with the religious leaders because they were stubborn and hard-hearted. He knew that it was right to do good things on the Sabbath day. It is God's seventh day of rest.

Jesus Teaches the Twelve Disciples

Jesus went to the Sea of Galilee with His followers. Great numbers of people came from near and far away to hear Him. The people were pushing and crushing Jesus, so He stood in a boat on the lake and taught them. Voices can be heard a long way across water.

Jesus healed many people in this region. He stopped the evil spirits from shouting out that He was the Son of God. He did not want the unclean spirits to speak about Him. Satan will try to do anything to stop the witness of Jesus. Jesus came to honour and obey God His Father. He came to save and to serve others.

Later, Jesus went to the hills. He chose twelve of His followers and called then His disciples:

- to be with Him at all times;
- to teach them about the Kingdom of God;
- to send them out to teach and to preach;
- to give them power to heal and authority to drive out demons.

The twelve disciples included Judas who later betrayed Jesus.

For three years, Jesus taught the disciples to be messengers of God. He encouraged them to tell the Good News from God that salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught them that it was the plan of God to sacrifice His Son to save sinners.

The Power of God over Satan

Again, large crowds gathered to listen to Jesus. The Pharisees said, "He is driving out demons by the power of the prince of demons".

Jesus asked them, "How can Satan drive out Satan?" This did not make

- "If a kingdom fights against itself, it cannot stand."
- "If a family fights against itself, it cannot stand."
- "If Satan fights against himself … he cannot stand."

Jesus also said that if you rob a house, you must first tie up the strong man who owns the house.

Satan is strong, but Jesus is stronger than Satan. Jesus came to bind the strong man and to free his prisoners. Jesus drives out demons. He also came to people bound by sin and by religious traditions, to set them free.

"Evil words against God will be forgiven. But anyone who speaks evil things against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven." He said this because the teachers of the Law said that He had an evil spirit. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus and his Mother and Brothers

It may surprise you to read that on one occasion Jesus did not want to see His mother and brothers. He knew that they wanted to take Him away. They were worried about the things people were saying about Him. Some people thought that Jesus was mad.

Jesus did not want to argue with His family. So He chose not to see them. In this way, they would not delay the plan of God. He wanted to stay with the people who needed Him. The crowds wanted Him to teach them and to heal them. He said that they were His mother and brothers and sisters. The followers of Jesus are the family of God.

Mark does not say that Jesus turned away from His own mother and brothers. He did not want to argue with them. So He chose to stay with those who were doing the will of God. He

did the kindest thing and the correct thing towards His family. He avoided a family argument while doing the will of His heavenly Father.

Sometimes, our relatives make it hard for us to do what God wants us to do. We must understand their loving concern. But we must understand what the plan or will of God is. We must avoid big troubles when we make family decisions.

Satan uses the love and fears of family members to try to stop the ministry of Jesus. Jesus did not feel anger for His family, only love. His family also included the poor and sick people in the world who needed Him.

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