

Sin & Grace

VBC

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Mark 2:13-17

Series: Mark #2

January 17-18, 2004

“The People Jesus Loves to Hang Out With”

INTRO

I've concluded that January is not my favorite time of year

- I suspect some of you have come to similar conclusions
- The holidays are over—there is a general let down—people seem to get sick and depressed
- The lights are taken down—the magical atmosphere of the shops gives way to inventory clearance
- Size 36 is replaced with size 38
- December's generosity suddenly becomes January's payments
- And by now, most of our teams are out of the playoffs (mine anyway—actually they were out back in September)

It could be worse

- The Saxons of Europe called this month “Wulf montha”—because it was the time of year starving wolves would leave the snow covered forest looking for food and villagers to satisfy their hunger
(I suspect it was not their favorite month)

But the worst part of January is the mail I get around the middle of the month that reads—

“Important Tax Documents Enclosed”

My guess is that people in the time of Jesus did not get too excited about taxes either

- especially tax collectors — as we read about in Mark 2:13-17

Like every story — it challenges us to ask some questions —

1 - WHERE IS JESUS GOING? – vs.13

- There seems to be a randomness to His movement in these opening chapters
- no sense of hurry — does not seem to be going anywhere in particular
- has time for meals with anyone who invites him — He seems to have all the time in the world (which He does)

Yet, the more you read, the more you realize there is a purpose behind everything He does — intention behind everything Mark writes

- When Jesus linked up with another tax collector, Zacchaeus, He declared (I **MUST** stay at your house today)
- It seems to be the case here as well — Jesus leaves Capernaum for a lake — for a tax office — for a man

APPLICATION

- It's the same with us — it's not that we find Him — He finds us
- with the precision of eternal purpose — He makes His way to our world — looking past our lostness — to our potential

- The story raises a more confounding question —

2 - HOW DOES HE DO IT? – vs.14

- Have you noticed how Jesus could say merely two words — “FOLLOW ME” -- and people dropped everything — left their careers, their ways
- There's no hint of skepticism, resistance — Levi (Matthew) simply “got up and followed”
- Luke 5:28 - “He ‘abandoned’ everything”

- How do you explain that? — I can't
I can't even get my Airedale terrier to follow me, even if I have food in my hand

It tells us something about Jesus

- That for all the ways He is often portrayed — as sort of a walking zombie — a “Prozac Jesus” (Yancey)
- The reality is — there must have been something about His voice, His eyes, His mannerism — HIS AUTHORITY -- that had to be absolutely riveting
- He could command storms — and they immediately ceased — demons would immediately leave — paralytics picked up their beds — tax collectors and fishermen left their trades — and zealots left their causes
- Somehow, He connected — cut immediately to the heart

- And if we're truly listening — Jesus has the same effect on us

- But a more astounding question beyond the where and how is this — why?

3 - WHY DID JESUS GO AFTER THE DEEPLY SINFUL?

- the dregs of culture
- in this case — the worst of the worst -- those who collected taxes?

A- Tax collectors were traitors

- men in bed with Rome
- who long ago had sold their souls to pocket some profits

B- Tax collectors were generally forceful and fraudulent

- guilty of bribes, kickbacks — fleecing the populace

ILLUSTRATION:

- Reminds me of “tax collectors” of sorts in Nigeria
 - with their nail pronged sticks — you had no choice but to pay what they demanded
- Matthew was probably doing pretty good — for Capernaum was on the main road on the Damascus/Egypt corridor
 - most likely had the nice place overlooking the village

C- Tax collectors were the ultimate outsiders

- ritually unclean, in constant contact with gentiles — their presence in a home rendered it unclean
- unwelcome in the synagogue, cut off from decent society
- the law put them on the same level as thieves and murderers

ILLUSTRATION:

- Reminds me of the leeches we encountered in Borneo
 - creepy, wiggly, seductive, sucking creatures

In sum -- the social pariahs, the deviants of the day

I suspect we could answer this question by what we know —

- God loves lost people — as He does the found
 - The more lost people were, the more intent Jesus was in finding

(He later likens Himself to a woman having lost a coin and stops everything to find it)

- An encouragement to those of us who feel like giving up on others — or ourselves feel too sinful for Jesus

- But looking deeper into the story raises an even more troubling question
- the question raised in the story – vs.16

4 - WHY IS JESUS HANGING OUT WITH SINFUL TYPES?

- It's bad enough Jesus includes — rather than excludes —
- but then Jesus skates on the edge — He goes to their party – vss.15-16

Jesus, in fact, seemed to enjoy parties — He seemed to be the life of them

- He took any dinner invitation — whether it was at the home of Simon the Leper, Simon the Pharisee, or Matthew the tax collector

What's clear -- there were no prior conditions

- no drinking, no hard rock, no smoking — only appropriate attire

Yet we have or assume conditions

ILLUSTRATION:

- Reminds me of the time we called a couple in the church, and the wife yelled to her husband — “Mike turn down the music—it's the pastor's wife”
- They had a perception that Christians have their rules for acceptance

Jesus did not have His test for fellowship questions

He accepted a prostitute's anointing with gratitude

- went the distance to be with a Samaritan woman
- here, joined “sinners” -- a term descriptive of people who made it their habit to live in sin — people categorically reprobate
- And the irreligious, in particular, seemed to enjoy His presence — they liked being around Him
- “There were many who followed Him” – vs.15

Jesus was likely to be fun to be with — He invented pleasure

In fact — the more unsavory, the more at ease they seemed to feel around Jesus

- How else do you explain Matthew inviting his friends?
- And the more uncomfortable it made everyone else
- maybe even some of us
- In the sharing of bread, in reclining at the table with reprobates — with “sinners” — which most likely included the whores of His day — Jesus violated almost every social code
- In consorting with the irreligious — He assaulted the world view of the religious
- He offended the sensibilities of Jewish law

He sowed grace in unpromising places — and this confounded and infuriated the establishment

So why?

- It is this question Mark records an answer – vs.17
- Here is why I eat with tax collectors and sinners —

HEALTHY PEOPLE DON'T NEED DOCTORS

I love this answer — so profound, yet so obvious

- Can you imagine going to your doctor -- “What is the nature of your illness?”
 - “I have none — I’ve never felt better”
 - “Then why are you here?”
 - “Well, last time I was here, Dr. Crawford said he would not see me unless I was perfectly healthy”
- Full people don’t go to restaurants
- People with new tires don’t hang out at Les Schwab
- Well people don’t go to doctors
- That’s why these people are hanging out with Me
 - For here they are finding health

And in the second part of vs.17 — Jesus was declaring

AND REAL DOCTORS DON'T SPEND THEIR TIME HANGING OUT WITH HEALTHY PEOPLE

IMPLICATION — YOU GUYS AREN'T REAL DOCTORS

And maybe — by implication — Jesus is saying to the church that has no time for lost people

- to the church that insists on the sinful getting cleaned up before coming through its doors
- to the church that has no time to enter into the world and hang out with lost people

AND YOU GUYS AREN'T REAL CHURCHES EITHER

CONCLUSION:

Who are real churches?

- They reach out to the perimeter
- They engage in peoples' lives — they go to their parties
- They are known more for what they approve than disapprove