

For Those Who Are Sick

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community and as we follow Jesus together, we've become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which means that God has something to say to everyone in His Word, which is why we come back week after week, Sunday after Sunday, open up God's Word and hear what He has to say to us.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and His life and His death and His resurrection, and we're asking two questions as we go through the Gospel of Mark.

Question one, who is Jesus? And question two, how do we respond to Him? You'll remember from last week, we looked at Jesus' healing of the paralytic, and we saw that there's something better and greater and more important than physical healing.

And so we come to Jesus with our need, but we also make sure we never forget our greatest need, which is our need for God's forgiveness. This week, we're going to see Jesus call someone else and have another confrontation.

We're going to see Jesus' healing of the Pharisees, and we're going to look at the question of why you should be deeply offended by Jesus in the Gospel. Okay?

[1 : 3 4] Why you should be deeply offended. It's with that, we're going to turn to God's Word now. We're in Mark chapter 2, starting at verse 13. You can find it in your worship guide or on your phone or in your Bible.

No matter where you find it, remember that this is God's Word, and God tells us that His Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, which means that God has not left us to stumble alone in the dark, but instead He's given us His Word to show us the way to go.

And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 13. He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to Him, and He was teaching them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth.

And He said to him, Follow me. And He rose and followed Him. 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.

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?

[2 : 4 1] 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. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word.

Our Father in Heaven, we thank You that on this cold day, You've given us the warmth of this building and one another, and even more, the warmth and heat of Your Word.

We ask that You would use Your Word in a powerful way this morning, that You would speak clearly to us in words, in ways that we can understand, that You would use Your Word to encourage us and to challenge us.

And most of all, You would use it to show us Jesus Christ, that we would see Him as more and more glorious and beautiful. We thank You that You help us, not because we are impressive to You, but because Jesus has earned these things for us.

And so we ask these things in His mighty name. Amen. As we've been tracking along together in the Gospel of Mark, we've basically been in two locations.

[3 : 46] We began in the desert where Jesus was baptized and He had His temptation, and then we've shifted to this area of Galilee where Jesus has been doing ministry. He's been in the region of Galilee next to the Sea of Galilee, and you'll know that we've been in the city of Capernaum, which is Jesus' base of operations in this area.

It's a city of around 10,000 people, and it's the place where He has a house that He's able to stay, most likely Simon's house. Remember, this is where He healed Simon's mother-in-law. And now we're beginning to come full circle in that section.

You'll remember in chapter 1, we started in verses 14 and 15 with Jesus beginning His earthly ministry by preaching repentance, and then immediately He went by the sea. And it was at the sea that He called His first disciples, Simon and Andrew, James and John.

And so now we return to where we began. Chapter 2, verse 13, we're told Jesus went out again beside the sea. This going out, He's going out from Galilee.

He's just healed this paralytic, which we saw in the previous section. So He's going out of the city of Capernaum by the sea, and it's continuing this pattern of ministry that we've seen from Jesus. He ministers, He retreats, He ministers, He retreats.

[4 : 57] His retreat earlier was when He went out to pray. You'll remember the disciples were frantically searching for Him. Now He goes out again by the sea, reminding us that Capernaum is right on the water.

It's a seaside town next to the Sea of Galilee. And we have this word here in verse 13 again, which reminds us that Jesus has not been to the sea since chapter 1, verse 16, when He was passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, we're told, and that's where He calls His first disciples.

James and John, Simon and Andrew. And so it shouldn't surprise us what happens next. We haven't seen Him here since He's called the first disciples, and what He's going to do next is going to call them again.

So in verse 14, He repeats this pattern of going by the sea. As He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth, and He said to him, Follow me. And He rose and followed Him.

Now we might think at this point that we're just getting another repeat of what we saw before in chapter 1. Here we go again. Jesus does the same thing. He heals people. Then He calls people.

[6 : 06] We'll probably see Him heal some more people and call some more people, right? Well, in the eternal words of Cookie Monster, one of these things is not like the others.

One of these things doesn't belong. Can you tell which thing is not like the other by the time I finish this song? And if you want to hear that song, rather than spoken by me, of course, not right now.

You can go onto YouTube and Cookie Monster is there for you. The calling of this disciple is not like the others. There is something radically different here. James and John, Simon and Andrew, remember, we're fishermen.

What do we think about fishermen? Well, we love them. We think fishermen are great. They help with the local economy. They're out there working hard. They're great businessmen. They've built these boats, and they're sailing them.

And suddenly, while we're used to this whole crowd of fishermen, Jesus has to throw us a loop and call a tax collector. Now, you probably already know that tax collectors were hated in the ancient world, and they were hated because tax collection was contracted out.

[7 : 11] So you would say, as the Roman government, we need X amount of money. Whoever bids us the highest amount will give them that contract. They're going to bring us back X amount of money, and whatever is left over, they get to keep.

And so there was this incentive for tax collectors to be incredibly dishonest. They had a lot of power. They would use it to get more money than they were supposed to, and the more they could get, the more they piled up.

The richer and richer they became. And unfortunately, if they came to you to collect your taxes, you would not be able to get on your phone and open up your browser and look up what the tax rate was.

Surprisingly, that wasn't an option back then. And so it was much harder to know whether the taxes were fair or not. There was a lot of areas and ways for these tax collectors to exploit people, and so they were considered the worst of the worst.

And so Jesus here, it's been all fun and games up until this point. He's healing lepers, letting paralytics walk. He's calling these good fishermen until he decides he's going to call a tax collector.

[8 : 16] Mercy for lepers and paralytics. Wow, isn't that great? Isn't that heartwarming, you know? Jesus is going to heal these lepers. Paralytics are going to be able to walk. He's fulfilling the Old Testament.

Justice is going to be brought to the nations. This is great. Healing for tax collectors, the calling of tax collectors, that is repulsive. That's offensive.

Jesus is going to the people he shouldn't be going to. He's going to the people we actually need him to judge, and he's bringing them in and calling them to follow him. Jesus saves people that you and I wouldn't.

Jesus saves people that you and I wouldn't. And Jesus doesn't save people that you and I would. Jesus doesn't save people that you and I would.

God's grace is all fun and games until it goes to the wrong people. Until it goes to people who oppress us. Until it goes to people we don't like. Until it goes to people who are known for their betrayals.

[9 : 21] God extends his grace to people that you and I would cancel. God extends his grace to people who are beyond the pale. God extends his grace to people whose behavior we would find unacceptable.

And so this tax collector is not like the others. He's not like the paralytic and the leper. The leper, physically repulsive. Tax collector, morally repulsive.

Lepers, paralytics are oppressed. Tax collectors are the oppressor. They're the ones doing the oppression. Lepers are on the outside physically.

Tax collectors, on the outside morally. It's easy to have mercy for someone physically repulsive, right? Probably not their fault. Very challenging to have mercy for someone who's morally repulsive.

Of course we know it's all their fault, right? And Levi, he's not just a tax collector. It actually gets even worse than this. Levi's later known as Matthew, the author of the Gospel of Matthew.

[10 : 26] That's a whole other discussion. But we know by Levi's name and his history that Levi is Jewish. And so he's not just your regular run-of-the-mill shill for the Roman Empire who's oppressing people.

Levi is someone who has sold out his own people. He's a Jew who has sold out Jews. He is exploiting them. He's sided with the oppressor over the oppressed.

He has given up his own people. We're told by ancient records that Jews who became tax collectors were often excommunicated. They were cut off from the Jewish community because they were seen as so repulsive and as betraying their people to such a great degree.

And so the test for us in this is whether we really understand God's grace. There are good people who are going to hell.

There are people in this world who clean up litter off of the street. They drive their friends and maybe even strangers to doctor's appointments. They tip well at restaurants.

[11 : 29] They really care about people in the service industry. They want them to thrive and flourish. These people work hard at their jobs. They are an asset. They're not a liability. And they help people who are weaker than them.

They're great people like this. And they are still in rebellion against God. They still refuse to listen to God, to worship him and obey them.

They are headed straight to hell. God is going to pass over them. Okay? God in his grace chooses to pass over many good people.

God in his grace also chooses to save people who are terrible. Jesus saves people like tax collectors. Jesus saves the kind of people who spit out their gum on the street rather than putting it in the trash.

Jesus saves people you'd never want to play pickup basketball with because they're so incredibly rude. Even worse than that, Jesus saves drug dealers. Jesus saves dirty cops.

[12 : 32] Jesus saves child traffickers. Jesus saves narcissists. By God's grace, they are going to heaven.

And so God's grace is offensive. And this tests us whether we really understand it or not. He gives grace to people we wouldn't. And he doesn't give grace to people that we would.

God saves people that we don't like. He saves people far outside of our traditions and our tribes. God saves the kind of people who move from California and take up residence in Colorado. God saves people like me, people from the East Coast.

Okay? If you're a Democrat, God saves people who voted for Donald Trump. And they didn't just hold their nose and vote for him. They loved voting for him. They were proud to vote for him.

They were excited about it. God saves people who watch Newsmax and Fox News. If you're a Republican, God saves people who voted for Joe Biden. And they didn't just hold their nose and vote for him.

[13 : 36] They loved voting for him. They were proud to vote for him. They were excited they got to vote for him. God saves people who can't get enough of Rachel Maddow. And they love reading the New York Times. Okay?

God saves people who are far outside of your tribe and your tradition. God saves people you would not. God shows his grace to tax collectors and sinners.

Why is this the way the world works? Why is this how God's grace operates? Because God's dividing line is not between the good and the bad.

Okay? In God's eyes, everyone is bad. God's dividing line is between those who recognize their sickness and those who don't.

God's dividing line is between those who recognize their sickness and those who don't. In God's eyes, everyone is sick, even those who are convinced they're well.

[14 : 37] You can do many good things. But if you refuse to listen to God, to worship him, and to obey him, those are good only in a surface, superficial sense.

Outside of God, you can do many superficially good things. You cannot do anything good truly or fully or ultimately. And so that's what Jesus is telling us here when the scribes of the Pharisees are scandalized.

Verse 16, They saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors. And in this situation, they're believing that Jesus is made unclean in some way. Maybe Jesus is ignorant. Maybe he doesn't realize what he's doing.

But he is putting himself in the place of losing, perhaps, his righteous status. Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? And Jesus comes home here with this ringer. Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. And of course, underneath that, what Jesus is saying is, everyone is a sinner. There's just some who recognize it and some who don't.

[15 : 43] And so we're reminded here of God's grace. No matter who we are, God still saves sinners. And he even saves sinners we wish he wouldn't.

Also reminds us that we have nothing to bring to God. God is not impressed with you. God has not made a resume for you of all your accomplishments.

He doesn't pull it out to examine it and then give you his grace. No, Romans chapter 5, verse 8 says, While we were sinners, Christ died for us. And so what I'm not saying this morning is that good people can't be saved, but good people are only saved if they know and admit and confess that they're not good.

Good people are only saved if they know and confess and admit that they are not good. What do the people that God saves have in common? Upstanding citizens, small business owners, drug dealers and jerks, all of them know that they are sinners.

They all know and admit that they need a Savior. And they come to Jesus for healing and forgiveness. That is the dividing line.

[17 : 01] The dividing line is not between the good and the bad. It's between those who recognize their sickness and those who don't. And so there's a test here.

Just like there is for the scribes of the Pharisees and their hearts, there's a test for our hearts as well. So the more scandalized we are by this, the less we understand God's grace.

The more scandalized we are by this, the more we think we have something to offer to God. The less we believe we have to offer to God, the more we understand how sick we are, the less surprised we will be by who God saves and who he does not.

The bad news is this, you are worse than you think. You are in the same category as Levi, the tax collector. The good news is God's mercy and the hope that he provides is greater and more powerful than you realize.

The bad news is that you are worse than you think. You are in the same category as this terrible tax collector. The good news is that God's mercy and grace and the hope that he offers is even more powerful and wonderful than you realized.

[18 : 19] That is what the Pharisees missed. The Pharisees believed they can avoid sin by staying away from the sinners. And Jesus says, No, it's not the righteous I came for.

It's the sick. Those who are well have no need of a physician. Now, in my life, I have an organizational system that I refer to as organized chaos.

And organized chaos means that I mostly know what pile something is in. If you don't believe me, you can take a look in my office in the back. In my previous life, at some point, I had a new roommate that I moved in with.

And when I moved in with this man, I immediately noticed how clean and neat that he was. In fact, I was a little taken aback. There was almost nothing in his room. He had almost no possessions in there.

There was like a bed and a nightstand, and that was almost it. There was almost nothing in the kitchen. And so I thought to myself, Well, is this man a minimalist? Does he own anything?

[19 : 22] Of course, if you've lived in a house before, which I think most of you have, you know there's a range of philosophies about the use of the kitchen counter. For some people, the kitchen counter is a storage area.

And for other people, the kitchen counter is meant to always be kept clean. Maybe there's a few well-placed items on it. Now, I'm probably kind of a moderate when it comes to the counter space. This guy was far on the side of the counter always being clean at all times.

Okay. So I kind of adapted to his philosophy, right? But I pondered these things for a while. I was amazed. How is it that this man is able to live his life like this?

Has he gotten rid of all his possessions? Does he just never buy anything? Then one day, I went down into the basement of the house, which I'd never been in before, and I discovered the answer.

Why was this man so clean? Because everything was stashed in the basement. There were boxes. Okay. There were random odds and ends. There were things that weren't being used.

[20 : 25] You name it, sports equipment. It was all down there in the basement. And so I understood finally what was going on, right? It's not that this man didn't have junk. It's that he knew where to hide it.

Okay. Okay. Jesus is telling us here in this passage, everyone has junk. It's just some people have figured out how and where to hide it.

Everyone is a sinner. Some people know they are. Others don't. The Pharisees are convinced, right? The Pharisees are convinced that they're good and righteous because they have figured out where and how to hide things.

They make sure they don't associate with the wrong people. They make sure things that people can see are done well and precisely. They're tithing not just on their money. They're tithing on their spices, as we see at one point in the gospel.

And so some people find religion, and there's no repentance. There's no heart change. They just know how to rearrange the furniture. They just know what to move where so things are more acceptable than before.

[21 : 40] They've figured out what to hide and how to hide it. They have mastered certain external behaviors, but the heart has not changed. This is the sort of person who's figured out that if they never use profanity, no one will question their words, but they continue to gossip around about people behind their backs and stab them with their words.

They've mastered something easy and external, but their heart has not changed in any way. The yard is perfect and the car is waxed, and there's all kinds of strife and abuse in the house.

Self-righteousness can rearrange the furniture so things look better. Self-righteousness can put certain things in the basement so that no one can see it.

Self-righteousness cannot change or transform the heart. That is something that only comes with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That is something that he offers to those and only to those who know and admit and confess that they are sick in need of a Savior.

Those are the ones that Jesus comes to help and clean up. Those are the ones he's come for because those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

[22 : 53] And so the self-righteous make sure the junk and the sin in their lives is basement junk. It's junk that no one gets to see.

But when Jesus comes, he comes to take a look in the closet and to take a look in the basement. Jesus comes to see not just what's in the entryway in the family room and the living room.

Jesus comes to see what's in the bathroom and the bedroom and the closet. And when the final accounts are made, what Jesus knows is that in every house, there's a pile of junk.

And so do we understand God's grace or not? Are we offended by it? Then we believe we don't have anything to hide. If we're honest, we know we have all sorts of things to hide.

And we invite Jesus to come and see it and to help us begin to clean up. Jesus comes to save sinners. Jesus has come for the sick, not the well.

[24 : 05] He's come not for righteous, but for sinners. Will you show him your basement? Will you let him into the closet?

Who is Jesus? Jesus is the one who picks people we wouldn't. Jesus overlooks the good and he seeks out sinners. How do we respond to him?

We know that we are not the righteous, but the unrighteous. There are no good people. Some people are just better at hiding it than others. Jesus has come for people that know they need his help and they're willing to show him the basements and closets of their lives, no matter how bad they are.

Are you willing to take Jesus there? Are you willing to show him the dark places and the hidden places? I ask you that because Jesus says this, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you that you have come to save sinners, sinners like us.

[25 : 21] We ask that you would show us our need, that you'd give us the grace to be willing to admit it, and you would show us how you meet us at that very same point of need, that you have come to save us.

We ask that you'd grow us in our humility and our joy in understanding your grace, that we would know more and more that we have nothing to offer you, and we would know more and more that you offer everything to us.

We thank you for that reason, that we can ask these things, not on our own power, but in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.