

The Gospel of Mark

(Mid-Week Bible Study)

Week 3: When Jesus Changes Everything -- Mark 2:1–28

Picture the scene. Capernaum has heard about this Jesus, and now He has returned. A house overflows with people. The crowd spills out the door and into the street. Inside, Jesus is teaching when suddenly bits of clay and thatch begin falling from the ceiling. Four men, refusing to let a packed room keep them from Jesus, have climbed up onto the roof and started digging. Down through the hole comes a paralyzed man on a mat. The room falls silent. Everyone is waiting to see what Jesus will do. And what Jesus does next will rewrite their understanding of who He is.

Mark 2 is a single chapter, but it contains four scenes that share a common theme. Jesus changes everything. He changes our deepest problem (sin is forgiven before the body is fixed). He changes who is welcome at the table (tax collectors and “sinners” are invited in). He changes the religious calendar (the old practices cannot contain what Jesus is bringing). And He changes the Sabbath itself (the One who gave the Sabbath is now its Lord). In each scene, the religious establishment is alarmed, the disciples are watching, and Jesus is showing the world that something genuinely new has arrived in Him.

We can be tempted to read Mark 2 the way the scribes did, as a series of doctrinal challenges to be defended or attacked. But Mark is not asking us to take sides in an ancient debate. He is asking us a personal question. When Jesus steps into your life, what is He changing? Is He changing your view of forgiveness, including how He sees your worst sins and your deepest needs? Is He changing the company you keep, the people you welcome, the way you see the broken? Is He changing the religious habits you have outgrown, or the new freedom you have not yet stepped into? Is He being honored as Lord of every day, including the ones you thought belonged to you?

The four men who tore through that roof understood something the rest of the crowd missed. They believed Jesus was worth the trouble of breaking through whatever was in the way. They were not going to let a packed room, a damaged ceiling, or the embarrassment of being seen keep their friend from Jesus. Mark wants us to read this chapter and ask the same question. What is standing between us and the Jesus who changes everything, and are we willing to dig through it?

Group Discussion: In each of the four scenes in Mark 2 (the paralytic, Levi’s table, the fasting question, and the Sabbath), Jesus quietly upsets a religious assumption that the people around Him had carried all their lives. What religious assumptions, even good and familiar ones, might Jesus be challenging in your life this season? How does change like that feel, and how does it usually go?

Personal Reflection: The paralyzed man's friends carried him to Jesus when he could not get there on his own. Who in your life has carried you to Jesus, in prayer, by example, or through encouragement? And who in your life is unable to come to Jesus on their own right now, perhaps waiting for a friend like that?

Read Mark 2:1–28

Study Questions

1. When the paralyzed man is lowered through the roof, Jesus' first words are not about the man's legs but about his sins (v. 5): "Son, your sins are forgiven." Why does Jesus address the deepest need first, and what does this teach us about how God views the human condition?
2. The text says it was when Jesus "saw their faith" (the friends' faith, v. 5) that He responded. Who in your life has carried you to Jesus through their faith, and who might God be asking you to carry now?
3. The scribes accuse Jesus of blasphemy because, in their words, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (v. 7). Their question is the right question. Why does this scene stand as one of the clearest declarations of Jesus' deity in the Gospel of Mark, and how does Jesus' response (vv. 8–12) confirm it?
4. Jesus asks, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?" (v. 9). When you bring your own life to Jesus, do you tend to ask Him primarily for outward changes (the walking) or for the deeper changes only He can give (the forgiveness, the healed heart, the new identity)?
5. Jesus calls Levi the tax collector to follow Him and then sits down to eat at Levi's house with "many tax collectors and sinners" (vv. 13–15). When the scribes object, Jesus says, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (v. 17). What does this self-description of Jesus' mission teach us about who the gospel is for and how the church is to view those still outside of Christ?
6. Levi gets up from his tax booth and follows Jesus, abandoning a profitable career on the spot. He then opens his home and his table so his old friends can meet Jesus too. How does Levi's response challenge your own willingness to let Jesus disrupt your work, your finances, your friendships, and your home for the sake of the kingdom?
7. When asked about fasting, Jesus answers with two short parables: a new patch on an old garment, and new wine in old wineskins (vv. 18–22). What is Jesus actually claiming about Himself, and about the relationship between His new covenant and the old religious system, and why is this such an important doctrinal turning point?
8. The disciples of John and the Pharisees were both fasting, and people noticed that Jesus' disciples were not. Where in your own walk are you tempted to measure your spiritual life by religious activities you can see and count, rather than by the deep, unhurried joy of being with Jesus (the "bridegroom" moment of v. 19)?

9. When Jesus' disciples pluck heads of grain on the Sabbath, He defends them by referring to King David eating the showbread (vv. 23–26), then declares, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (vv. 27–28). What does Jesus mean by these two statements, and what do they teach us about the relationship between the Old Law (including the Sabbath) and Christian worship today?
10. All four scenes in Mark 2 show Jesus changing things, sometimes things people had built their whole lives around. As we close this chapter, where do you sense Jesus most actively at work in your life right now to change something He wants different? Are you cooperating with that work, or quietly resisting it?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 32, the blessing of the one whose sins are forgiven; Isaiah 43:25, God's declaration that He alone blots out transgressions; Colossians 2:13–17, Christ canceling the record of debt and the Old Covenant shadows; Hebrews 4:1–10, the rest God always intended His people to find in Christ