

Mark 2:1-17 IDENTIFICATION & FORGIVENESS

PRELIMS. We have looked at chapter 1 where Jesus has begun His ministry and called His first 4 disciples, who were to be apostles, Peter (Simon), Andrew, James, John, 2 sets of brothers! This was **not** their conversion but their **calling** to **full time** ministry for the Lord. Jesus heals and helps so many people. Everyone is **amazed** at Him!

People **gravitated** towards Jesus! That should **not** surprise us! He was **lovely**, He was **warm**, He was **approachable**, He **understood people**. He **loved** people - of every class and colour! He was overflowing with **love/compassion** and **zeal** for **righteousness**!

As soon as it was "*reported that He was at home...many*" people "*gathered together so that there was no more room not even at the door*"[1,2]! No doubt most of them came seeking **healing**. In fact Mark tells us about the **paralytic**! **APP** There is no doubt but that **mercy ministries** attracts people and creates **credibility**! Was it not through **mercy ministries** that Jesus got a following? Yes, it was!

Now, whether they **knew** He was going to **preach** to them or not, I don't know, but He was "*preaching....to them*"[2]. A person who **does** good, **will** be **listened** to! The word here for preaching is actually **speaking/talking** (laleo), and being in a house, that is perhaps more likely. You can actually be preaching, by just talking! You can communicate truth in a **winsome** and **influential** way by simply talking! Jesus talked to people everywhere. In a house, a boat, in a cemetery, on the beach, on the road, at a well, and on a Cross!!

Scripture calls **Noah** a "*preacher/herald of righteousness*"[1Pet 2:5] (kurusso), and yet in Scripture he does not open his mouth to preach! A person's life and a 'few and quiet words' can be more effectual than many a long sermon! **APP** It is so important that we **do talk** in **general** conversation about the things of God. And it is **vital** that we do so, in a **non-threatening** and **non-intimidating** manner! If we do it **biblically** it **ought** to **soften** people's heart - unless of course, which is common, such people are hardened and rebellious! It is a **privilege** to bring X to people's attention. It should

be our **daily** prayer that we would take every **opportunity** God gives us! *“as we have **opportunity**, let us do good to everyone”* [Gal 6:10].

It certainly was **the Word** that Jesus was talking about! There 469 references in the Bible (AV) to ‘the Word’! Jesus is ‘The Word’ *“In the beginning was the Word, and **the Word** was with God, and the Word was God”*[J1:1] The **Man** on the White Horse with *“a robe dipped in blood...is called is **The Word of God**”*[Rev 19:13] There are those who have given their lives for the sake of The Word: The last reference speaks of *“those who had been **beheaded** for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God”*[Rev 20:4]

Of course the Word refers also to the Holy Scriptures. *“Remember your **leaders**, those who **spoke** to you **the word of God**”*[H13:7] James instructs us to *“be doers of **the word**”*[Jam 1:22]. *“but the Word of the Lord remains forever. And this Word is the **good news** that was **preached** to you”*[1Pet 1:25] (evangelidzo)

Now the whole passage teaches us one main lesson, which I think we saw last week in Xnity Explored. It is importance of **recognising** the **identity** of Jesus! Who is He? Jesus asked the question several times ‘Who do you say the Son of Man is?’ Who do the people say I am? **What** we believe about Jesus is **vital** - to salvation! Here, there was **nothing** wrong with the **theology** of the Phars and Sadds! No one **can** forgive sins but God alone - indeed! What was wrong was their **discernment** - they did not **recognise X was God!**

APP That problem is common today - people have good theology but **no discernment!** They know the Scriptures like the back of their hand, but they are deaf to the voice of the Spirit. They have no recognition of the spiritual work in the heart of man. No compassion. They can complain about a heresy miles away and yet turn away from a golden opportunity to apologise to a brother, or to help a neighbour in need or to drop everything and pray! They do not know of the call from God ‘This is what you **ought** to do, right now’!

Paul instructs the Ephs to *“try to **discern** what is pleasing to the Lord”*[Eph 5:10] and to the Romans *“be transformed by the renewal*

of your mind, *that...you may discern what is the will of God*”[Rom 12:2] We are here to do the will of God but we need to be **discerning**

The passage also reveals what is our **greatest** need. It is **not** physical strength and life! It is **spiritual life!** Which **begins** with **forgiveness** of **sins!** Despite this man’s physical disability, his greatest need was the forgiveness of sins! As someone else said: ‘What sins could a paralytic commit? Not many physical ones! Sin has to do with the heart! You can very gravely lying on your bed **motionless!** You can commit murder, **jealousy, hatred, revenge,** you can **curse** and **lie!** James says “*where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice*”[Jam 3:16]

Again He is walking “*beside the sea, and all the crowd were coming to Him, and He was teaching them*”[13] He saw and called **Levi,** who worked for the Inland Revenue! Tax booths were set up on highways/bridges and canals to collect **toll charges,** and at seashores to **tax fishing!** Levi/Matthew immediately responded to the call!

The term “*reclined at table*” [15] is parallel to our ‘**relaxing at dinner!**’ A relaxed atmosphere is **best** for winning souls! One evangelist writes about the first 300 years of church history. There were no church buildings. They depended on homes. He concludes ‘I wonder if the church didn’t lose something essential to its nature when we extracted it from our living rooms and shops and began to house it in specially designed buildings’, [Petersen, p104]

The company, it seems, was **not the choicest!** The **worst** in that society were present, those whom most folk would not want to be seen with. To be **associated** in any way with the **notorious** was a great sin with the Pharisaees. Jesus broke the ecclesiastical conventions of His society by **relaxing** with the worst in society. ‘**Guilt by association**’ was one of Jesus’ greatest offenses!

One of the **forgotten** blessings of the Church at the Reformation was their belief about the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper was a means of dispensing grace to the recipient. So much so, that some began to **object** to sitting at the Lord’s Table with the vilest of society. But, it

seems, it was common for the Lord's Supper to be given to all that would wish it! One famous Reformer (Calvin) said: 'Now, if we feel disgust at being **associated by Baptism and the Lord's Supper with vile men**, and regard our connection with them as **a sort of stain upon us**, we ought immediately to descend into ourselves, and to search without flattery **our own evils**. Such an examination will make us willingly allow ourselves to be washed in the same fountain with the **most impure**, and will hinder us from rejecting the righteousness which **he offers indiscriminately** to all the **ungodly**, the life which he offers to the dead, and the salvation which he offers to the lost' [Calvin's Commentary on Mat 9:12] **APP** Surely we cannot say that some sinners are **too unworthy** of the grace of Christ? If we believe we are feeding on Christ at the Supper why should we deny it to all who would not despise/ridicule the ordinance?

Christ **mingled** with unbelievers, **so that** they might hear and **believe** the good news He had to impart. How will they hear without a preacher? If people want to **approach** Christ, if they want to learn from Him, let them come - children and adults! He invites us **"Come to Me all you who labour and are heavy laden...I will give you rest"**! That invitation does **not exclude** the Lord's Supper!

"Why does He eat with tax-collectors and sinners?" [16] They could **not understand** it! They were miles away from X's **mindset**! They did **not** have His **compassion** for the perishing! He ate with them because He wants them to **understand** the gospel. He wants them **saved** and as long as there is a **distance between** the Church and the world there will be no salvation. X wants **sinners** to know, that the **most important** thing in life is **'forgiveness of sins'**! He wants them to know that He, Jesus Christ, is God, and **"has authority"** to forgive sins! he wants sinners to know that they are **welcome** to come to Him

It is those who **feel good** about themselves, who do not **need** a Saviour? **"Those who are well, have no need of a physician"**[17] Very **dangerous**! No one goes to a **doctor** who is feeling well! But some serious diseases have **no symptoms**! That is just **until** - you go to the **hospital** and the 'specialists' **examine** and **discover** things!