

Dr. Mark Jennings, Mark, Lecture 4, Mark 1:40-2:17: The Public Ministry Continues

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This is Dr. Mark Jennings in his teaching on the Gospel of Mark. This is session 4, Mark 1:40-2:17: The Public Ministry Continues.

All right, it's good to be with you again. We're going to be getting into Mark chapter two today, though there is part of the end of chapter one I want to get to before we do that. But just to take stock of things, so far, in the Gospel of Mark, our attention has been drawn to Jesus' authority.

We saw it with the calling of the disciples. He called and they immediately came. We saw it in his teaching, how he taught with an authority unlike the scribes.

We saw it in the exorcisms, again, where Jesus spoke and they immediately obeyed. And even in the miracles, if you remember when we were talking about Peter's mother-in-law, how she was stricken with illness and then she was fully recovered. So, that great day in Capernaum, which really was the attention of chapter one, we have launched into the Markian narrative properly.

And therefore, I think it's important as we begin to still move through that we remember the themes that were presented, namely that Jesus is the stronger one, the one with the authority. And that is, of course, going to guide us through primarily the first eight chapters. And then we'll see this hinge, this switch, that will move to also know Jesus as the one who is to die.

I mentioned last time that we would get into chapter two, and we will, but there's a brief account at the end of chapter one that's after the day at Capernaum, the Jesus healing of a leper. And I want to look at that briefly because I think it does tell us quite a bit. And I'll read it here from you, verses 40 through 45 of chapter one, and then we'll discuss it.

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, if you are willing, you can make me clean. Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. I am willing, he said, be clean.

Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning, see that you don't tell this to anyone, but go show yourself to the priest and offer sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing as a testimony to them. Instead, he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news.

As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly, but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere. So this account of leprosy, probably to begin with it, we need to make sure we're understanding the context that we're talking about.

Now, leprosy here in biblical times probably referred to a number of skin diseases, not just what we call Hansen's disease today. But it would have been diseases that especially were marked by flesh dying away or decaying or some sort of rot being put in. Now, one of the things that we understand here is leprosy had this idea almost of living death, that you were, even though the person was alive, they were showing signs of death.

In the Second Temple Judaism, death was an impure state. If one touched a corpse, there were regulations where one had to ritually cleanse oneself. Because death was considered to touch, death was carried with its impurity. And we see this in the Old Testament.

We see it in the oral law that surrounds the Old Testament. So, a leper, by definition, was ceremonially impure. What this meant for a leper in the Jewish community at this time was they would be separated from family and friends, and there would be no social interaction.

There would be, in essence, they would be living almost outside the community. Indeed, we know that from Leviticus 13 and Numbers 5 and then the oral tradition around it, that when a leper would start to come into any contact with other people, they had to declare themselves to be unclean. They would have to announce their arrival by declaring their unclean state.

It had to be a very horrible existence if you think about not only just the disease itself but also the social loneliness that would have occurred. And the idea here of the purity laws was that holy and unholy, clean and unclean, do not mix. And the holiness, whether the unholiness or the impurity, is contagious.

So, something that is clean, if it comes into contact with something is unclean, it is the unclean part that has now moved into that which was clean and rendered it now unclean. So the unclean is contagious. There aren't a lot of occasions of the curing of leprosy.

Exodus 4, 2 Kings 5, a couple of examples there in the Old Testament. But by and large, it was considered an incurable disease. So, I think knowing that, we see a couple of interesting things that begin to come out.

First of all, what this man does, coming up to Jesus and speaking to him and begging him, would have itself been an act contrary to what was expected of someone

stricken with leprosy, that he would approach a person and come into that proximity in that way. They were to steer clear and to make a path. And that is consistent with what we see in the Gospel of Mark, which is that great acts of coming to Jesus often require a kinetic display of faith, a muscular act.

And so he is doing what he should not. And then even the phrasing, notice there in verse 40, if you are willing, you can make me clean. Notice, first of all, it's not healed.

It's clean because he understood that he was in a state of uncleanness, according to the Jewish ritual law. But even the phrasing is fascinating. I won't get into it too much, but in the Greek, there are different ways of structuring if-then statements.

And one of the ways that we see being structured here is the if part, if you will, is the uncertain part. Jesus may be willing, or he may not be willing. But if the condition is met, i.e., he is willing, then the outcome is certain.

And so, the way the Greek reads it presents the if-then statement as if you are willing to do this, then the outcome is certain. So, the uncertainty is, will Jesus choose to do it or not do it? Not. Can Jesus do it or not? I hope that makes sense. And so when he approaches him, he is asking if Jesus will choose to cleanse him, choose to make him whole if you will.

And Jesus' response, I think, is fascinating, filled with compassion; he reached out his hand and touched the man. Notice this reaching out of his hand and touching the man occurs before the miracle. Jesus is doing what he should not.

Ceremonially, ritualistically, he should not touch this man. One of the things we will see as we work through the Gospel of Mark is that it isn't only the miracle that Jesus does that is important, but the manner in which he chooses to do the miracle that is also important. We know from the Gospel of Mark Jesus has the abilities to heal over a distance.

We know that he doesn't always have to touch to heal, that his powers can speak, that we will see in the storms, or that he can just speak and something occurs. We have already seen that in the exorcisms. So, presumably, he could have simply said to the man with leprosy, I am willing to be clean.

And that would have been sufficient. But instead, Jesus chose to touch him. And I think that is important, for it says a couple of things.

One, it just once again reveals the tenderness. It is filled with compassion, and he touched this man. One could only wonder how long it had been since this man had actually felt a tender touch from another.

But also, going back to our point of impurity being contagious, that unclean and clean do not mix. And when clean touches unclean, well, the unclean was the stronger force. Well, going back to the idea we see here with Jesus, the opposite is happening.

Again, holy and unholy do not mix. Clean and unclean do not mix. But with Jesus, it is the holiness, the cleanness, if you will, the purity of Jesus that is the contagious factor.

The leper becomes cleansed by being in contact with Jesus, rather than what one would have expected in that culture, which is Jesus becoming unclean by touching the man with leprosy. And so, Jesus reached out, affirmed he was willing, and said, be clean. Again, we see what we have seen, this idea of speaking, and it occurs.

And as the pattern is with Mark, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cured. Now, interestingly enough, the story does not end there. There is a little bit more.

Jesus gives him instructions, which is actually a very strong warning. See, you do not tell anyone this. Now, we have to understand that I do not think Jesus is oblivious to the fact that people are going to see that this man no longer has living, decayed flesh.

I think the idea is he needs to do something first before he begins and just starts telling people what has occurred. Specifically, Jesus instructs him to go show yourself to the priest and offer sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing as a testimony to them. In the practices of this time, what was necessary for one to re-enter the community, for one to be sanctioned now as clean, was to have the priests, the religious leaders, affirm.

Often, they would do the ritualistic rite themselves or at least bear witness to the fact that the individual was no longer in an unclean state. And so, I think what Jesus is telling him, the leper, to do is to go through the process that is prescribed to allow for full involvement and acceptance back into the community. That he is to go and show himself that he no longer is bearing the marks of living death, if you will, and now is fully clean.

And so, this language is a testimony to them, I don't think, as much as a testimony to what Jesus has done per se, but as a testimony to them that the leper is fully cleansed. As one of the things we'll see in Mark, Jesus commands to be silent or to delay or to always obey. And so, this man immediately began to talk freely and spread the news.

And one understands that. I can understand why he would do so. It is interesting that the first thing that occurs after a great healing and in such a powerful way is an act of disobedience, even if it's sort of understood.

But there's a result. And the result is Jesus could no longer go openly to the towns because, again, the news was starting to spread around this area of, here is this one who has leprosy, an incurable disease, who now has immediately been made whole at the words of Jesus. And so, I think we get a glimpse, too, of one of the motivations of why Jesus always tried to dampen a little bit or control or direct a little bit the spread of his fame is because it did hinder some of his abilities.

So, as Mark tells us; as a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside, yet people still came for him from everywhere. So, I just wanted to spend just a little bit of time there looking at Jesus and the leper because I think it speaks to a couple of the themes we're going to be seeing. Of course, it continues Jesus' authority and his ability to speak, and it may happen, but we're also now engaging in purity and impurity in the Old Testament community, ritualistic law, and Jesus' relationship to purity and impurity.

That's going to sort of set the stage for some of the things we're going to find. All right, let's move into chapter 2. With chapter 2, we continue sort of working through these healings and miracles that Jesus has been doing, and we get the famous story of the paralyzed man in verses 1 through 12. I'll just have it for us here with verse 1. A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, so he came back, the people heard that he had come home.

So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven. Now, some teachers of the law were sitting there thinking to themselves, why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Immediately, Jesus knew in his spirit that this is what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, why are you thinking these things? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up, take your mat, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic, I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home.

He got up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone, and they praised God, saying, we have never seen anything like this. So here we have the setting, so Jesus has circled back to Capernaum.

He's probably at Peter's house, but this seems to be the house where he was staying. Word got around, as one would expect, that he had gone home, and so we have this crowd starting to develop and notice again, we continue to see Mark interweave teaching and miracles, or teaching and exorcisms, or healings and exorcisms. We see this interweaving of the big three, which are teaching, healing, and exorcisms.

He'll constantly and continually interweave this. So here Jesus, last time when he was at Capernaum, at this house, if you remember, they were bringing him, and everyone who had some sort of disease or was possessed by demons, he was doing many, many things, and then he said he needed to move on. Here he's teaching, so in the scene, they're still crowding around the house, but they're receiving his teaching, and I always find it interesting, one of the characteristics of the crowds, if you will, in the Gospel of Mark, is they get in the way.

They block doorways. They are constantly preventing people, if you will, from getting to Jesus, and so as we're looking at this, we see again an example of muscular faith. Here are these men.

They're carrying a paralytic on a mat, one who is unable to walk, and because of the crowd that's at the door, they must find another way into this house, so they make the decision to climb up. There would be stairs that would come alongside the outside of these houses, and they would go up those stairs and then begin to attempt to lower the man to Jesus. The only way they could get to him, thus, was through the roof, so as we think about these four men and notice, it's the actions of the four men, and I think that's important.

We'll see. The paralytic man is not really credited with doing anything at this point. Now, presumably, he encouraged this and was for this and wanted to get to Jesus as well, but it's the four men who are doing this action, and they're even destroying property.

They're digging through the roof, and the digging would have been the right idea. The roof would have been made of some sort of thatch material, and so to open it up, you literally would almost be digging the hole, which they do, and they lower them down. Palestinian roofs were flat.

So, here are these men. They go outside, they dig through the roof, they lower the man down, and then Jesus says in verse 5 when Jesus saw their faith, so he's talking about the whole group, their faith, their trust, their willingness to get around the obstacles to get to Jesus, he said to the paralytic, notice there's a shift here, he said to the paralytic, it doesn't say he said to them, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven. So, the concern here by the man was his inability to walk.

He was paralyzed. Yet, what Jesus says to him is your sins are forgiven. We had the leper who had a skin disease that was associated with cultic impurity, and here we have a paralyzed man whom Jesus now has made a statement about his sins.

I think this statement is important, going back to our idea that Jesus is very deliberate in his actions when he does something miraculous. He did not need to say, "Your sins are forgiven," to heal this man. He chose to say, "Your sins are forgiven."

So, what relationship does Jesus want to make? Well, of course, there was some thought during Second Temple Judaism that if you were suffering of some sort, it must be the result of sin. There must be something you've done to anger God that has led to you being stricken in a certain way. We see that pop up here and again. So, it's possible that people are understanding Jesus maybe to make that type of connection.

But I think we could probably move beyond that because I don't think it's exactly what he's doing. He doesn't name a particular sin. He doesn't say a specific sin.

He just says, your sin is forgiven. Now, without a doubt, the man's physical state was the result of sin. But understand what I'm saying.

It's not the result of a particular sin of which now judgment is being rendered upon him. It's not the case that the man who is paralyzed did something, and then God said, because of that, I'm now stricken you with paralysis. But rather that all physical ailments of any sort are the result of sin.

When God created, and the world was good, it was without sin. But when sin entered into the world through the transgressions of Adam and Eve in the story of Genesis, when sin entered, so came death and the decaying of the world. And so, in a lot of ways, this paralysis is anybody's sickness, like the cough that I have here today, which is a result of a sin of particular judgment that happened when sin entered the world.

So, I think what Jesus is saying here is that he is about to make an example that not only does he have the power to undo the symptoms of the fall, illnesses, for example, but that even the cause of those symptoms, namely the problem of sin in general, he can remedy the cause of the illness, not just the symptom. So, here Jesus says, your sin, son, your sin is forgiven, which is, I think, a fantastic interplay but a very purposeful one. Now, as you would expect, there are law teachers sitting there, which I think is interesting.

They're in this position. They're in the house. The teachers of the law did not have trouble getting good seats.

They seem to find a way to get into the house. Probably, there was respect for their position, and people gave way. So, they were sitting and listening to his teaching.

Remember, he's been teaching at this point. This is what has been occurring. And they're listening to him, and they hear him say, son, your sins are forgiven.

Naturally, they become very upset about this because Jesus' statement seems to be declaring something that was beyond his prerogative. Not only was he just issuing a statement about the forgiveness of sins, but he was doing so unaccompanied by any sort of atonement or sacrifice that might have been expected. This was something priests could declare that sins had been atoned for because sacrifice had been done in keeping with the law.

But here was Jesus simply saying, your sins are forgiven. And so, they begin to talk among themselves. And who can forgive sins but God alone? He's baffling me.

Why does he talk like he does? This is all in the context of the same town where the people marveled that Jesus taught with authority, unlike the scribes. And here's a statement that Jesus is making that is very much unlike what the scribes would ever do. Then we get this statement that Jesus immediately knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts.

And I think that's a very important bit of information that we're given there. Because the tension in the story is, is Jesus blasphemy? Has Jesus done something that only God can do? That's the question being asked. The Pharisees and the scribes are asking the question, you know, who can forgive sins but God alone? Even the sacrificial system that was in place was in place because God directed that sacrificial system and said that if one followed this system, the day of atonement, etc., then temporary forgiveness of sins would be available to the people.

So again, it was always a God-designed ritual. Well, here we have this tension in the story. Can Jesus do something that only God is supposed to do? Is he truly blaspheming or not? And then Mark tells us that Jesus knows what they're saying in their hearts.

That is something that only God can do. So, as we've just had a statement, your sins are forgiven; before we even see the miracle, Mark has told us that that statement has been effective because Jesus indeed does have the power to do that which only God can do. He has the power to know what someone is saying in their hearts.

And so, he says, why are you thinking these things? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up, take up your mat, and walk? I find that question a bit funny because, to some extent, it's easier to say your sins are forgiven than it is to say, take up your mat and walk. And by that, I mean you don't

necessarily see the reality of saying your sins are forgiven like one would expect to see when you tell one to get up the mat, take up the mat, and walk. But the logic of it essentially is that there's an impossibility associated with both, and Jesus is presenting one as evidence of the other.

That is to say, to a paralytic, take up your mat and walk. Jesus links that moment to his statement of forgiveness of sins. He's linking the two. So what's about to occur to the paralytic is really an evidence, a visual portrayal of an internal change.

He has declared that he wants to link them. And so he says, I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home. And so here is this paralyzed man and immediately restored.

The healing of the paralyzed man is again what we've been seeing in the Gospel of Mark. There isn't a process. He doesn't have a bit of a clumsy start.

His legs, you would assume, would have been fully atrophied, and there would have been very little muscular act. Yet he is able to get up, pick up his mat, and walk home. A full restoration.

And so, it isn't just he can now walk. He can walk at full strength. And that becomes the picture.

The miracle serves the statement, and your sins are forgiven. So, he saw this great act of which the paralyzed man contributed nothing physically to. It was the four men who physically did it.

Yet, in seeing their faith, he takes that moment to present an incredible display of his authority not only to heal but also to forgive sins. Because Jesus has linked the two, what this means is that in the declaration, your sins are forgiven, it is a full, complete declaration.

In the same sense that this man is able to now fully get up and walk. And he does. He gets up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of them all.

And this does what? It amazed everyone. And they praised God, saying, we have never seen anything like this. Very similar to what they said in the synagogue.

Who is like this? That even the evil spirits obey him. So, there's this, there's a difference. You know, those who will want to locate Jesus' ability to do miracles and make them similar to other figures.

Notice the Gospel of Mark is saying the crowd sees a big difference. They've seen nothing like this. And so, as we continue through into chapter two, you know, of

course what we've been seeing is Jesus do these wonderful, miraculous acts, but with some tension involved.

There is a leper now clans go show the religious leaders. The religious leaders wondering if, you know, this seems like blasphemy to forgive sins. And here Jesus, in full display of them sitting around here, says, your sins are forgiven.

And then also announces he knows what's in their hearts. So, we're getting this growing tension in the middle of all this authority. We're getting this growing tension of this relationship that is happening between Jesus and the religious editor, religious leaders.

Something we're going to see here is the call of Levi and the eating with sinners in verses 13 through 17. Once again, Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.

As he walked along, he saw Levi's son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax collector's booth. Follow me. Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law, who were Pharisees, saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? On hearing this, Jesus said to them, it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners.

We likely have two separate stories that have been put together. One is Levi's calling, and the second is what happens at Levi's house. You could probably see why they would be put together, Levi being the same figure in both.

Luke very clearly blends these together. Now, interesting enough, the name of Levi for a disciple only occurs here and in Luke 5:27-32. The reference to the son of Alphaeus suggests Mark does indeed have a very specific person in mind.

When you look at the different lists, this is where things become very interesting. Levi is not mentioned in Luke's list of the 12, but James, the son of Alphaeus is. Matthew does not mention Levi, but he does mention Matthew right before he mentions James, the son of Alphaeus.

It seems that we are perhaps dealing with the same figure. In fact, Matthew 9 presents the story of Levi as the story of the call of Matthew, very similar. So we probably have this same person who went by both Levi and Matthew and had a double name of source, which would not be uncommon back then to have more than one name.

A couple of other interesting things: the first two sets of disciples called by Jesus were two pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, and so thus, it's possible that Levi and James are two sons of Alphaeus. So again, we have two pairs of brothers that are being put together, and then Luke seems to work this way. So, if we have Levi as this figure, also known as Matthew, who is being described here, the call of Levi is very interesting.

It would have presumably happened near the city, depending on whether he was a toll collector sitting on the border between two regions or a tax farmer who lived in the city. Those are different types of options. It's probably here, though, not someone who collected income taxes, is most likely a customs official of some sort, given this language of sitting at the table.

So, here's how this would work. If you wanted to bring your goods into the market, you would have to pay a customs official a toll to be allowed to come to bring them into the city, and these figures would then, these people would, some of their collections, they had a nut they had to pay, they had to get up to the Roman officials who would be involved, and then whatever else they collected was part of their own earnings. They were despised individuals and considered traitors.

The Talmud, for example, lists tax collectors among murderers and thieves in terms of the types of harm they did to people. They made the limit from the extra they charged on top of what they owed. Now, often, one gets this job by bidding for it.

Either you got it by connections that were made or by offering the ability to gain or collect more. And so, if you would get this position by being able to say you could get more money up to the ruling authorities, to the Romans, perhaps here, and so you could see why Levi would be such a despised person. And if this is in Capernaum, it likely meant he was a tax collector in the fishing industry as well.

So, think of this. Here you have Simon and Andrew and James and John, individuals who were involved in fishing. This is a house familiar to Simon.

There might have even been opportunities they would have sought to bring fish into market, and they would have routinely had to engage with figures like Levi, if not Levi himself. This was not a figure who, by his profession, Simon, Andrew, James, and John would have thought this is really good. This is the type of people we need to recruit.

So just keep that in mind as we think through what happens next. But notice Jesus says, follow me. Mark words it the very same as it does with the calls of the other disciples.

Levi doesn't get a distinctly different call. He gets the same call, the same summary, follow me, and the same response. Levi got up and followed him.

So just as Simon and Andrew and James and John heard follow me and left their boats and followed him, Levi heard follow me and got up and followed him. Now, there may have been a process involved, there may have been other conversations, and there may have been other moments. Mark doesn't give us that information, but what Mark, by doing it this way, what Mark wants us to know is that there is nothing substantially different about the calling of Levi or the response of Levi than there was with the calling and the response of the others.

And so then, after this call, we have a banquet. Jesus is having dinner at Levi's house. Many tax collectors and sinners, and it's interesting my translation puts sinners in quotes, were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

I want to talk just a little bit about what we probably have going on here. We have a banquet that's been arranged by Levi, maybe to celebrate what is happening, and Jesus is being accused of banqueting with bad people. They're having a Greco-Roman style meal where they're reclining.

This would have been sort of the dining practices that are being perceived. He's being accused of banqueting with bad people. I want to talk about the bad people here, because it's repeatedly tax collectors and sinners, sinners and tax collectors, tax collectors and sinners.

That's the arrangement. And the question becomes, how are we to make what are we to make of that statement, tax collectors and sinners? Is that simply a way of saying tax collectors and a bunch of other people who sin? Or is something more specific in mind? And I think just the way the language and the stressing of the tax collectors, because it isn't Jesus was eating with sinners, but was eating with tax collectors and sinners. So, I think there are two possible options.

One is there are just so many tax collectors in that room that that category was worth noting. We've already talked about how the idea of a tax collector was considered despicable. So maybe there were so many of them that it's just worth noting.

That's one option. Another option might be, and this is where I tend to go, is that tax, the term tax collectors here, by stressing it, is helping us understand what is meant by the term sinners. Here's what I mean by that.

That a tax collector's vocation was, by definition, considered a sinful vocation. They were exploiting people, robbing people, you know, there was a bit of extortion that

was in view. And if you played out that they were doing this against the Jewish people, you know, for the benefit of Gentile rulers or the benefit of Jewish rulers that were considered immoral and unethical, the idea would be if you called someone a tax collector, you also by definition were calling them a sinner because of their vocation.

And I wonder if that is what is happening here, that this sinners group, which the translation I'm looking at puts in quotes, and I think for a good reason, that this sinners group is comprised of people who, by definition of their vocation would have been considered sinners. So perhaps these would be people who were paid to physically harm other people. Prostitutes would be another example.

We have at this gathering those who it isn't simply tax collectors and gossipers and liars and slanderers, but tax collectors and then list whatever other vocation which made you, by definition in that culture, a sinner. Those are the groups that are being stressed. It's just one of the ways of thinking about it, but it seems to fit here.

And so, we have this situation where Jesus is eating with them, and I think when we talk about dining fellowship, table fellowship, table fellowship is one of the most important concerns in the ancient world. The idea of purity and impurity on dining we're going to see come up time and time again in the Gospel of Mark. But even more so, table fellowship conveyed honor and shame.

Who you ate with was a declaration of your value, of your worth, of your honor, or conversely of your shame, of your lowliness. Think of it in terms of the leper. The leper was unclean, and his state was considered to be contagious until he was in the company of Jesus and Jesus' purity was stronger.

That's what happened in table fellowship. It was very important in the social status of who you ate with because if you ate with people who had lower honor in that culture, your honor yourself was lowered. If you ate with people who were unclean, your purity state would be challenged.

And so, for Jesus to be eating with those who should be shamed by Jesus, who Jesus should be avoided in that culture, and second, you know, from the religious leader's point of view, Jesus, in a sense, was doing socially what is akin to what happened with the leper in terms of purity and impurity. He is someplace he should not be. And so we have this challenge, and this challenge is a challenge that we will get time and time again.

The Pharisees saw him, and they asked his disciples why he ate with tax collectors and sinners. We get this interplay a lot between the Pharisees and Jesus and the disciples, where Jesus will, the Pharisees may ask Jesus why the disciples are doing something that they should not be doing, or they may ask the disciples why Jesus is

doing something he should not be doing. There's this sort of indirect attack. Of course, the implication is always the same: that one party is wrong and potentially influencing the other.

And by asking the disciples, there is this measure of trying to bring to the disciples' attention, look what Jesus is doing, implying surely you do not agree with this. Surely this bothers you. Surely, he is not worthy of being a leader.

Look what he is; he's eating with those with whom he should not. Jesus, hearing this, said to them, it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. This is not an uncommon proverb here, you know, this proverbial saying that Jesus is quoting isn't unknown.

There are different versions of that type of statement throughout the ancient world. But the idea here is that to recover the ill or those in need of treatment, and then it's necessary to go to those who are ill and in need of treatment. The extension being to go to those who are by definition outside of the law, and it is necessary maybe to abrogate or transcend certain Old Testament provisions, or if you will, oral traditions around them.

It's necessary to do what might not be considered socially acceptable because that is where the unacceptable are. So, Jesus is claiming that he's come for the sinners, the lost, the immoral people. That he is where, just as a doctor is to be among the sick, he is as well.

And there might even be a tongue-in-cheek that I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners. There might even be a bit of irony there because the Pharisees, the entire hint of their criticism is they think they're righteous, and these sinners are not, and Jesus is saying he is here for the sinners, not the righteous. There may be a hint of rejection or subtle irony as well.

So far, this is what we're seeing move through chapter two. We'll continue working through chapter two at our next time. Thank you.

This was not a figure who by his profession, Simon, Andrew, James, and John would have thought this is really good. This is the type of people we need to recruit. So just keep that in mind as we think through what happens next.

But notice Jesus says, follow me. Mark words it the very same as it does with the calls of the other disciples. Levi doesn't get a distinctly different call.

He gets the same call, the same summary, follow me, and the same response. Levi got up and followed him. So just as Simon and Andrew and James and John heard

follow me and left their boats and followed him, Levi heard follow me and got up and followed him.

Now, there may have been a process involved. There may have been other conversation. There may have been other moments.

Mark doesn't give us that information. But what Mark, by doing it this way, Mark wants us to know that there is nothing substantially different about the calling of Levi or the response of Levi than there was with the calling and the response of the others. So then, after this call, we have a banquet.

Jesus is having dinner at Levi's house. Many tax collectors and sinners, and it's interesting my translation puts sinners in quotes, were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. I want to talk just a little bit about what we probably have going on here.

We have a banquet that's been arranged by Levi, maybe to celebrate what is happening. And Jesus is being accused of banqueting with bad people. They're having a Greco-Roman style meal where they're reclining.

This would have been sort of the dining practices that are being perceived. He's being accused of banqueting with bad people. I want to talk about the bad people here, because it's repeatedly tax collectors and sinners, sinners and tax collectors, tax collectors and sinners.

That's the arrangement. And the question becomes, how are we to make what are we to make of that statement, tax collectors and sinners? Is that simply a way of saying tax collectors and a bunch of other people who sin? Or is something more specific in mind? And I think just the way the language and the stressing of the tax collectors, because it isn't Jesus was eating with sinners, but was eating with tax collectors and sinners. So, I think there are two possible options.

One is there are just so many tax collectors in that room that that category was worth noting. We've already talked about how the idea of a tax collector was considered despicable. So maybe there were so many of them that it's just worth noting.

That's one option. Another option might be, and this is where I tend to go, is that the term tax collectors here, by stressing it, is helping us understand what is meant by the term sinners. Here's what I mean by that.

That a tax collector's vocation was, by definition, considered a sinful vocation. They were exploiting people, robbing people. There was a bit of extortion that was in view.

And if you played out that they were doing this against the Jewish people for the benefit of Gentile rulers or the benefit of Jewish rulers that were considered immoral and unethical, the idea would be if you called someone a tax collector, you also, by definition, were calling them a sinner because of their vocation. And I wonder if that is what is happening here, that this sinners group, which the translation I'm looking at puts in quotes, and I think for a good reason, that this sinners group is comprised of people who, by definition of their vocation, would have been considered sinners. So perhaps these would be people who were paid to physically harm other people.

Prostitutes would be another example that we have at this gathering. Those who, it isn't simply tax collectors and gossipers and liars and slanderers, but tax collectors and then list whatever other vocation which made you by definition in that culture a sinner. Those are the groups that are being stressed.

It's just one of the ways of thinking about it, but it seems to fit here. And so, we have this situation where Jesus is eating with them. And I think when we talk about dining fellowship, table fellowship, table fellowship is one of the most important concerns in the ancient world.

The idea of purity and impurity in dining we're going to see come up time and time again in the table fellowship conveyed honor and shame. Who you ate with was a declaration of your value, of your worth, of your honor, or conversely of your shame, of your lowliness. Think of it in terms of the leper.

The leper was unclean, and his state was considered to be contagious until he was in the company of Jesus and Jesus' purity was stronger. That's what happened in table fellowship. It was very important in a social status of who you ate with because if you ate with people who had lower honor in that culture, your honor yourself was lowered.

If you ate with people who were unclean, your purity state would be challenged. And so, for Jesus to be eating with those who should be shamed by Jesus, who Jesus should be avoided in that culture from the religious leader's point of view, Jesus, in a sense, was doing socially what is akin to what with the leper in terms of purity and impurity. He is someplace he should not be.

And so, we have this challenge, and this challenge is one that we will get time and time again. The Pharisees saw him and they asked his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? We get this interplay a lot between the Pharisees and Jesus and the disciples where the Pharisees may ask Jesus but why the disciples are doing something that they should not be doing or they ask the disciples why Jesus is doing something he should not be doing. There's this sort of indirect attack.

Of course, the implication is always the same that one party is in the wrong and potentially influencing the other. And by asking the disciples, there is this measure of trying to bring to the disciples' attention, look what Jesus is doing, implying surely you do not agree with this. Surely this bothers you.

Surely, he is not worthy of being a leader. Look what he is. He is eating with those with whom he should not.

Jesus, hearing this, said to them that it is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. This is not an uncommon proverb here. This proverbial saying that Jesus is quoting isn't unknown.

There are different versions of that type of statement throughout the ancient world. But the idea here is that to recover the ill or those in need of treatment, and then it's necessary to go to those who are ill and in need of treatment. The extension being to go to those who are by definition outside of the law.

And it is necessary maybe to abrogate or transcend certain Old Testament provisions or, if you will, oral traditions around them. It's necessary to do what might not be considered socially acceptable because that is where the unacceptable are. And so Jesus is claiming that he's come for the sinners, the lost, the immoral people.

That he is where, just as a doctor is to be among the sick, he is as well, and there might even be a tongue-in-cheek of I have not come to call the righteous but the sinners. There might even be a bit of irony there because the Pharisees, the entire hint of their criticism is they think they're righteous and these sinners are not.

Jesus is saying he is here for the sinners, not the righteous. There may be a hint of rejection or subtle irony as well. This is what we're seeing move through chapter two.

We'll continue working through chapter two at our next time. Thank you.

This is Dr. Mark Jennings in his teaching on the Gospel of Mark. This is session 4, Mark 1:40-2:17: The Public Ministry Continues.