

Introduction

1. Mark began his gospel with a declaration that Jesus is the Christ (e.g. Messiah), the Son of God
2. In his prologue, he points to the coming of John the Baptist as evidence of Jesus's as Messiah, and God's declaration at Jesus's baptism as evidence that Jesus is the son of God
3. Last week he revealed to us how Jesus came preaching the arrival of the Gospel of God, and a new era of God's redemptive plan for mankind
4. Today, Mark is going to introduce us to another aspect of Jesus's ministry and something He faced right up until His death—the opposition He faced from Israel's leadership

A. They opposed Jesus's over His authority to forgive sins (2:1-12)

1. Jesus returns home to Capernaum and continues teaching (READ 1-2):
 - a. Mark tells us that so many came to hear Him teach that there was no more room in the house, and not even any **"near the door"**:
 - 1) "at home" suggests they were gathered in a house, possibly where Jesus lived
 - 2) Luke says the crowd included Pharisees and scribes from **"every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem"** (Luke 5:17)
 - b. And, as was His practice, He was **"preaching the Word to them"** (2)
2. About this time, four men came carrying a man who was paralyzed and couldn't walk (READ 3-5a):
 - a. Because of the crowds they couldn't get into the house or anywhere close to Jesus
 - b. So, they carried him up to the roof, cut a hole and dropped him down into the room (4!)
 - 1) Excavations in Capernaum have shown that most houses were one story structures with a flat roof
 - 2) The roof was normally used for working and/or sleeping and accessed by an outside staircase on the side of the house
 - 3) The roof was also constructed of wooden beams or branches, thatched with rush and coated with mud—which is why Mark's text says they had to **"dig an opening"**
 - 4) It would have been no simple feat to do what they did which may be one reason why Jesus referred to what they did as act of **"faith"** (5a)
3. When Jesus forgives the man's sins He immediately faces opposition from the scribes (READ 5b-7):
 - a. After seeing the men's faith, Jesus does something peculiar—instead of immediately healing him, He declares that the man's sins are forgiven (5b): **"And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"**
 - b. Some of the Scribes (and Pharisees according to Luke) were immediately disturbed because Jesus had just done something only God can do (6): **"But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 'Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?'"**
 - 1) Notice that they didn't say anything out loud or directly to Jesus—they were **"reasoning in their hearts"** (e.g. just thinking it) and Jesus read their minds (READ v. 8)

- 2) They were right that only God can forgive our sins, and therefore they would have been right that Jesus was a blasphemer—had it not been for the fact that He was God
4. And that’s where we find the point of this particular healing: it would serve to demonstrate that Jesus was not a blasphemer and has the authority to forgive sins (READ 8-12):
 - a. Jesus confronts the Scribes by posing a question (8-9): **“Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’?””**
 - 1) Jesus answers the Scribe objections with a rhetorical question: **“Which is easier to say to a man who cannot walk...‘you sins are forgiven’...or...‘get up and walk?’”**
 - 2) The obvious answer for most normal men would be the former because you can’t tell a paralyzed man to get up and walk because he can’t walk!
 - 3) However, what proof would there be that such a man could forgive sins? Essentially none, and the scribes claims of blasphemy would be true
 - b. So, Jesus didn’t just claim to forgive the man’s sins—He proved He had the authority to do so by healing the man (READ 10-12): **“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins ”-- He said to the paralytic, 11 “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” 12 And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.””**

NOTE: Jesus has the authority to forgive sins because He is the “Son of Man” which is a designation of divinity based on Daniel 7; we will discuss this at a later date

B. They opposed Jesus over His association with sinners (2:13-17)

1. The second instance of opposition Mark shares with us begins in vs. 13-17 (READ)
2. Once again, we find Jesus out teaching the crowds where he comes across Levi, a tax collector, and invites him to follow Him (READ 13-14)
3. A short time later, Jesus and His disciples are found dining at Matthew’s house with a bunch of Matthew’s co-workers and other less-than-reputable characters (15): **“And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.”**
 - a. Mark says that in attendance were **“many tax collectors and sinners”** and Luke describes it as a **“big reception”** with **“a great crowd of tax gathers and others”** (Luke 5:29)
 - b. Tax collectors were agents of Rome and the system of tax collection was often abused with tax collectors collecting more than what was due and pocketing the rest
 - c. They were considered worthless and treated as outcasts
 - d. However, according to Mark, many of these tax collectors and sinners were following Jesus and He was willing to associate with them (15b)
4. The Pharisees had a problem with this and it put them at odds with Jesus (16): **“When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, “Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?”**
 - a. The Pharisees would never associate with such riff-raff
 - b. They were arrogant, judgmental, prideful, legalistic Law-Keepers (READ Luke 18:10-14)

- c. But Jesus specifically came to call sinners (17): **“And hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”**

C. They opposed Jesus over their religious traditions (2:18-22)

1. Mark shares a third instance of opposition us next: READ 2:18-22
2. The Old Testament only commanded fasting on one day a year--the Day of Atonement, which was designated as a day for cleansing for sin (Exodus 20:10)
3. But the Pharisees fasted—and encouraged fasting--twice a week, Mondays and Thursdays (Lane, p. 19)
4. So, when John’s disciples and the Pharisees confronted Jesus and His disciples over their lack of fasting, it wasn’t a Biblical issue but rather one of man-made traditions—though in the mind of these men there was no distinction
5. Jesus responds with three illustrations revealing the folly of clinging to old man-made religious traditions in light of the new era ushered in by Christ:
 - a) The illustration of the bridegroom reveals that one doesn’t fast when he should be celebrating (19-20): **“And Jesus said to them, “While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.”**
 - 1) Since weddings were a time of feasting and celebration, it would be inappropriate for attendants to fast when the bridesgroom is with them
 - 2) Likewise, it would be inappropriate for Jesus’s disciples to fast when He, the ultimate Bridegroom, is with them
 - b) The second illustrations, that of worn out garments and old wineskins, reveals that you can’t mix old and new (21-22):
 - 1) Using a new piece of cloth to patch an old garment would result in making a worse tear when the new patch starts to shrink
 - 2) Pouring new wine into old wineskins would lead to bursting the skins and losing the wine
 - 3) In this case, the old represents the man-made religious traditions and the new represents the new era and way ushered in by the coming of Messiah

D. They opposed Jesus over the real purpose for the Sabbath (2:23-3:6)

1. The final two events (#4 and #5) detailed by Mark in today’s passage have to do with conflict over the Sabbath
2. The fourth confrontation occurs when Jesus’s disciples are seen picking and eating grain on the Sabbath (READ 22-28):
 - a. The OT prohibited working on the Sabbath, including the reaping of grain
 - 1) However, the Law didn’t spell out each and every permitted or forbidden activity that constituted work
 - 2) So the Jews came up with lists of activities as part of their oral law (hakalah) as a practical means to avoid braking the OT Law

- 3) However, over time this oral law began to carry the same weight as the OT law which is what we have here
 - 4) So, when the Pharisees saw Jesus's disciples picking and eating grain, they accused them of working and thus breaking the Law (24): **"The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"**
- b. Jesus, however, gives a two-fold defense of His disciples' actions:
- 1) The Sabbath was made for man, not the other way around (25-27):
 - a) He uses David's violation of the Law as an example, when the priest permitted David and his starving men to eat bread reserved only for priests
 - b) Through this example, Jesus demonstrated that David's actions did not violate the intent of the Law, but rather permitted under the circumstances and therefore not judged by God
 - c) By drawing an association between David's actions and the fact that God did not condemn him, and that of Jesus's own disciples, Jesus was making the declaration that the actions of His disciples were permissible as well
 - d) The Pharisees had failed to interpret the intent of the Law in their application of it
 - 2) The second part of Jesus's defense was that the "Son of Man" (a claim of deity) He was Lord of the Sabbath and permitted it (28)
3. The fifth confrontation also occurs on the Sabbath, but this time when Jesus heals a man with a withered hand (3:1-6)
- a. This time, the religious leaders were watching Jesus specifically to see if He would heal on the Sabbath so they could accuse Him of breaking the Law (1-2): **"He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. 2 They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him."**
 - b. After calling the man to Himself, Jesus directly confronts the Pharisees (3-4): As was his practice, He does so by posing a question (3-4): **"He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward. And He said to them, Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?"**
 - 1) According to Matthew, the Pharisees had actually questioned Jesus first by asking whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath (Mathew 12)
 - 2) Jesus responded to that initial question by asking them basically this—if a sheep falls into a pit on the Sabbath what man wouldn't rescue it? And if you law permits doing this good on the Sabbath, does it not permit doing good to a man who is more important than a sheep?
 - 3) As expected, the Pharisees refuse to answer (5)
 - c. When Jesus finally heals the man, it resulted in anger on both side: Jesus and the Pharisees (5-6):
 - 1) Jesus was rightfully angered over the Pharisees **"hardness of hearts"**
 - 2) The Pharisees were wrongly angered over Jesus perceived violation of the Law and **"went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him."** (6)