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Mark Exposition

Impact of our studies

I want us to be open to where God leads us in these sessions. So it's possible we may have to abandon the schedule - or decide that we will respond in some way.

How will you allow God to make a difference in your life as you discover Jesus afresh?

What individual thing is God calling you to do?

How will we report back what we have found to others? e.g. the rest of the church?

There are three words mentioned for the first time in these verses. Can anyone get them before we start?

Big word for today - it will just be useful - pericope.

At its simplest, a pericope is a division or section of text. It comes from the Greek word *perikopē*. It is a compound word from the Greek words *peri* (around) and *kopē* (cutting). The Greek essentially means to cut around. From this we get the idea of a pericope being a "section" or portion of something larger.

While generally used in literature, this terminology is almost exclusively relegated to the realm of biblical studies. So, to give it a more biblical definition, a pericope is a portion of Scripture. According to pericope.net, they referred to larger paragraphs that were read in the church. Over time it has become a way for Bible scholars and students to break up the text into manageable portions for study.

Note that with this pericope we hit a complex of 'conflict-stories' where Jesus starts getting opposition to his ministry - there are 5 of these 'conflicts' in quick succession, terminating in the sinister verse in

Mark 3:6 "Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him."

Mark 2:1-2 "Now after some days, when he returned to Capernaum, the news spread that he was at home. So many gathered that there was no longer any room, not even by the door, and he preached the word to them."

Mark 2:3-4 "Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying."

A typical peasant's house in first-century Palestine was usually small, one-room with a flat roof. Roofs were often used for storage, drying fruit, and for sleeping on.

Think of Peter in

Acts 10:9 "The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour."

You would get up to the roof by an outside stairway or ladder built against an outside wall of the house.

The roof itself was usually made of wooden beams with thatched and compacted earth in order to shed rain. So they would have 'dug' through the earth, showering those in the house with dirt.

Mark 1:32 "At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed."

Mark 2:5 "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven.'"

The Dictionary of Bible Themes defines faith like this: "A constant outlook of trust towards God, whereby human beings abandon all reliance on their own efforts and put their full confidence in him, his word and his promises."

They weren't taking no for an answer. It's reminiscent of Jacob wrestling with God at the brook Jabbok:

Genesis 32:26 "And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

But it's a reminder that WE can bring our friends to Jesus, and they may not seem to be 'alive' to the possibility of faith at first, but we can give them that gift.

Jas 2:26 "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

These men show their faith by their actions. Faith is primarily something you do. It's a step you take. It's only as we step out in obedience, that God meets us.

What would you have expected Jesus to say to the man? Surely, 'be healed' like he said to the leper. But in this miracle story, sin and sickness are linked together. In the kingdom, healing and forgiveness go hand in hand. This is an eschatological moment.

There are examples in Jesus' ministry of those whose sickness has been caused by sin:

John 5:14 "Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.'"

This is the man at the pool of Bethesda. It's clear that in the early church sin and sickness were also linked, for example:

Jas 5:15 "And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

But we could put against that from the same gospel the man born blind, about whom Jesus says:

John 9:2-3 "And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."

There is also this interesting passage about calamity and disaster, which can happen to any of us:

Luke 13:1-5 "There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.""

Cranfield speaks of an 'organic connection' between disease and sin:

"Because there is this organic connection between sin and disease and Jesus makes war on both, the healing of disease is a sign and token of the forgiveness of sins. Jesus' healing miracles are sacraments of forgiveness."

Spurgeon says on this miracle: you may have many troubles you want to bring to Jesus, but "there is no venom as poisonous as that of sin...If this evil be removed, then every ill has gone." The man hasn't even confessed his sin, and yet has been completely forgiven.

Keith Warrington says: "The man's primary need appears to be for physical healing, but Jesus meets his actual primary need, forgiveness for sin, and heals him as well." The Miracles in the Gospels.

| Psalm 103:3 (NLT)

| He forgives all my sins

| and heals all my diseases.

Mark 2:6-7 "Now some of the experts in the law were sitting there, turning these things over in their minds: "Why does this man speak this way? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?""

The scribes are taking it that Jesus is going beyond any Old Testament prophet - in pronouncing he is forgiven, he is doing something only God is authorised to do. A priest might say this, authorised by Yahweh, on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Yet in this first conflict account, they don't speak aloud. The hostility to Jesus builds

up gradually. The penalty for blasphemy is stoning. Ultimately, this sort of charge is what they convict Jesus on in Mark 14:61-64.

I love the way Morna Hooker puts it in commenting on how the scribes might perceive Jesus' actions. He's claiming to forgive the paralytic. At least with the leper at the end of chapter 1 he asks the leper to be ritually cleansed according to the law. But here:

"no conditions are made, no penalty demanded, and forgiveness is a matter of sheer grace. Such an attitude might well lead to objections from the scribes, who would consider this to be treating sin in an appallingly light way." Hooker, Black NT commentary

Luke informs this about his listeners:

Luke 5:17 "Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them."

In Mark 1 we just had the local scribes in the synagogue, but in this house we now have some 'big cheeses' listening in. They're holding their counsel (at least so they think) but they are sceptical.

Mark 2:8-11 "Now immediately, when Jesus realized in his spirit that they were contemplating such thoughts, he said to them, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up, take your stretcher, and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"—he said to the paralytic—"I tell you, stand up, take your stretcher, and go home.""

Mark is showing that Jesus is actually divine as he knows what they're thinking. The NIV puts this verse very well:

| Mark 2:8 (NIV)

| Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?"

There is something very Hebrew about the fact that they are 'thinking' in their hearts - I can't imagine Paul saying something like this. He didn't have to back up and figure out what they were thinking - he knew instantly. The word for 'reasoning' includes our word 'dialogue' - they are holding an inner dialogue with themselves, asking and answering questions.

In Matthew's account Jesus is much plainer -

Matt 9:4 "But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"

Notice that in v.10 Jesus refers to himself as the 'Son of Man'. This is the first mention of 'Son of Man' in the gospel. It's also the first time the phrase is used in

Luke (Luke 5:24). It's Jesus' favourite way of referring to Himself, used 14 times in the gospel, but most of them in the second half, AFTER Peter has identified him as the Christ.

It has not become a common way that Christians refer to Jesus, and it seems that sometimes in Mark Jesus spoke of himself like this to 'veil' his destiny for a while. But look at this interesting moment that makes it clear Jesus is referring to himself (sometimes it's so important to compare the gospels together):

| John 9:35–37 (NIV)

| Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

| "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

This phrase 'son of man' suggests that Jesus has God's authority, but in other places in Mark it also emphasizes the suffering that he must go through. The little phrase 'authority on earth' is quite important.

Warrington says this: "Jesus is the initiator of the kingdom of God with the authority to forgive sins on earth."

We know the Jews were waiting for the Messiah, the 'Christ', but in a way 'Son of Man' is a greater title, in that he carries God's authority. Hooker says "there is nothing in Jewish literature to suggest that any man—not even a messiah—would have the authority to forgive sins".

But I will just show you this verse, that ultimately Son of Man becomes a glorious title, showing God astonishingly remains human:

Acts 7:56 "and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!""

Mark 2:12 "And immediately the man stood up, took his stretcher, and went out in front of them all. They were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!""

There is a real test of the man's faith here, if not before. And it's another excellent use of 'immediately' showing that the man's healing is instantaneous and complete. I enjoyed the New Living Translation's rendition here:

Mark 2:12 NLT

And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!"

Whether that accurately reflects what he did - the 'Chosen' show him getting up rather more slowly (but it's still incredible). We have three different groups here: The scribes are silenced, at this stage. Jesus has the upper hand here. The onlookers glorify God - they recognise the 'finger of God' in what Jesus has done.

Where did Jesus tell the man to go? Notice what Spurgeon says about this:

“For him to go home to his house, was a clearer proof of him being cured than for him to remain with Christ, for it might be supposed that, while he was with the Saviour, some strange influence emanating from the great Physician kept him in a state of excitement and up to the mark.” Spurgeon, *The physician and his patient. Sermons on the Miracles.*

The crowd say they haven't seen anything like this, and in Matthew it says:

Matt 9:8 “Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.”

What is new? In both gospels they have already seen Jesus' miraculous power. What is it they are marvelling about at this point? It must be the forgiveness of sins. Warrington says that Jesus gives the man the 'sensational news that his sins are forgiven'. In Matthew, he says: 'Take heart', before he tells him.

Mark 2:13-14 “Jesus went out again by the sea. The whole crowd came to him, and he taught them. As he went along, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth. “Follow me,” he said to him. And he got up and followed him.”

A word about telonai, or tax collectors (note Zaccheus is recorded as a 'chief tax collector' so especially wealthy):

| The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary

| local officials responsible for the collection of taxes and tolls were especially despised in the Greco-Roman world. In the Talmud they are designated as “robbers”; in the gospel of Luke they are considered greedy; and elsewhere in the gospels they are usually linked with sinners (hamartōloi), prostitutes, and gentiles; perhaps, then, they were considered by pious Jews as ritually unclean.

It's likely that Levi is Matthew - Mark doesn't list Levi among the disciples when he selects them in Mark 3, and Matthew assumes that this tax collector IS Matthew.

Witherington notes that “If Levi was a tax collector in Capernaum, then fish were indeed one of the commodities regularly taxed in the region. In that case, he probably was already well known and despised by Simon and Andrew, Jacob and John.”

Mark 2:15-16 “As Jesus was having a meal in Levi's home, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the experts in the law and the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?””

Here we have two of our first mentions: disciples and Pharisees. This is the first vocal challenge to Jesus from the authorities. They see their chance here.

| The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (B. Levi's Genes (2:13–17))

What is nonetheless striking is that Jesus appears to not require repentance in advance of having table fellowship with sinners and tax collectors. This comports with various Gospel traditions' suggestions that a variety of people from the fringes of society were in the wider circle of Jesus' followers—a tax collector, a Zealot, some fishermen, some women, some sinners.

This is reinforced by E.P. Sanders, who says that it seems clear the kingdom would include sinners. What would they have to do to be accepted into the kingdom? Simply accept Jesus. It's not that the sinners and tax collectors are 'already' in the kingdom in this verse, there is a distinction with 'disciples' but they are on the journey to becoming followers.

When the word 'disciples' appears, it usually refers to the twelve, at least from Mk 3:13 or Matt 10:1 onwards, when the 12 are called. But at times when the word is used, it refers to a wider group, of course. Jesus' purpose in preaching and teaching is to draw out closer followers from the crowds. We'll look at the actual names when we get to Mark 3.

The Pharisees are mentioned here for the first time in Mark. So this 'conflict story' is ramped up here, as they are challenging the disciples, probably with the intention of disenchanting them with Jesus.

The Lexham Bible Dictionary gives this brief description of the Pharisees:

PHARISEES (Φαρισαῖος, *Pharisaios*). Members of a Jewish party that exercised strict piety according to Mosaic law. The Pharisees were a sect within early Judaism, becoming active around 150 bc and enduring as a distinct party until being subsumed into the Rabbinic movement around AD 135.

It's important to say that Pharisees believed the 'oral tradition' from rabbis interpreting the Bible was as important as the Bible itself. But the oral tradition was not preserved until the Talmud was written down - the Babylonian Talmud wasn't preserved until 500 or 600AD, so quite a long time after Jesus.

Acts 15:5 "But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.""

Yes, they were causing trouble, but even the legalistic amongst us can receive God's salvation!

However, this verse points out that Jesus is here for the last, the least and the lost - not those who parade their religiosity for others to see (where Pharisees were inclined to do this on occasion!).

Mark 2:17 "When Jesus heard this he said to them, "Those who are healthy don't need a physician, but those who are sick do. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.""

Luke 15:1-3 "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners

and eats with them." So He spoke this parable to them, saying:"

Jesus then tells the parable of the lost sheep, and how the shepherd leaves the 99 to look for the one, and he concludes:

Luke 15:7 "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."

He's not being ironic about the righteous here:

Mark 2:17 "When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.""

He recognises that the 'righteous' to an extent, are blind to their predicament, but he focuses on his mission to sinners. Jesus is the friend of sinners. Isn't this good news?

At the start of the daily 49-Week Challenge some of us are following, it poses these questions:

- Do you notice a promise to trust?
- A command to obey?
- A truth to embrace?
- A warning to heed?
- An encouragement to rest in?
- What do you learn about God, about yourself, or about the world?
- Is there one verse or thought that stands out to you today? Share it with us now.