

Jesus touched and healed Simon's mother-in-law and now shows the same care and compassion for a leper. Just as then, with Jesus' touch the leprosy "leaves".

MARK 1:40 – 2:17

Jesus cleans a leper

Jesus seeks to teach but people seek Him as a healer. As Jesus prayed to the Father, people come to pray beg Jesus.

1:40 And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling *said* to him, "If you will, *you can make me clean.*" ⁴¹ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand

Not "if you can" - the leper knows Jesus' authority and approaches with respect (kneeling) Lit. "being angered" (see Judges 10:16) - most likely Jesus is angered by the consequences of a fallen world and the work of the evil one

and touched him and *said* to him, "I will; be clean." ⁴² And immediately the

leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³ And Jesus sternly *charged* him

and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ and *said* to him, "See that you *say* nothing to

anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what

Moses commanded, for a proof to them." ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to *talk*

freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly

enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him

from every quarter. ^{2:1} And when he returned to Capernaum after some days

it was reported that he was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so

that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was *preaching* the

word to them. ³ And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four

men. ⁴ And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they

removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let

down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵ And when Jesus saw their faith,

he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

And the scribes and the Pharisees began to say, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you doubt?"

And he said to the paralytic, "Stand up, take your bed, and go home." And he stood up and went home.

And the crowd glorified God.

And Jesus went home.

And the crowd glorified God.

And Jesus went home.

And the crowd glorified God.

And Jesus went home.

The man wants to be clean, and Jesus instructs him how to become clean (not just healed) so that he will be fully restored!!

Unlike the demons who obeyed Jesus' command to be silent, the leper does not. Ironically, the forces of darkness obey, while the one healed by Christ disregards His word.

Jesus did the unthinkable of making a leper clean. He goes even farther and cleans the sins.

This is the first direct mention of faith. From this passage we can observe that faith is something that is visible - through persistent, bold actions that demonstrate our complete trust and need for Jesus. This is how Jesus called people to respond to his message of the kingdom!

The faith of others can have effect on us.

Jesus came to preach the kingdom, yet the crowds, fixated on healing, consistently interrupt His mission. Rather than just restoring bodies, He seeks to restore souls. This moment turns a physical miracle into a deeper lesson about His authority to forgive and call sinners.

he **said** to the paralytic, "**Son**, your sins are **forgiven**." ⁶ Now some of the

← Mark 1:4

scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this man

← Mark 1:22

speak like that? He is **blaspheming**! Who can **forgive** sins but **God** alone?" ⁸

Mark 14:61 - 64 --> Blasphemy - this first charge
- was the accusation that led to his death!

(Ex 34:6-7, Is. 43:25, 44:22-24, Daniel 9:9)

And immediately **Jesus**, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned it

in themselves, **said** to them, "Why do you question these things in your

hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to **say** to the paralytic, 'Your sins are **forgiven**,' or to

say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the

(Deut. 18:22
Ex. 9:14)

Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he **said** to the paralytic—

(Daniel 7:13-14)

← Mark 1:22, 27

¹¹ "I **say** to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹² And he rose and

immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they

(Is. 33:23-24, 35:5-10)

were all amazed and glorified God, **saying**, "We never saw anything like this!"

← Mark 1:27

¹³ He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him,

and he was **teaching** them. ¹⁴ And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of

Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he **said** to him, "Follow me." And he

rose and followed him. ¹⁵ And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax

collectors and **sinners** were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there

were many who followed him. ¹⁶ And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they

saw that he was eating with **sinners** and tax collectors, **said** to his disciples,

← Mark 1:6

Whereas, it was notable what
John the Baptist ate, it was
notable who Jesus ate with.

In the synagogue, the people questioned one another about Jesus' authoritative teaching, which was unlike that of the scribes. Here, the scribes question Jesus in their hearts—this time, regarding His authority to forgive sins.

Who can forgive sins?
The one who can read hearts and raise the paralytics—the Son of Man!

Jesus demonstrates a new authority in this section—he has authority to forgive sins. If God alone can do this, then what does this say about Jesus!

Jesus not only can forgive sinners, he has come to call sinners to be with Him.

Connections with previous passage:

- * Teaching the crowds
- * Jesus sees and speaks, leading to changed lives
- * Sinner – forgiving and calling
- * mention of son
- * laying on mat or in the house
- * rising to a new life

Similarities with calling of fishermen:

- * passing by the sea and saw
- * fishermen and tax collector at work – and end up leaving it
- * "son of"
- * Follow me
- * They followed at once (they say nothing)
- * Afterwards Jesus goes to their home

Jesus told the leper to go as a testimony to priests. Now he tells the paralytic to go as a testimony to scribes that he can forgive!

Jesus calls a tax collector

First time "disciple" mentioned. It will be used 45 times in Mark.

Progression: from questioning in their hearts to asking the disciples. But they still don't ask Jesus.

“Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”¹⁷ And when Jesus heard

it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but

Lit. those who are strong / powerful

those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners.”

← Mark 1:38

(Is. 1:18, 55:7)

This is the second instance where Jesus defines why he has come.

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NOTES:

1:40 – 45

Leprosy in biblical times was a collective term used to describe a range of skin conditions rather than a single disease. These could include various dermatoses, psoriasis, burns, suspicious baldness, and what was sometimes called “white leprosy.” The concern surrounding leprosy in the Old Testament was not primarily medical but ritual. According to the Law, those diagnosed with leprosy were required to live in strict isolation in order to prevent ritual contamination rather than the spread of disease. Leviticus 13–14 outlines the diagnostic process, the leper’s required behavior, and the procedures for reintegration should healing occur. Lepers were instructed to wear torn clothes, leave their hair unkempt, and cry out “Unclean! Unclean!” to warn others of their presence. They were excluded from cities and barred from the temple, effectively cut off from worship and community life. Touching a leper rendered a person ritually unclean, comparable to contact with a corpse. As a result, lepers were widely regarded as social outcasts and were often viewed as living under divine judgment. Biblical accounts such as Miriam’s leprosy (Numbers 12) and Naaman’s healing (2 Kings 5) reinforced the belief that cleansing a leper required a direct and extraordinary act of God. Because such healings were exceedingly rare, lepers were sometimes described as “the living dead.” In the exceptional case of healing, the Law provided a carefully prescribed process involving priestly verification and sacrificial rites in the temple, underscoring both the seriousness of the condition and the significance of restoration.

Ritual cleanliness was a foundational aspect of Israel’s religious and communal life. The Law instructed Israel how to live as a people with God dwelling in their midst, and maintaining ritual purity was essential for participation in worship and community life. Only those who were ritually clean could enter the temple and take part in Israel’s corporate worship. Priests were charged with teaching the people how to distinguish between clean and unclean, as detailed especially in Leviticus 11–16. Uncleanness could result from a variety of causes, including certain illnesses, bodily discharges, contact with corpses, or contact with animals associated with death. At its core, impurity symbolized the presence of death, which stood in opposition to God’s holiness and the life He gives. The Law therefore established boundaries to prevent the mixing of holiness and impurity, life and death. While those who became unclean were temporarily excluded from worship and social participation, most forms of impurity could be addressed through prescribed acts such as washing or sacrifice, allowing individuals to be restored to ritual cleanliness and full participation in community life.

2:1 – 12

For background on **Capernaum**, see the notes on Mark 1:21–28. Archaeological evidence indicates that even the largest homes in Capernaum could accommodate only a limited number of people, perhaps up to fifty standing closely together. Homes typically featured flat roofs accessed by external staircases. These roofs were sturdy enough for regular use and often served practical purposes such

as drying produce, storage, or resting in the evening. Roof construction usually involved wooden beams covered with branches, reeds, and layers of compacted dried mud. While firm enough for daily activity, this construction made it possible to dig through the roof without causing the structure to collapse entirely.

Mark uses an ordinary term for a poor man's *mat*. Such mats or pallets were common among the lower classes and typically consisted of a cloth sack filled with straw or similar material. They were lightweight and portable, allowing them to be carried easily, while still providing minimal padding for sleeping or resting.

For background on *sin and forgiveness*, see the notes on Mark 1:4–8. In Jewish belief, sins were atoned for through sacrifices offered at the temple, as forgiveness ultimately belonged to God alone. Priests could pronounce forgiveness, but only on the basis of repentance, restitution where necessary, and the prescribed sacrificial rites. Within the prophetic tradition, however, the coming kingdom of God was associated with a deeper and more comprehensive forgiveness of sins, accompanied by healing and restoration (see Isaiah 33:23–24; Jeremiah 31:34).

Blasphemy in Jewish tradition involved dishonoring or reproaching God's name rather than honoring it. According to the Law, blasphemy could include misusing the divine name or leading others to follow false gods. Because Israel confessed that the Lord alone is God (Deuteronomy 6:4), certain actions were understood to belong exclusively to Him. One such prerogative was the authority to forgive sins. To claim such authority was therefore considered blasphemous, and the Law prescribed death as the penalty for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:10–23).

For background on the *scribes*, see the notes on Mark 1:21–28. These trained experts in the Law played a central role in interpreting and applying Scripture and were widely regarded as guardians of Jewish religious tradition and practice.

The phrase “**Son of Man**” in Hebrew and Aramaic could function as a general expression meaning “a human being” or “a son of Adam.” In Daniel 7, however, the term takes on a distinctive and exalted meaning. There, the Son of Man is portrayed as a heavenly figure who defeats the oppressive kingdoms of the world, judges the beastly powers, and is enthroned in God's presence, receiving an eternal kingdom. This figure represents God's intended rule for humanity and is associated with authority, glory, heavenly exaltation, and judgment.

Miracles were commonly understood in Jewish thought as signs confirming that a teacher or prophet was truly sent by God. Ancient historians such as Josephus note that various individuals claimed to be the Messiah, but many were discredited by their inability to perform signs. According to Deuteronomy 18:22, a true prophet could be recognized when his words were confirmed by events. As a result, miraculous acts played an important role in discerning genuine divine authority.

2:13 – 17

Tax collectors were among the most despised figures in Jewish society. They worked on behalf of the occupying Roman administration, collecting taxes from their fellow Jews while being permitted to retain a portion for themselves. Because tax collectors were responsible for delivering a fixed amount to the authorities, any shortfall came from their own resources, creating strong incentives to overcharge and extract additional payments. This system often resulted in considerable wealth gained at the expense of the local population. Under Herodian rule, tax revenues supported not only the temple in Jerusalem and royal building projects but also the construction of pagan temples and cities in Gentile regions. As a result, tax collectors were widely viewed as collaborators with foreign oppression, symbolizing both economic exploitation and political betrayal. Their frequent contact with Gentiles and disregard for strict Sabbath and purity observance led many Jews to regard them as ritually impure and morally compromised. Consequently, tax collectors were treated as social outcasts, barred from serving as judges or legal witnesses and often excluded from synagogue life.

Levi is identified as a tax collector working at a booth in Capernaum, where tolls and duties were collected on goods moving through the region. His name derives from the Hebrew root meaning “to join” or “be attached” and is associated with the tribe of Levi, which in Israel’s Scriptures was set apart for priestly service and the guardianship of ritual purity. In the first century, however, such associations did not prevent individuals from bearing traditional names while participating in occupations regarded as impure. Given Capernaum’s location along trade routes and its active fishing economy, tax collectors there would have overseen duties on transported goods, including fish, placing Levi in regular contact with local fishermen and merchants.

Table fellowship carried significant social and religious meaning in Jewish culture. Sharing a meal expressed acceptance, solidarity, and relationship. For groups concerned with ritual purity, such as the Pharisees, eating with others implied a level of shared holiness and trust. As a result, many avoided table fellowship with those deemed morally or ritually compromised. Later rabbinic tradition reflects this concern, warning against association with sinners, even for the purpose of instruction. Meals were typically taken while reclining around low tables, reinforcing the sense of closeness and communal belonging among those who shared them.

The **Pharisees**, whose name likely means “separated ones,” were a lay movement devoted to rigorous observance of the Torah. Numbering several thousand, they sought to guide all of Israel into faithful obedience so that the nation might remain pure and experience God’s blessing. Though they held no formal political authority, they exercised substantial influence through teaching and example. Central to their concerns were issues of purity, Sabbath observance, and the proper interpretation of the Law. Unlike some other Jewish groups, they affirmed the resurrection of the dead and the continuing relevance of ancestral traditions. Some scribes were associated with the Pharisaic movement, and the phrase “scribes of the Pharisees” likely refers to learned interpreters who shared this theological outlook and commitment to strict observance.

COMMENTARY:

¶1: JESUS CLEANS A LEPER (1:40 – 45)

The full significance of this passage becomes clear only when we place ourselves in the position of the leper. He was like a walking dead man. His disease, widely believed to be the result of sin or divine judgment, rendered him physically deformed, socially isolated, and religiously outcast. He was considered unclean and was required both to appear visibly disheveled and to cry out “Unclean!” to warn others from coming too close. Any physical contact with him would render a person unclean for up to seven days. What made his condition even more devastating was the prevailing belief that there was no cure—only God Himself could heal a leper. To be healed from leprosy was likened to being raised from the dead. Thus, beyond the physical and social suffering, he also bore the crushing weight of guilt, accusation, and the belief that he was under God’s judgment.

This leper had clearly heard the stories about Jesus—His authority over evil spirits and sickness. He has no doubt that Jesus *can* heal him. The greater question in his mind is whether Jesus *wills* to heal him. Will Jesus keep His distance, looking upon him with disgust, as so many have done before? Will He reject him as one shunned by God and deserving of judgment? To everyone’s surprise, Jesus does not recoil or command him to leave. Instead, He reaches out and *touches* him. In this simple yet radical act, Jesus shatters the social and religious barriers surrounding leprosy. More than physical healing, Jesus offers him human touch, compassion, and relationship—something the man likely has not experienced in years.

The text says that Jesus was “moved with anger” (some manuscripts say “compassion”). If anger is the correct reading, it is likely directed at the brokenness of the world that makes leprosy—and all its accompanying suffering—possible. He may also be angered by a world in which this man has come to believe the falsehood that God and His servants want nothing to do with him.

Under normal circumstances, uncleanness spreads—whoever touches an unclean person becomes unclean themselves. The assumed direction is always from impurity to purity. But Jesus reverses this expectation. His holiness is not diminished by uncleanness; instead, His purity overcomes it. In Him, the power of God's kingdom moves outward, cleansing what is defiled and restoring what has been excluded, so that people may once again dwell in God's presence and within the community of His people. This moment echoes Ezekiel 36:22-32, where God promises to cleanse His people so they can truly know Him.

Jesus' healing of this leper parallels the ministries of Moses and Elijah, the only Old Testament figures through whom God healed lepers (Numbers 12; 2 Kings 5). But in contrast to them, Jesus does not call upon God—His own authority is enough. He is the greater Moses (lawgiver) and the greater Elijah (prophet). Mark's wording here resembles his accounts of exorcisms, reinforcing that Jesus' kingdom is driving back all forms of darkness and brokenness. However, unlike in exorcisms, the cause here is not demonic but another manifestation of a fallen world in need of restoration. His mission is not only to cast out demons but to restore all that is unclean and broken—physically, spiritually, and socially.

The man had asked to be made clean, and Jesus not only heals him but also instructs him to follow the Mosaic law to be officially declared clean by the priests. This shows Jesus' concern for the man's full restoration—physically, socially, religiously, and emotionally. It also demonstrates Jesus' respect for the law, something that will soon be questioned. By sending the man to the priests, Jesus was offering a testimony to the religious leaders. Had they witnessed a leper miraculously healed, it could have pointed them toward God's kingdom. But because of the man's disobedience, they likely never saw the evidence. Notably, the very next section in Mark (2:1-12) shows religious leaders not recognizing Jesus' authority but beginning to question and oppose Him.

Jesus commands the man to tell no one, a continuation of the "Messianic secret" theme we have seen before. He does not want to be known merely as a healer but as a teacher. He desires people to come to know Him through His message, not just His miracles. There is a right time and way to bear witness, and premature or misguided testimony can have unintended consequences. The man's disobedience results in Jesus becoming even more famous as a healer but less able to carry out His primary mission—preaching. The crowds, now fixated on His miracles, hinder rather than help His ministry.

It is also possible that Jesus avoids entering the towns because He had physically touched an unclean man and, out of respect for the law and the people, refrains from public gatherings until He is ceremonially clean. Even if this is not the reason, there is a striking reversal in the passage. At the beginning, the leper is the one dwelling in desolate places, but by the end, Jesus has taken his place—now unable to enter the towns. This foreshadows the greater exchange Jesus will make on the cross, where He will take upon Himself the sin and shame of humanity so that we may be restored.

Ultimately, Mark shows us that sin and disobedience are never merely personal—they ripple outward, affecting others and even God's mission. Even well-intended actions can distort Jesus' mission when they draw attention away from His message. The man's disobedience shifts public focus from proclamation to spectacle, a tension that will continue to surface throughout the Gospel.

¶2: JESUS FORGIVES A PARALYTIC (2:1 – 12)

As this second scene opens, some time has passed and Jesus returns to the city. His fame has grown so dramatically that there isn't even room at the door for everyone. He is preaching in His "home base" (likely Simon Peter's house), and the large crowd fills the space completely. Even as they listen to His message about the coming kingdom of God, the atmosphere is charged with expectation—particularly the expectation of miraculous healing—an undercurrent that will soon challenge the focus of His ministry.

In the midst of this crowded setting, Jesus' teaching is interrupted—not by a demon-possessed man this time, but by a paralytic and his determined, faith-filled friends. Like the leper in the previous account, this man has endured a life marked by deep pain and hardship. Despite formidable obstacles,

his friends carry him to Jesus—climbing onto the roof, creating an opening, and lowering him directly into the presence of Christ. They risk rejection by both the crowd and Jesus, yet nothing stops them because they believe that Jesus alone is the paralytic's hope. This episode offers the first explicit mention of "faith" in Mark's Gospel, defined not as a private belief but as bold, visible action that echoes Jesus' call in Mark 1:15 to repent and believe in the gospel of the kingdom.

What happens next is unexpected. Rather than immediately commanding the paralytic to get up, Jesus addresses him, saying, "Son, your sins are forgiven." In doing so, He teaches that the coming kingdom is marked not only by the cleansing of physical ailments and deliverance from demonic oppression but also by a far more significant cleansing from sin. The coming kingdom under the Messiah would be a time when God's children are forgiven—a new exodus (see Isaiah 33:23–24; 35:5–10; 40:6–31) ushering in a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–37; 33:6–9). John the Baptist had already prepared the way with his preaching on the forgiveness of sins. In the ancient worldview, sickness often signified the fallen state of the people, and paralysis served as a powerful symbol of the heavy burden of sin—a condition that withers life without divine intervention. Recognizing the deeper need of the paralytic, Jesus demonstrates that his most urgent need is forgiveness and restoration to a right relationship with God—not because he is a greater sinner, but because sin and rebellion are pervasive throughout the land. By forgiving his sins, Jesus both heals him and testifies to His divine authority, inviting others to seek the same restoration.

The scribes present silently question His authority—for only God can forgive sins, and to claim such power would be blasphemous. Yet Jesus, who reads hearts as clearly as He discerns faith (cf. 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Kings 8:39; Psalm 7:9; Jeremiah 11:20), perceives their unspoken objections. In mercy, He offers a sign by asking, "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'" Although both commands seem impossible for any ordinary person, Jesus proves His claim by healing the paralytic before their eyes. Although saying 'Your sins are forgiven' might appear easier since it lacks immediate proof, Jesus validates His authority by performing the undeniable miracle of healing. When the man gets up and walks, it confirms Jesus' divine empowerment, leaving the onlookers amazed and testifying that the kingdom of God has arrived.

In light of these events, Jesus' message deepens. He proclaims that the kingdom of God is here and that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins. By referring to Himself as the Son of Man, Jesus identifies Himself as the promised Messiah—the true Adam—who will usher in an eternal kingdom where all nations can come to know and worship God. His mission is to defeat both evil and sin—a victory that will be fully accomplished through His sacrificial death. This act of healing carries a profound, symbolic resonance. As Jesus touches the paralytic and "raises him up," the language strongly foreshadows the resurrection life He brings. Rooted in the prophetic vision of Isaiah 53, where the suffering servant bears our infirmities, Jesus heals by the same power that will be fully revealed in His death and resurrection, inaugurating a new creation. With this miracle, the paralytic is ushered into a life that mirrors the resurrected life of God's kingdom—a present reality that points to the future hope of complete restoration.

In this act of healing and forgiveness, the paralytic receives far more than physical restoration; he is made whole in body and spirit. Jesus demonstrates His identity by providing two undeniable proofs: He reads the hearts of those around Him and heals the paralytic. In doing so, He fulfills Isaiah's vision of an exodus where the lame leap for joy and the burdened are forgiven (cf. Isaiah 33:23–24; 35:3–10). If only God can forgive sins, then the power of the Son of Man to do so leaves the people with one pressing question: Will they recognize Him and respond in faith?

¶3: JESUS CALLS A TAX COLLECTOR (2:13 – 17)

This short story draws together many of the themes that Mark has been highlighting since Jesus' ministry began. Jesus has just had a remarkable encounter with a paralytic, where He demonstrated that He has the authority both to forgive sins and to heal. Now, He calls a sinner, making it clear that calling sinners is central to His mission.

Once again, crowds gather as Jesus teaches them the word of God. As in the previous passage, He sees someone—this time, Levi, a tax collector—while that person is in the middle of his daily work. Jesus interrupts his life with a simple yet radical call: “Follow me.” Just as the paralytic had risen into a new life of forgiveness, Levi now rises from his tax booth, leaving behind his old life to follow Jesus. This decision is costly; unlike the fishermen, who could return to their trade, Levi’s departure marks a permanent break. Yet his response is immediate, mirroring the call of the first disciples by the sea.

In a display of joy and transformation, Levi hosts a banquet for Jesus, making Him the guest of honor. The story, having introduced Levi, now broadens its focus, revealing that many tax collectors and sinners were following Jesus. Here, for the first time in Mark’s Gospel, we encounter the word “disciple.” It is no coincidence that Mark chooses to introduce this term in the context of tax collectors and sinners—those deemed unholy or inferior by the Pharisees. To be a disciple is not about having one’s life together, but about being with Jesus, learning from Him, and being transformed by His presence. Discipleship will often lead into uncomfortable missional situations, stretching those who follow Him. One can only imagine how Jesus’ disciples felt stepping into Levi’s house, surrounded by people they had likely been taught to avoid. Yet at the same time, this scene affirms that people like Levi—those who know their need and respond to Jesus’ call—are truly His disciples.

The Pharisees, who sought to help Israel find God’s favor through ritual purity, found it appalling that Jesus would share a meal with such people. Table fellowship in the ancient world signified acceptance, relationship, and belonging—so in their minds, Jesus’ actions were scandalous. To them, eating with the impure meant becoming unclean by association. Yet, as we have already seen in Jesus’ encounter with the leper, He is not contaminated by impurity. Rather, He extends His own holiness outward, bringing cleansing and restoration. He is not defiled by sinners—He makes them clean. This moment recalls the holiness of God radiating outward on the Day of Atonement, sanctifying the people. What the Pharisees fail to grasp is that Jesus is not merely a teacher—He is the very presence of God, bringing purity and forgiveness to those who come to Him.

The Pharisees’ complaint, this time spoken aloud to Jesus’ disciples, does not go unnoticed. Jesus responds with a piercing analogy: those who are well do not need a doctor. A doctor’s purpose is to heal the sick, just as Jesus’ purpose is to call sinners to repentance. He is the great physician, willing and able to bring healing to those who recognize their need and come to Him. This moment echoes Isaiah 55–56, where God calls sinful Israel to return and receive life. Jesus’ words now provide the second explicit statement of His mission in Mark’s Gospel: first, we learned that He came to preach the good news. Now, we learn that He has come to call sinners. The good news is not for those who think they have no need, but for those who recognize their brokenness and turn to Him.

This radical picture of welcome and forgiveness reveals the very heart of the kingdom Jesus is proclaiming—a kingdom not for the self-righteous, but for those who are humble enough to acknowledge their need. The Messiah does not require people to clean themselves up before they come to Him; He welcomes all who desire to be with Him. This grace-filled invitation will increasingly place Jesus in conflict with the religious leaders, setting the stage for the growing opposition that will dominate the coming passages.

SUMMARY: MARK 1:40 – 2:17

Jesus continues to reveal His authority—yet His authority is marked by compassion, restoration, and a call to discipleship. He reaches the untouchable, forgives the sinner, and calls the outcast to follow Him. Through faith, people experience His kingdom, where healing, forgiveness, and obedience go hand in hand. Wherever He goes, His kingdom brings life. He brings cleanliness where there was impurity, forgiveness where there was sin, healing where there was suffering, and meaning where there was emptiness. His rule is not what people expect, nor does He call the ones society would assume to be His followers. The King has come, and His invitation is extended—not to those who believe they have everything together, but to those who recognize their need for Him.

Once again, disciples are being called, but not those who appear perfect or righteous in the eyes of the world. Instead, Jesus calls those willing to follow Him, learn from Him, and join Him in His mission. This passage further reveals what it means to repent and believe in the gospel. It is not merely an intellectual assent or a one-time decision, but a posture of the heart—to acknowledge our need, follow Jesus, obey His call, and join Him in His mission to the world.

Obedience is central to our response to this kingdom. When Jesus speaks—whether saying “stand” or “follow”—we are called to respond immediately, finding life in His word. The story of the leper also reminds us that disobedience has consequences—not only for our own lives but for how Jesus’ mission is perceived. To follow Jesus means trusting His word fully, knowing that His commands lead not to burden, but to freedom and wholeness.

The structure of this section, along with the previous one, follows a structured pattern (a chiasm) that highlights the source of Jesus’ authority and the nature of His mission:

A. At the sea, Jesus calls fishermen, who leave their nets.

B. In Capernaum, Jesus teaches and is interrupted, displaying His authority to teach and cast out demons, leaving people amazed.

C. He touches and heals Simon’s mother-in-law, and crowds flock to Him for healing.

D. Jesus withdraws to pray, seeking the Father’s direction for His mission.

C.’ He then touches and heals a leper, as people begin coming to Him from everywhere.

B.’ In Capernaum, Jesus teaches and is interrupted again, this time displaying His authority to forgive and heal a paralytic, leaving people amazed.

A.’ At the sea, Jesus calls a tax collector, who leaves his tax booth.

At the center of this pattern stands Jesus in prayer. The meaning is clear: the authority with which Jesus heals, forgives, and calls disciples comes from above. His strength, direction, and mission flow from His communion with the Father. Jesus is the true High Priest, standing between God and humanity and bringing God’s blessing to His people.

This section also marks a turning point in the narrative. As Jesus brings life to sinners, His authority begins to provoke resistance from the religious leaders. Conflict is emerging—but so is the unstoppable advance of the kingdom of God.

APPLICATION: DISCIPLESHIP AND SERVICE

The kingdom of God is marked by obedience, faith, and mission. Jesus’ authority is not oppressive but life-giving—He calls us to follow Him because His will is for our ultimate good and healing. When Jesus speaks, we are called to respond immediately, trusting that His commands lead to life. Disobedience does not just affect us personally; it also has consequences for His work in the world. The leper’s story reminds us that ignoring Jesus’ instructions can hinder both our own flourishing and His mission. True discipleship means listening to His voice and responding in faith.

- Where is God calling you to obey Him fully?
- What challenges hold you back, and what motivates you to trust Him?

Faith in Jesus is more than an intellectual belief—it is lived-out trust in His power and compassion. The people who came to Jesus—the leper, the paralytic, the tax collector—came in dependence, knowing they needed Him. And each time, Jesus gave more than they came seeking. He delights in bringing life to those who seek Him.

- Where are the places of brokenness in your life?
- What would it look like for you to come to Jesus in faith and dependence on Him?

Our faith is not just for ourselves—it is meant to bring blessing to others. The friends of the paralytic did whatever it took to bring him to Jesus, and their faith led to his healing. This should encourage us to intercede for others, persistently bringing them to Jesus. We should not allow obstacles—whether physical, cultural, or personal—to prevent us from helping others encounter Him. And if Jesus' mission is to seek out the lost and be with the outcast, then His disciples are called to do the same. We are invited to step outside of our comfort zones, enter difficult places, and extend fellowship to those whom society often rejects, so that they too might experience God's love, grace, and healing.

- Who are the people God is calling you to bring to Jesus?
- How can you pray for them, and how might your words and actions invite them to trust in Him?

Jesus has the authority to forgive sins, making us whole and reconciling us to God. Yet to truly follow Him, we must first recognize our own need. The Pharisees struggled to admit their spiritual sickness, but Jesus made it clear—He came not for the self-sufficient, but for those who know they are in need of healing. His grace is for the humble, the repentant, and the dependent.

- Do you recognize your own need for Jesus, or are you relying on yourself?
- How might you cultivate a practice of reflection and confession, keeping your heart soft and open to His grace?