

Mark: A Servant on a Mission
The Reason He Came

Introduction: Video Clip

- John Newton (slave trader, 20,000 slaves carried)-converted wrote Amazing Grace
- He is speaking with Wilbur Wilberforce about to end slavery in England
- He is nearly blind and his memory is fading
- 2 Things I remember—I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior

Today—I want to talk about the reason Christ came-to be our Savior!

Text (part one of a larger section—2:1-3:6)

- Made up of 5 narratives (first two today)
- Each one has controversy that surrounds it
- All five involve the Pharisees and the Scribes
- These five take place in Galilee
- They are balanced by 5 later that take place in Jerusalem (11:27-12:37)
- Together they stand against the radical intrusion of Jesus into the world
- They will lead to the firm decision that Jesus must be put to death

Healing of the Paralytic (2:1-12) is the first narrative

1. Jesus returning to Capernaum where he had been before (1:21-28)

When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them,

They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:1-2, 4-5 NLT

2. His ministry had grown in popularity there and many were seeking him out
3. He entered a home—likely the home of Peter and Andrew (had healed Peter's mother-in-law earlier)
 - a. Crowd had followed to hear Him teach and preach the Word
 - b. It was his word about the kingdom that was at hand (near you, in you)
 - c. Repent and prepare

“Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” Mark 1:14-15 NKJV

4. The house was full and over crowded but a man needed to be seen by Jesus
 - a. 4 friends determined nothing would stop them
 - b. When they couldn't get in they climbed ladder on side of house
 - c. Cut through the roof and let the man down in front of Jesus
 - d. Imagine the other people in house (dirt in hair, disruption, inconvenience)
 - e. Amazing friends (believed Jesus could heal and they were gonna get him there)
 - f. How determined are we to get our friends to Jesus?

5. The statement of Jesus—*“When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” Mark 2:5 NKJV*
 - a. Backdrop of ancient world tied sin and sickness together (indeed the Old Testament did—fall)
 - b. No particular sin indicated but there is a notion that sin leads to decay and death that is rooted in the truth of the creation narrative that sin brought curse—death
 - c. Forgiveness would push back withering, decay and death.

Leads to the 1st Truth

I. It is possible to be truly whole only when the breach occasioned by sin has been healed through the forgiveness of Jesus Christ!

A. Scripture is clear on the fact that sin separates us from fellowship with God

1. All have sinned and come short (Romans 3:23)
2. Our sin will always find us out (Numbers 3:23)
3. All is open to the examining eye of God and His Word (Hebrews 4:12)

B. Scripture is also clear on the fact that sin leads to death

1. The wages of sin is death (that is separation from God)
2. This death is passed on to us all

“When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.” Romans 5:12 NLT

C. God sent Christ to deal with this sin problem (deliver us from death)

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16 NKJV

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Romans 6:23 NKJV

We cannot be whole unless this sin is dealt with:

Hank Simon writing in the New York Times says:

"Most incompetent people don't know they are incompetent. In fact, researcher Dr. David A. Dunning of Cornell University reports that people who are incompetent are more confident of their abilities than competent people. Dunning and his associate Justin Krueger believe that skills required for competence are the same skills necessary to recognize that ability.

Krueger writes in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, "Not only do [incompetent people] reach erroneous conclusions and make unfortunate choices, but their incompetence robs them of the ability to realize it."

That is the way we are spiritually without Christ. Our sin not only separates us from God, it blinds us to our predicament.

A W. Tozer wrote in Christ the Eternal Son.

The gulf that separates the Creator and the creature, the gulf between the being we call God and all other beings, is a great and vast and yawning gulf. ... If you do not engage in deep thinking, it may not seem so amazing, but if you have given yourself to frequent thoughtful consideration, you are astonished at the bridging of the great gulf between God and not God.

How great is this gulf and you cannot be whole unless it is dealt with through Christ!

Mark goes on:

“But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, “What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!” Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts? Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk’? So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!” 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!”
“Mark 2:6-12 NLT

6. The Scribes were not at all happy about Jesus pronouncing forgiveness

- a. Scribes were schooled in the written law and the oral interpretation
- b. They were not scribes until they had past exams and had hands laid on them
- c. Could not engage in legal interpretation until then
- d. They will show up at every corner with Jesus

7. They were offended by Jesus—only God can forgive (who does He think He is? Blasphemy)

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,” Psalms 103:2-3 NKJV

“But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.” Psalms 130:4 NKJV

“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.” Isaiah 43:25 NKJV

“For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; For how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another.” Isaiah 48:11 NKJV

“To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.”
Daniel 9:9 NKJV

8. Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked them a question:

“But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’?” Mark 2:8-9 NKJV

- a. Scribes thought it was easier to say that (no verification)
- b. Miracle would have to be verified

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c. They thought Jesus was offering cheap grace

9. Then Jesus does a miracle—THIS IS NOT CHEAP GRACE!

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" —He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" Mark 2:10-12 NKJV

Leads to second truth:

II. The verification of our forgiveness (justification) is the miracle of the resurrection!

"And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God." Romans 4:23-25 NLT

A. If there is no resurrection there is no forgiveness

B. He bore our sins but the resurrection provides assurance of our forgiveness

(ILL) A Modern Parable:

At a parochial middle school, a boy stands with back arched and hands clenched. "Go ahead, give it to me," he says.

The principal asks, "How many times have you been to my office?"

The boy says, "Not enough, I guess."

"You've gotten the belt each time."

"Yeah, and I can take whatever you dish out."

The principal pauses for a moment to think and then quietly says, "Today you learn about grace."

The boy asks, "You gonna let me walk?"

The principal replies, "Yes, I'm going to let you walk."

The boy studies the face of the principal. "No punishment at all?"

"Oh, there has to be punishment," says the principal. "What you did was wrong, and there are always consequences to our actions."

"I knew it," says the boy as he holds out his hands. "Go ahead."

The principal takes hold of a belt, folds it in two, and then hands it to the boy's teacher. He tells the boy, "I want you to count the blows." The principal then extends his own hands toward the teacher and says, "Ten strokes." The belt snaps across the outstretched hands of the principal. Shock registers on the boy's face. By the fourth stroke, tears well up in the boy's eyes. "Stop! That's enough!" the boy yells.

But the belt continues to crack across the principal's hands. The boy counts out loud, "Five□ six□ seven□ eight□ nine□ ten." The principal stands with sweat glistening on his forehead, his hands swollen and red. He reaches over, puts his swollen hand on the shoulder of the boy, and says just one word: "Grace."

(ILL)

*In his book *Written in Blood*, Robert Coleman tells the story of a little boy whose sister needed a blood transfusion. The doctor had explained that she had the same disease the boy had recovered from two years earlier. Her only chance for recovery was a transfusion from someone who had previously conquered the disease. Since the two children had the same rare blood type, the boy was the ideal donor.*

"Would you give your blood to Mary?" the doctor asked.

Johnny hesitated. His lower lip started to tremble. Then he smiled and said, "Sure, for my sister."

Soon the two children were wheeled into the hospital room--Mary, pale and thin; Johnny, robust and healthy. Neither spoke, but when they met, Johnny grinned. As the nurse inserted the needle into his arm, Johnny's smile faded. He watched the blood flow through the tube.

With the ordeal almost over, his voice slightly shaky, broke the silence. "Doctor, when do I die?" Only then did the doctor realize why Johnny had hesitated, why his lip had trembled when he'd agreed to donate his blood. He'd thought giving his blood to his sister meant giving up his life. In that brief moment, he'd made his great decision.

Johnny, fortunately, didn't have to die to save his sister. Each of us however, has a condition more serious than Mary's, and it required Jesus to give not just his blood, but his life.

Jesus bore our sins on the cross but was raised for our forgiveness—our justification! It's why He came!

The verification of our forgiveness (justification) is the miracle of the resurrection!

The calling of Levi, the Tax Collector (2:13-17) is the second narrative

"Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him. As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him." Mark 2:13-14 NLT

1. Jesus after this great demonstration of great power and victory does what He often does, retreat to a place of rest, the mountain, the wilderness, or the sea.
2. But, in this case the place he retreats to is the lakeshore which though on the surface seems peaceful, in the Mark narrative, it has a much more fierce connotation.

"As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water." Mark 4:35-37 NLT

"Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and head across the lake to Bethsaida, while he sent the people home. After telling everyone good-bye, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Late that night, the disciples were in their boat in the middle of the lake, and Jesus was alone on land. He saw that they were in serious trouble, rowing hard and struggling against the wind and waves..." Mark 6:45-48 NLT

- a. Likewise his return to the wilderness signaled a move into a sphere of conflict
- b. So, the seashore symbolizes a sphere where the forces stand in opposition to God

C. Here Jesus calls of one His followers—Levi, the son of Alphaeus

1. He is a publican or tax collector
2. Most hated of people in first century
3. William Barclay

There was a purchase tax on all that was bought and sold. There was bridge money to be paid when a bridge was crossed; road money to be paid when main roads were used; harbor dues to be paid when a harbor was entered; market money to be paid when a market was used; town dues to be paid when the traveler entered a walled town. If a man was traveling on a road, he might have to pay a tax for using the road, a tax on his cart, on its wheels, on its axle, and on the beast which drew the cart. There was a tax on crossing rivers, on ships, on the use of harbor quays, on dams; there were certain licenses which had to be paid for engaging in certain trades" (61).

4. So hated couldn't testify in court and excommunicated from synagogue
5. Yet Jesus calls him to be His follower

Leads us to the third truth

III. Christ calls people out of their deep darkness, their utter loneliness, and their most frightful circumstances and offers forgiveness to them.

- A. The seashore was a place of strife and conflict
- B. Levi was hated and and outcast
- C. But Jesus offers him forgiveness
- D. It often takes us to get to a place of desperation before we find His forgiveness

(ILL) Kneeling to See His Eyes

Bruce Thielemann,

Copenhagen is a nice city and there are many things to see there. But if I could only spend one hour in Copenhagen, the place I'd go again would be the Church of Our Lady. That's where the great Thorvaldsen statues are. When you walk into the church, it's very dim. But after you're there for a few minutes, you begin to see the statues. They're carved

out of cold stone, but they look like warm, living personalities--so warm they melt your heart.

One statue of Christ stands with his arms extended. I walked up to that statue, and as I looked, I thought, He has his eyes closed. He must be at prayer. A man who sat in the front pew said to me, "You have to get on your knees to see his eyes." I got down on my knees and looked up, and there was such grace and mercy and compassion in those eyes that it was almost more than I could bear.

The last section of our text:

"Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.) But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?" When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners." Mark 2:15-17 NLT

- D. Levi is so full of joy about his new experience, he throws a banquet for Jesus and his followers and invites his fellow tax collectors and others called "sinners"
- a. Most often the new believers are the most passionate about winning others
- b. They were called sinners by the Pharisees (regarded as inferior) because of their failure to show interest in the scribal law
- c. They didn't eat their food according the prescribed ceremonial law or separate their tithe correctly
- E. It was disgraceful to have a teacher of the Law recline at the table with those unversed in the Law and so they were offended by Jesus
- F. Pharisees and Scribes criticized Jesus because he failed to observe the distinction between the righteous and the sinners which was essential to their spiritual piety

Brings us to the final truth...

IV. Christ does recognize the distinction between the (self) righteous and the hopeless sinner, shaping His mission and extending His forgiveness to the one who recognizes their own sinfulness and hopelessness.

Conclusion:

Philip Griffin, from the sermon "A God Who Redeems"

I saw a sign once that I love—a lost dog sign. There was a big cash reward for whoever found the lost dog, and a description of the dog. It said: "He's only got three legs, he's blind in the left eye, he's missing a right ear, his tail has been broken off, he was neutered accidentally by a fence—ouch!—he's almost deaf, and he answers by the name 'Lucky.'"

That dog isn't lucky! He's been through a whole lot of mess. But he's lucky because he's got an owner who loves him and wants him back. That's what redemption is all about!

And that friend, is WHY HE CAME!