10. The Gospel of Mark—2:13-17

"Jesus, the Great Physician"

(11/1/26)

26 years ago, I suffered a heart attack.

I was blessed by God for the simple reason that many people don't survive their *first* heart attack.

Too many people with heart disease never know they have a problem until it's too late.

Heart disease is a silent killer, there is often no warning signs and therefore no reason to see a doctor until the attack happens—as was the case with me.

It's the symptoms that let you know you're sick and in need of medical attention—without the symptoms, a person can have advanced heart disease and be completely unaware of it until it takes their life.

It's not that people wouldn't see a doctor if they knew there was a problem—often times they just don't know that there is a problem until it's too late.

There is another disease that has infected the human race.

It's also deadly—only it doesn't just kill the body but also the soul—forever in hell.

The whole human race has been infected by it, and it is one hundred percent 'eternally fatal'—it's the disease of sin.

The problem is that most people today don't realize they have this deadly disease or if they do acknowledge they're sinners—they really don't think it's a serious thing because our culture has convinced people that sin is no big deal (if they even believe in it at all).

So, they ignore the warning signs—often until it's too late!

The good news is that there is a cure for the disease of sin—but only one cure—the precious blood of Jesus Christ!

Now with all that in mind, in Mark 2:13-17 Jesus presents Himself as the 'Great Physician' whose whole purpose for coming to the earth was to heal the human race from the greatest pandemic in human history—the disease of sin.

Mark 2:13–17 (NKJV)
13 Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. 14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. 15 Now it happened, as He was dining in *Levi's* house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. 16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How *is it* that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" 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."

Here in Mark 2, we catch up with Jesus, the Great Physician who is making a *'house call'* to the home of Matthew (Levi) who used to be a tax-collector for the Roman government.

Matthew has recently put his faith in Jesus and received a 'healing' or in other words, a cleansing from his sin, and he is so excited about it that he invites all his sinner friends over to his house so that the Great Physician can heal them too!

Let's stop for a minute and look at the background.

"As He passed by, He saw Levi [Matthew] the *son* of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office" (v.14)

At this time Israel had been under Roman rule for a little over years.

One of the worst things about Roman occupation was their <u>oppressive system of taxation</u>.

One historian commented on the existence of three main statutory taxes:

(1) A ground tax of one-tenth of the grain and one-fifth of fruit and grapes,

(2) An income tax of 1 percent of a person's income, and

(3) A poll tax imposed on all males fourteen to sixty-five, and every female twelve to sixty-five.

"In addition, however, the collectors grew rich by overcharging on many other taxes. There were taxes for using main roads and Capernaum happened to be located where major roads came together. Therefore, Matthew was at the junction to levy taxes on goods that passed by."

"How did Matthew get this job?"

Rome would sell at public auction the right to collect taxes in a given country, province, or region at a fixed rate for a period of five years—whatever was collected above that amount was kept as profit.

Those who held such taxing rights were called *publicani* (KJV—"publican").

As you can imagine this system encouraged excessive taxation and even extortion which left the average citizen with little or no recourse since these tax collectors were independent contractors working for the Roman government.

Consequently, these tax-collectors were hated by the people, especially if they were members of the community like Matthew—a Jew working for Rome and collecting taxes from his fellow Jews.

He would have been doubly hated by his own people as an extortioner and traitor.

They would have considered him unclean like a pig and put him in a class lower than that of prostitutes, murderers and robbers.

"And He [Jesus] said to him, 'Follow Me.'" (v.14)

We don't know much about Matthew before he responded to Jesus' invitation to become one of His disciples.

It is doubtful that he was very religious—the noted Jewish scholar Alfred Edersheim reports that *"a Jewish publicani was barred from the synagogue and was forbidden to have any religious or social contact with his fellow Jews".*

And yet even though Matthew was a hated outcast, Jesus still sought him out and invited him to become one of His disciples.

"So, he arose and followed Him." (v.14)

It seems apparent that God had been working in Matthew's heart long before Jesus called him.

Matthew no doubt made a comfortable living as a tax collector but his life seems to have been empty which is why he so quickly chose to leave his job to follow Jesus knowing that—he could never return to tax gathering ever again!

Matthew counted the cost and chose to leave earthly riches behind to follow Jesus—a decision that I'm sure he doesn't regret today!

Mark 2:15 (NKJV)
15 Now it happened, as He was dining in *Levi's* house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him.

Like many new converts, Matthew's first thought was to tell his friends about his new life of following Jesus.

In fact, Matthew was so excited that he threw a banquet to celebrate and to present Jesus to his friends—all of whom were tax-collectors and sinners.

Of course, this presented (as some would call it) a *"target rich"* environment for the critical eyes of the scribes and Pharisees who were also present that day.

Mark 2:16 (NKJV)
16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How *is it* that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?"

In that culture they believed that when you ate with someone you became one with them. (Explain)

I'm sure the Pharisees were only there observing and not eating—they would never have thought to eat with people such as these.

All they were interested in was finding something they could condemn Jesus for and at Matthew's celebration they found the perfect justification for their condemnation of Jesus and His disciples.

Mark 2:17 (NKJV)
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."

The analogy is simple—just as a physician isn't needed among the well and so spends his or her time among the sick, so to the Savior (the Great Physician) isn't needed among those who *think* they're spiritually well and therefore goes to those who recognize they're sinners and in need of the Savior.

Mark 2:13 (NKJV)
13 Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them.

Jesus can only save sinners, people who know they are sinners and are worthy of hell—He can't save people who think that they are basically good and therefore deserving of heaven.

No one will see their need for the Savior who doesn't first see themselves as a sinner.

1 Timothy 1:15 (NKJV)
15 This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

The word "gospel" means *'good news.'*

But as we have said many times before the announcement of good news implies the presence of something bad—and in this case it's the presence of sin and judgment.

No one can come to the awareness of their sin without the conviction of the Holy Spirit—which then must be followed by confession and repentance.

David refused to confess his sin with Bathsheba and repent to God for it for a whole year until God made it so rough on him that he was broken and brought to confession and repentance—

Psalm 32:3–5 (NLT)
3 When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. 4 Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. 5 Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the Lord." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

1 John 1:8–9 (NIV)
8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)
23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The word **"sinned"** in the Greek literally means to *'miss the mark'*—it was an archery term for hitting the bull's eye on a target.

Of course, the next question is, *'What does the mark or the bull's eye represent?'*

Well, we're not left to guess because Paul goes on to tell us—

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)
[23] for all have sinned [missed the mark] and fall short of the glory of God,

Okay you might be thinking but—*"What is the glory of God?"* → It's perfection.

"Yes, but perfection with regard to what?"

The perfection that God is referring to is perfectly keeping the Law of God.

In the O.T. God's law contained 613 commandments—to break anyone of them was to miss the mark and to be guilty of sin.

But let's not deal with all 613, let's just limit ourselves to the ten we are most familiar with → *The 10 Commandments* (not the 10 suggestions).

These commandments are like the wooden boards that make up the hull of a ship, it doesn't matter if most of them are there, if only one is missing or broken that ship is going down!

The same is true for the person who chooses to get to heaven by the Law (10 Commandments)—it doesn't matter if they keep most of it—if *any* commandment is broken even once that person is sunk (condemned).

James 2:10 (NKJV)
[10] For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point,* he is guilty of all.

This is why Paul calls the Law a curse—it's because it makes salvation dependent upon a person keeping all of it without fail—or in other words the law demands moral perfection from a person to gain access into heaven.

And yet when I ask people, *"If you were to die tonight would God let you into heaven?"* They will almost always tell me, "*Yes*".

And when I ask them to explain why they respond, *"Because I'm a good person. I know I'm not perfect, morally speaking, but I still think I'm good enough to get into heaven"*.

Listen to what God's Word is saying—If you're *not morally perfect* you're *not good enough* to get into heaven!

It's all or nothing—there is no *"I'm good enough*" or "*I'm better than most*…" argument that God will accept.

It's either sinless perfection or eternal rejection (hell).

Romans 3:23
…for all have sinned (missed the mark) and fall short of the glory of God (sinless perfection),

Romans 6:23
…the wages of sin is death…[the second death—the lake of fire—hell]

When you tell people this, they immediately respond in disbelief with—*"No one can live a life of sinless perfection!"*

That's not true—One Man did—His name is Jesus, and if we put our faith in Him, He will put His righteousness to our account so that we can go to heaven through Him.

You see, all this has been the bad news, which has then prepared us to receive the good news—

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

John 3:16 (NKJV)
[16] 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.

Today as Jesus' disciples we are the spiritual physicians of the Great Commission—*"Go to all the people of the world and preach the good news of salvation to them."*

We are to faithfully tell people that they have a terminal disease that if left untreated will kill them—forever!

And that there is only one cure—the blood of Christ which is applied through faith.

The problem is that most people don't feel 'sick', they don't feel like there's a problem (like my heart disease)—everything seems fine and so they really don't see their need for a Savior because they don't see themselves as sinners.

Proverbs 20:6 (NKJV)
[6] Most men will proclaim each his own goodness…

Jesus can only help those who know they're sinners and in need of a Savior—and that's why we have to tell them the bad news (sin and judgment) before giving them the good news (salvation through Jesus)—but we have to care more about them than we do ourselves.

The Pharisees didn't care about curing sin so that sinners could go to heaven—they only cared about proclaiming the Law, holding themselves up as righteous men and condemning sinners.

Matthew 9:11–13 (NKJV)

[11] And when the Pharisees saw *it,* they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" [12] When Jesus heard *that,* He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [13] But go and learn what *this* means: *'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'* For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

When Jesus said to the Pharisees, **"But go and learn what *this* means: *'I desire mercy and not sacrifice."***—He was quoting from the prophet Hosea (6:6).

Jesus was telling these so-called 'religious men' that God wasn't as interested in their religious observances—He wanted them to have a heart of compassion and mercy towards sinners.

As one pastor put it—
*"The Pharisees always brought the proper sacrifices, but they were totally lacking in compassion toward sinners. When **mercy** is lacking, then religious formalities are meaningless."*

I wonder if we as the Church today have become more like the Pharisees than like Jesus?

I wonder if the Church, which should be representing Jesus, is now more comfortable with the religious people (church folks) and indifferent and even 'grossed out' by sinners.

Jesus said, *"I don't want sacrifice, I want mercy, compassion and concern for sinners."*

➔ Mention the transman who came to my son's Calvary in Arizona and how he was treated

Let me transition (no pun intended) and apply this to us as Christians.

As the physicians of the new covenant helping others to be healed in Jesus—we are not immune from sickness ourselves.

A literal, physical doctor who helps others to be cured can sometimes get sick themselves—and as such they will use their knowledge to help themselves to be healed.

Sometimes we who know Jesus can get sick, yes, physically but right now I'm talking about sick in our souls.

And when that happens, we have to draw on our knowledge of the Word to heal ourselves.

Let me say this—when there is something wrong with our physical body, God has designed it to give off pain—which is the body's alarm that there is a core problem, perhaps a disease of some kind that our body is alerting us to by giving off symptoms.

When our soul is 'sick' and crying out for God it sends signals also (restlessness, emptiness, depression, fear, anger etc.)—signals we often miss or misdiagnose.

In other words, we make the symptoms the core problem which causes us to run to the world for its 'cures' as we seek to remedy that inner pain and lack of peace with what the world has to offer.

These would include counseling with a secular psychologist, or psychiatrist, who often prescribes drugs to alleviate the pain—which often only makes it worse.

The world offers a myriad of *'cures'* for troubled souls—but only Jesus <u>is</u> the cure Who alone will satisfy the emptiness within and give you true and lasting peace—as He said:

John 14:27 (NKJV)
[27] Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Now, let me say that a lack of peace (restlessness, anxiety) is a *symptom* of something deeper—it isn't the core problem but a symptom that is sounding the alarm to a much deeper problem.

One Christian author said it well,
"The root issue is not external circumstances but internal disconnection from God's sustaining peace. The world's solutions—self-help strategies, temporary escapes (take a vacation or get

drunk or high)*, or emotional control* (hypnosis or 'positive mental attitude' courses)—*are ultimately insufficient because they do not address the spiritual foundation of peace…*

Peace is not something we manufacture; it is something we receive by living in the "finished work of Christ." This idea reframes peace from being dependent on circumstances to being rooted in faith.

True peace doesn't come from a calm life—it comes from a connected life," even when life is chaotic, believers can experience a peace that "passes understanding"—a calm that transcends logic or emotion. Lasting peace is not found by avoiding hardship but by anchoring oneself in God during hardship. This involves trusting God's sovereignty, surrendering control, and choosing faith over fear."

Faith is the antidote for fear and worry—and the only thing that will bring peace and healing to our souls.

Nothing this world has to offer in the way of material possessions, accomplishments, successes or even human relationships will ever satisfy that deep longing in your soul—only a relationship with Jesus Christ will satisfy you—and yet people still try.

Isaiah 55:1–3 (NKJV)

[1] "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. [2] Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread, and your wages for *what* does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. [3] Incline your ear, and come to Me…

Where else can we go because only Jesus has the answer because only Jesus is the answer—seek Him!

And don't discount the possibility that you are being attacked through spiritual warfare and oppression. (Explain)