



5: Lord of the Sabbath! (Mark 2:13-3:6)

Why did Jesus welcome sinners, challenge religious traditions, and heal on the Sabbath—even when it led people to plot His death? Today we discover what His actions reveal about His authority and the grace that still transforms people like us.

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* All Scripture is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise mentioned.

Mark 2:13-14

Jesus went out again beside the sea. The whole crowd was coming to Him, and He was teaching them. Then, passing by, **He saw Levi** the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, **“Follow me,”** and He got up and followed Him.

Levi was sitting at the tax office. When tax collectors came to be baptized by John the Baptist they asked what God wanted them to change and John told them, “Don’t collect any more than you are required to” ([Luke 3:12-13](#)). Tax collectors were known for abusing their own people by collecting for the Romans & taking more than what was due. Later Jewish writings make it clear that tax collectors were considered ‘unclean’ and were not allowed to participate in synagogues, unable to give testimony in court, a cause of disgrace to their families - traitors to their people.¹

Levi immediately **got up and followed Jesus**. While Levi responds to Jesus like the fishermen called by Jesus did, the fishermen have the option to go back to fishing, but a tax collector who left his post would easily be replaced and not have a job to come back to.

Mark and Luke both give his name as Levi ([Mark 2:14](#); [Luke 5:27](#)), Matthew’s version of this same story names the tax collector as Matthew ([Mt 9:9](#)). It is very likely that this tax collector is known by multiple names as *Simon Peter is also known as Cephas*. This is Levi/Matthew.

Mark 2:15

While He was reclining at the table in Levi’s house, **many tax collectors and sinners** were eating with Jesus and His disciples, for there were **many** who were following Him.

Levi/Matthew threw a dinner party, “a great banquet” ([Lk 5:29](#)) **for Jesus!** And Levi invited **many tax collectors** and other **sinners** to hang out with Jesus in his home.

Most Jews wouldn’t want to be ANYWHERE NEAR this motley crew, but Jesus accepted the invitation and took his disciples with Him. Following oriental custom of the day, they would have reclined on a couch or a floor full of pillows as they ate & talked together for a long time.

People who often thought they had gone too far for God’s grace, were *WANTING* to hear what Jesus had to say! **Jesus gave them HOPE and Levi used his home as a tool for his friends to meet Jesus!** May our homes be a place **where Jesus is honored and people are welcomed!** Let’s use our homes to welcome brothers & sisters...and **invite a sinner to dinner**...like Levi did.

Mark 2:16

When **the scribes** who were Pharisees saw that he was eating with **sinners and tax collectors**, they asked his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

Sharing a meal communicated fellowship and acceptance. Couldn’t Jesus be **a friend of sinners & yet NOT be a friend of SIN?** These Pharisees would never have contaminated themselves entering a sinner’s home, and certainly wouldn’t have EATEN with these people - considered the worst of sinners.

Who is someone you thought would never follow Jesus? Maybe that person has used & abused others, cheated others. Maybe that person is known because of their foul language or crude actions. Until they breathe their last, they haven’t gone too far for God’s grace.

¹ James R. Edwards, The Gospel according to Mark, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 83.

Mark 2:17

When Jesus heard this, he told them, "It is not those who are well who need a **doctor**, but those who are **sick**. I didn't come to call the righteous, but **sinners**."

People who aren't sick have no need of a doctor. Since these Pharisees didn't view themselves as being sick...*they had NO NEED of a doctor* - especially if that was Jesus. But the tax collectors at Levi's house were very sick. Even the Pharisees believed that. So Jesus' argument in question form might sound like this: "*What exactly do you expect a doctor to DO - stay away from sick people?*" The Pharisees act like Jesus is applauding their sickness, but He is there to help them get well. **The Friend of sinners is not a friend of sin.**

☀ **David Garland:** "Jesus does more than preach repentance to sinners; he befriends them."²

Notice the balance - Jesus doesn't JUST befriend them. He also tells them the truth, and calls them to repentance. The Doctor wants to see them HEALED. Followers of Jesus should follow His example. **Befriend sinners, tell them the truth, and help them get HEALED!**

Why aren't Jesus' Disciples Fasting and Mourning?

Mark 2:18

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. People came and asked him, "Why do John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

Fasting in Jesus' day, was a sign of waiting, of mourning that God's kingdom still had not arrived. It was a way of remembering how God had disciplined disobedient Israel, and humbling oneself in repentance to pray for God's mercy.

- The Pharisees fasted twice a week (as seen in Luke 18:12) - on Monday and Thursday, but there is only one annual fast mandated in the Old Testament - on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, 31). Their twice-weekly fasting was a traditional religious practice, but not a requirement of the Law of Moses.

Mark 2:19-22

Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the groom is with them, can they? As long as they have the groom with them, they cannot fast. But the time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. No one sews a patch of **unshrunk cloth** on an old garment. Otherwise, the new patch pulls away from the old cloth, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts **new wine** into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost as well as the skins. No, **new wine** is put into **fresh wineskins**."

You don't mourn at a wedding—you celebrate with the **Groom**. Jesus' presence changes everything. But He also points ahead to the day He will be **taken away**. The cross is already coming into view.

The **old garments** and **old wineskins** point toward the religious leaders who refused to listen and respond to Jesus in faith. These people are not flexible enough to bend their beliefs to trust WHO Jesus is and what Jesus says.

The **unshrunk cloth** and **fresh wineskins** are the followers of the One who didn't come to patch old holes and pour out the same Old Covenant message of the prophets. Jesus brings **new wine** - the New Covenant - a new kind of relationship with new methods, pouring Himself into fresh followers.

➡ Jesus didn't come to *reform* the Old Covenant - this is the TRANSFORMATION that comes with the New Covenant!

More Confrontations on the Sabbath

Mark 2:23-24

On the Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to make their way, picking some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is **not lawful** on the **Sabbath**?"

What were they doing that was **unlawful**? *Were they stealing?* No. According to Deut. 23:25, travelers were allowed to pluck grain from neighbors' fields as they passed through, but they couldn't use a sickle to harvest another person's land. That would have been unlawful. Preparing a meal on the Sabbath would have been unlawful and the Pharisees interpreted plucking the grain and rubbing it in their hands to separate the grain from the husks, as "food prep".

Mark 2:25-26

He said to them, "Have you never read what **David** and those who were with him did when he was in need and hungry—how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and **ate the bread of the Presence**—which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests—and also **gave some to his companions**?"

The great King David and his men did what was **unlawful** - eating **the bread of Presence**. David approached the priests asking for food. They had nothing to give - except **the bread of Presence** - that was **only for the priests**. Yet the priests gave it to them and David and his men. Jesus poses a question without ever asking it: "So did King David break God's Law? And if so, why were David and his men not condemned for their actions?" Saving King David & his holy men from starving was the greater law. And - **based on the evidence - God was good with that.**

- David and his disciples broke the Written God-made Rule,
- but Jesus' disciples did not - They broke the Rabbinical (man-made) Rule.

² David E. Garland, Mark, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 104.

Mark 2:27-28

Then he told them, "**The Sabbath was made for man** and not man for the Sabbath. So then, **the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.**"

The Sabbath was meant to *BLESS* mankind, not be a *BURDEN*. It was meant to be a day to rest, not a day to scrutinize every little movement. Jesus lets these respected scribes know they are not interpreting the Scriptures correctly.

If Jesus, **the Son of Man, is Lord - MASTER & BOSS - of the Sabbath**, this means HE determines how the Sabbath was to be observed. But ONLY YAHWEH GOD could do that! ***This claim by Jesus is blasphemous, unless it's true!***

The Author of the Sabbath is the Authority of the Sabbath.

ONLY GOD can legitimately make that claim. If Jesus is the AUTHOR of the Sabbath, then He rightly interprets that **the Sabbath was meant to be a blessing to man, not a burden**. If **the Lord of the Sabbath** says, "*They haven't done anything wrong*" then *His interpretation of HIS WRITTEN RULES trumps their Rabbinical Rules*.

If JESUS, **the Son of Man**, is claiming to be the Author of the Sabbath - which would also mean He is the AUTHOR of the Scriptures, and the AUTHOR of LIFE!

❓ **Do YOU recognize Jesus as the Author & Authority of YOUR life?** Do you trust what JESUS says or have you decided to be your own authority?

Mark 3:1-5

Jesus entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a shriveled hand. In order to accuse him, they were watching him closely to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath. He told the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand before us." Then he said to them, "Is it **lawful to do good on the Sabbath** or to do evil, to **save life** or to kill?" But they were silent. After looking around at them with anger, he was grieved at the hardness of their hearts and told the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out, and **his hand was restored**.

Once again, Jesus heals this man *ON THE SABBATH*, and *PROVES* that...

The Author of the Sabbath is the Authority of the Sabbath.

Mark 3:6

Immediately the Pharisees went out and started plotting with the Herodians against him, how they might kill him.

What an IRONY we see here. When Jesus chooses to **do this good on the Sabbath** and restores a man's hand, these men are plotting **to do evil** - to take Jesus' life. This is the response of sick people who don't think they need a doctor. They push away from Jesus and want Him far from them! But, for those sick people who realize they need a doctor, **the Lord of the Sabbath is STILL transforming SINNERS!**

☀️ **Chris Cherp** Comfort in His Presence

As you can imagine, life for me was a blast—for a short season. Then, all hope began to fade. I started to realize I could not fill the emptiness or loneliness in my life. Though I longed for the comfort of having my Father God with me in my everyday affairs, I just didn't understand how it could be possible, especially since He is perfectly holy and I am far from it (Psalm 99:9).

Then one evening while washing the dishes, I heard some preacher on television say, "Look at my hands; there are no holes. Look at my back; there are no scars." He went on to say that he is not our Savior but Jesus Christ is and He is our eternal righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

That statement got my attention...The more I listened to this preacher on television, the more I began to see that even my future sins were paid for at the Cross, too. God, who is not subject to time, took all the punishment of my sins and laid it on the body of Jesus at the Cross (1 Peter 2:24). This was all done almost two thousand years before I was even born.

The moment I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior—many years ago now—was the moment ALL my sins were forgiven. I no longer had to go around feeling like a hypocrite, pretending to be perfect, and hiding all my mistakes and failures. I could begin to walk in the freedom of knowing Jesus was, and forever is, my righteousness and that my Father God views me through Jesus, not through my mistakes (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 8:12).

If you're feeling alone, longing for the comfort of His presence, then I encourage you to stop looking at yourself and begin looking at Jesus and what He did for you at the Cross. Understand that He is God and His work is far superior to any work of man. His work at the Cross was perfect and complete. There is nothing for us to do except believe and not forget all the benefits He has given to us (Psalm 103:2). We are righteous through Christ and as a result, our Father God will always be near us.

If you have never invited Jesus into your heart or even if you have just walked away from your relationship with Him over the years, know that it's not too late to form a healthy relationship with Him. He waits patiently for each one of us to come to the realization that we need Him, and once we call on Him, He will never leave us.

► **Leave your sin and follow Jesus.**

Jesus is a Friend of Sinners, but not a friend of sin.

► **Value the TRUTHS of God over the traditions of men.**

► **Serve sinners & Share the hope of Jesus.**

- **Next Sunday, October 18** we will meet together at the Fellowship Campus for **Love LOUD** - breakfast @ 8:30am, worship, & short devotion. Then we will launch into our community to meet *IMMEDIATE needs* & address their *ULTIMATE needs*.

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Derek & Emily Beaty** (813-763-4421), or **Chris & Caitlin Day** (850-673-7920), **Glen & Margie Peacock** (850-464-1484).

Discussionquestions

These questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your family, friends, or small group.

1. **Read Mark 2:13-17.** What surprises you about Jesus calling Levi and eating with tax collectors and sinners? What does this reveal about His mission?
2. Jesus says that sick people need a doctor. What keeps us from recognizing our own need for Jesus?
3. **"Jesus is a Friend of Sinners, but not a friend of sin."** How can we follow His example by showing genuine friendship while speaking truth and encouraging repentance?
4. Levi welcomed Jesus and others into his home. How could you use your home—or another place where you spend time—to build relationships and help people encounter Jesus?
5. **Read Mark 2:18-22.** Why does Jesus compare His presence to a wedding celebration? What do the cloth and wineskin illustrations add to His answer about fasting?
6. **Read Mark 2:23-28.** How does "The Sabbath was made for man" help explain God's purpose for the Sabbath? How can we distinguish God's commands from our own religious preferences?
7. **"The Author of the Sabbath is the Authority of the Sabbath."** Where do you find it difficult to submit to Jesus' authority rather than follow your own judgment?
8. **Read Mark 3:1-6.** What is ironic about the religious leaders' response to the healing? What do Jesus' anger and grief reveal about His heart?
9. Chris's story reminds us that Jesus can transform someone we might consider unlikely to follow Him. Who have you been tempted to give up on, and how could you begin praying for and loving that person?
10. As we prepare for **Love LOUD**, what practical step will you take to serve someone's immediate needs and share the hope of Jesus? How can this small group help you follow through?