

## Mark 1:40-2:17 “New Beginnings”

Over the last few weeks we have been working our way through chapter 1 of the Gospel of Mark and we should just keep in mind that this Gospel is action packed as it moves from one scene to the next.

Just for example listen to the different events that took place in just 23 verses from our study last week. Jesus called 4 fishermen to Himself telling them that He would make them Fishers of Men. He went to the synagogue and began to teach as no one else ever had and he had the authority to cast out a demon. He then went to the home of Simon Peter and Andrew and healed Peter's mother in law. That same night the crowds came seeking the healing touch of the Lord...and then that very next morning Jesus was up early before it was daylight seeking the Father in prayer before announcing that it was time for Him to move on preaching the gospel to others.

And that brings us to verse 40 of chapter 1 which says the following  
**<sup>40</sup> Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.”**

Here we are told that a leper came to Jesus and we need to talk about leprosy and what it was and understand a little bit about the culture and the law of God and what it had to say about leprosy to fully understand what took place as this unfolds.

Today leprosy is what we call Hanson's disease and at the onset of this disease you probably wouldn't think much of it as a small spot might appear on your arm or leg but what began as something small would eventually become a much bigger problem. That small spot would then progress into a white spot that became shiny or scaly and then the spots would spread to other areas of the body. Sores would

then develop and begin to open up and the disease would begin to target your nerves...As your nerves were effected it led to the individual losing feeling which would result in further injuries without the person knowing about it. Fingernails and toenails might fall off and eventually portions of the limbs would die and fall off as well. In the end stages of the disease your mouth, eyes and gums would rot away as your teeth fell out from a lack of tissue. And just so you have it in mind we have this same account over in Luke 5:12 which makes it clear that this man was advanced in the disease...so he was probably disfigured at this point.

Beyond the physical pain and suffering the worst part of being a leper was that you would be ostracized from society. Once diagnosed according to the law a leper was to be outside the city gates meaning they would have to leave their homes, they would tear their clothing and they would have to keep at least 6 feet of distance between themselves and another...When someone passed by it was the lepers responsibility to cry out "Unclean, Unclean!" so those passing by could keep their distance.

Leprosy in the Bible is often said to be a picture of sin...Sin so often begins under the skin, but it slowly works its way out eventually enveloping the individual leading to death.

With that background in place we should then look at how this leper behaved. Perhaps he had heard of Jesus and His authority over both demons and sickness and as he heard about it perhaps just a tinge of hope crept into his heart. There was a problem though...How could he get to the Lord? For him to approach someone, to come near to

someone else was off limits and yet we can see that for this man nothing was going to stop him from coming to the Lord.

And notice that as he came to Jesus he simply says “IF YOU ARE WILLING YOU CAN MAKE ME CLEAN” for this man it was not could Jesus heal him, it was not does Jesus have the ability to heal me but is it the will of God to make me clean. I think that’s a great model of prayer for you and I as we seek the healing of those that are sick. There are some that have the thought that as they pray God desires to heal everyone as long as there is enough faith...I would say that yes we should have faith and an understanding that Jesus can heal at any moment but at the same time we must ask the Lord “Is it your will that they would be healed.”

We must understand that often times the Lord has a much bigger plan and reason for sickness than we could ever grab hold of...It may be in your sickness that you will have the opportunity to minister to many others...It may be that you get to experience the closeness of Jesus and the provision of Jesus in ways that you would never experience if it was not for the struggles that you were facing.

Even Paul we are told in 2 Timothy 4:20 at the end of his life said this **20 Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.** Did Paul lack faith that this man could be healed? I seriously doubt it and yet at this point he had to leave a man behind who had become sick.

To sum this up, Yes Jesus absolutely can heal and He does heal and we should ask Him to heal in full faith and we should do so often I believe...but it is not always His will that every sickness would be cured. If that was the case then why does anyone ever die? Does a

person die of cancer or a heart failure because they don't have enough faith or because we live in a world that is fallen?

So this leper comes before the Lord falling before Him and asking for healing and then look at verses 41-42 which say <sup>41</sup>Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." <sup>42</sup>As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. In this case Jesus was willing and we quickly see that this leper was healed of his leprosy. It's interesting to think about Jesus in this situation and you can imagine that as the leper approached the Lord the crowd was probably appalled, I can imagine many running away to keep away from this unclean man...and yet Jesus had compassion on him.

It's amazing to me that the ones that everyone else runs away from Jesus embraces...I'm not talking about just those that have leprosy as we see here in our narrative but think of those that often times end up giving their lives to Christ...It's usually the broken hearted, the ones that are down and out, those that no one seems to have a heart for.

I would challenge us today by asking who are the lepers in our society? Who are the ones that are often pushed away and overlooked? Perhaps we should be challenged to learn from our Lord as He ministered to this leper.

Another thing that stands out to me here in this narrative is the simple fact that Jesus after saying He was willing actually reaches out and touches this leper. In the life of Jesus we see Him heal people in all kinds of ways and at times He would just say the word and it would be done...But here he touches the leper and we might ask when was the

last time anyone touched this man? How long had it been since he had hugged his family? How long had it been since he had been embraced with love?

And then I just wonder how it was for this man when he was healed...I wonder if his skin began to regenerate, if his limbs that were lost came back.

Look at verses 43-44 which say <sup>43</sup> **And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once,** <sup>44</sup> **and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”** Now this is interesting for the Lord to tell this man to tell no one and then he gave him a mission to head to the priest and to offer for his cleansing the things commanded by Moses and notice the Lord says it would be a testimony to them.

We might scratch our heads at this and say well what does it mean to show yourself to the priest and this is why we should be reading all of God's Word for in Leviticus 13-14 we have both how to diagnose a person who might have leprosy and then what to do when they were cleansed. There was an offering that was to be made and the priest was to examine the individual to see if they had indeed been cured.

Now here is an interesting thing about leprosy in the Bible. If you look all through the old testament there are only two times that record that someone was actually healed of this disease. The first time was actually the sister of Moses who was Miriam back in Numbers 12 and the second time was with a man named Naaman who was a king of a foreign land in 2 Kings 5.

Two whole chapters written and scarcely any indication that anyone had been healed previously. I would submit to you that it may very well be that God led Moses to write two full chapters of the Bible about leprosy and what to do if someone had it and what to do if they were healed for this very person that is before us and healed of Jesus. **If you were a priest and this man showed up and said “Hey I was a leper but a man named Jesus healed me”** that would have been alarming indeed for simply said that did not happen...and more than likely this person would have to do some research to know what to do and how to perform the offering...Surely when the man came it was a testimony to the priests that someone great was on the scene.

And then look at verse 45 which says <sup>45</sup> **However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.** Now I have to say it would have been quite difficult to keep your mouth shut after being healed of such a gross sickness and this man actually disobeyed the Lord as He went out and told everyone he saw...as a result the Lord had to be out in deserted places as the crowds were just too much for him to minister in. It's ironic that the Lord told this man to be quiet and he disobeyed and today He tells you and I to tell the world of His love and goodness and so often we stay quiet.

Let's move on to chapter 2 if you look at verses 1-2 which say **And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. <sup>2[a]</sup>Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.** So Jesus is back in



Capernaum again and as people heard he was in the house and which house we aren't sure but it may be the home of Peter and Andrew again but as the people heard they immediately gathered together and so many came that the house was essentially busting at the seams. One commentator stated that the homes that have been excavated from this time period would allow about 50 people to fit inside shoulder to shoulder. I can imagine the windows being opened and the people outside pressing to be able to see the Lord even from a distance.

And what did the Lord do when he had a crowd watching? Did he perform the miracles? Did He focus on casting out demons? No, His focus was on the preaching of the word to them. To perform a miracle may cause a person to have interest in Jesus but it wouldn't teach them about who He really was. It was far more important to hear truth and know who Jesus was than it was to see a miracle...Though the miracles certainly brought validity to what He was saying.

Look at verses 3-4 which say <sup>3</sup>**Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men.** <sup>4</sup>**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.** Four men arrive on the scene and they have in their hands a bed with a paralytic who was lying on it...When they arrive however they discover there is no room for them and yet that would not stop them as they went up on the roof and made a hole that they could lower their friend down through.

It's interesting that as these arrived no one made room for them, how sad is that? People were perhaps so concerned about themselves

and what they could get from Jesus that they didn't care about the needs of others. Sometimes I think you and I can be like those in the house in that we are just thinking of self and we have no concern for getting those that most need the Lord to Him...We should be careful we don't become a hindrance to others knowing Jesus.

**These four friends though upon realizing they could not get** into the house would not be stopped. They went the extra mile for their friend, they refused to let a little bump in the road stop them from getting their friend to Jesus and I think this is a good picture of the battle that you and I face as we pray for those that we wish to know the Lord Jesus. So often there are obstacles that get in the way and sadly often we just give up rather than pressing in...These men were unwilling to let a little crowd of people get in the way. We might ask ourselves "How far are we willing to go that an individual we know might come to Jesus?"

Now, often times the homes in biblical times would have a small flat roof on them that people would use as a place to sit or even sleep in the evenings when it was hot and they would have a staircase on the side of the house leading up to it. The roof itself would often be made of thatch or mud that had become hardened but in the Gospel of Luke which lists this same account we learn that this house actually had tiles on it.

And so you can imagine that Jesus is in the house and there is this large crowd inside and suddenly you hear some footsteps up on the roof and then you start to hear some hammering and some smacking and shortly after you see dust starting to fall and then clumps of dirt and sticks and pieces of tile and then a hole opens up...and I imagine



the room became quiet at this point as these four friends struggled to get their friend to Jesus...you can imagine the silence as the paralyzed man was lowered before Jesus and the crowd I am sure is wondering what is Jesus going to do in response to this.

I wonder what the owner of the house thought? Was he thinking “Someone is going to pay for this mess” was he taking the names of those responsible...Or were they just happy to see someone having the chance to come to the Lord?

So here the paralyzed man is before Jesus, the four friends are probably grinning with joy that they have accomplished what they came for and now their friend can be healed and yet if you look at verse 5 something very different transpires it says <sup>5</sup>**When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”** Well, this was probably unexpected and in reality probably not what the friends had in mind for their paralytic friend and yet I would submit to you that the most important and powerful miracle that can ever take place is when Jesus forgives a person of their sins and moves a person from a wrong place in life to a right relationship with the Father.

I think we often underestimate how powerful the forgiveness of God is. If you think about it if a person was to be healed physically in this life and yet remain unforgiven what good does that do the person? I mean it may help them for a few years or decades and yet if they have no eternal life in Jesus then what do they really have? They essentially have nothing...and While Jesus does heal people and certainly that's an important and awesome thing the very best miracle Jesus does is to forgive a person of their sin.

Some speculate that perhaps this young man was paralyzed because of a sin he had committed...The STD called Syphilis has a complication attached to it that can lead to paralysis...perhaps this man fell as he ran after stealing something or he rebelled against his parents when they said not to do something...we don't know for sure but Jesus wanted this man above all things to know he was forgiven.

We should understand that when Jesus made this statement that this man's sins were forgiven that every religious person in the room would have been intensely listening and if you look at verses 6-7 we get the reason why <sup>6</sup> **And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts,** <sup>7</sup> **"Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"** We should remember that Jesus as He ministered was creating quite a stir and as the religious leaders were hearing about Him they too were curious as to what He had to say...It was their task to keep watch over what transpired in the religious community in order to keep things in line with what they believed should be taught...So when Jesus came along naturally they wanted to investigate.

And the scribes when they heard Jesus say that this man's sins were forgiven immediately began to think in their hearts that this man was a blasphemer and the reason for that was that God alone could forgive a person's sins.

Essentially Jesus as He was doing this was claiming to have the authority not only to pronounce forgiveness but to actually take action leading to forgiveness...and simply said if Jesus had no ability to do this or if He was assuming the ability to do this in the eyes of those there **Jesus was making a claim that He was God...**For the religious

folks this was a troubling statement indeed. Their assessment was correct the problem was they didn't have all the information and as this unfolds Jesus will provide evidence that He can indeed forgive...and really what this reveals to us is that Jesus is indeed God in the flesh.

Look at verse 8 which says <sup>8</sup>**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?"** Can you imagine being a scribe and you are thinking about Jesus and the claim He has just made and you are thinking He is a blasphemer and then the Lord calls you out about it asking why you reason about these things in your heart?

That would have been pretty shocking to have someone call you out like that...Perhaps the scribes nervously glanced at each other as this man has just brought out in public the thoughts that were in their hearts.

Now I would submit to you that as Jesus is able to discern the thoughts of these men that this is a great example of what is called the gift of discernment or the gift of a word of knowledge that is talked about over in 1 Corinthians 12. These gifts are seen as a supernatural understanding of a situation or being able to speak about something that you should have no knowledge about.

We also see this gift in action with Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5 and this was when they sold some property and pretended like they were donating all of the money they had gotten from the sale to the church but in reality they had kept some back...And Peter called them out as

the Spirit of God revealed to him what they had done in their hearts and minds.

As Jesus was able to speak to them about their thoughts this would have been additional evidence of who He was...**We might remember that God knows the thoughts and intents of** our hearts better than we know ourselves. **He knows what we will do before we do it. He knows all things and there** is nothing that is done under the sun that He doesn't know about.

**Look with me at verse 9 as Jesus continues by saying <sup>9</sup>Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?** So Jesus asks them which of these two things is easier to say to a person...**when you think about it if you say to someone their sins are forgiven can you physically see that with your eyes?** No, it's an action that is done in the heart...**On the other hand to stand in front of a multitude** of people and to say to a man that can't walk that they should get up what is it that is going to be seen? **Well you are going to learn real quick if what that person says has any** power to it as you either watch the person rise up or you see them stay on the mat...**It would be an embarrassment indeed to say** this and then no action followed.

**So I think it's much harder to say that a person should get up and take their bed and walk.**

**Look at verses 10-12 which say <sup>10</sup>But that you may know that the Son of Man has <sup>[b]</sup>power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup>"I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." <sup>12</sup>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!”**

So now Jesus combines the two statements together by saying that the evidence of His ability to forgive will be validated with the performing of this miracle as He says to the man that He should get up, take his mat and go home.

And then the man simply gets up and goes. How awesome do you think that would be to see something like that?...and I think when it says that they were amazed and glorified God that we don't really have a grasp of what that scene looked like. Can you imagine a miracle like this taking place before your eyes? I can imagine people just weeping at the goodness of God, I can imagine them jumping up and down, I can imagine them praising God and blessing His name...I can imagine the people standing in awe as they looked at Jesus.

We should think about this paralytic and what he had gone through in his life. When you don't use your legs for a long time the muscles will atrophy making them extremely weak and emaciated...I wonder how many times this man had given the command from his brain to his legs to move and over and over there was no response...and yet this time when he gives the command the legs responded and I wonder if muscles began to grow and strength was in those legs like they hadn't had for some time.

Jesus is the great healer of our lives. He does heal the sick and the blind and the lame. He heals the hearts of those who are sinners and are in need of forgiveness. Sometimes people have it in their minds that the Lord could not forgive them of the sins they have engaged in. Some think they are too far gone and yet Jesus clearly demonstrates

over and over that He can and does forgive the sins of those that come to Him in humility.

One final brief comment before we move on you might notice in verse 10 the phrase “Son of Man” and you might underline that for it is a Messianic title of the coming Messiah that is first found in the book of Daniel 7:13-14...As Jesus said this of Himself He would have been plainly telling all who were there that He was indeed the Messiah.

Ok one final narrative here for tonight if you look with me at verses 13-14 which say <sup>13</sup>Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. <sup>14</sup>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.

Here we are introduced to yet another of Jesus’ disciples and here he is referred to by the name of Levi but we know him much better by what is probably a name Jesus gave him which is Matthew.

We are told here that this man was a tax collector and we should just understand that being a tax collector was a despised job by the Jewish people. It meant you had abandoned your people and instead gone to work for the enemy the Romans. Often times people would consider you a traitor...your family might ostracize you and so low were you considered that you could no longer be used as a witness to a crime in a court of law and you also couldn’t attend the synagogue.

What would happen if you were working to become a tax collector was you would make kind of like a bid for the job to the Romans. You would promise to them that if they gave you a certain territory that you would collect a specified amount of taxes to give to them...What was



sad is that many tax collectors would go way beyond what they promised to collect and they would then keep the extra money for themselves...so they were seen as thieves among the people.

So Jesus as He came along was out near the sea and when He saw this man Levi he called him to “follow Me” and this man we are told arose and followed. Understand that for Levi to do this was a huge step of faith on his part for if you left your post as a worker of the Roman empire the odds were you could never go back...Peter and John as fishermen if the whole thing with Jesus didn't work out could just go back to fishing and we do see them do that after the death of Jesus...for Matthew there was no return...He was leaving a lucrative life with many pleasures to follow after the man called Jesus.

Perhaps he had been watching Jesus and hearing about Him and there was something brewing in this tax collectors heart...and then to have the Lord look at you and say “follow me” this was the chance that I believe Matthew had been waiting for and you can imagine the Roman soldiers that were nearby calling out after him as he walked away asking where he was going.

It's interesting that the name Matthew means “gift of God” and we can see that the Lord took this man who the people despised and worked so greatly in him that we now have one of the greatest and most complete recordings of the life of Jesus through him.

Some speculate that Matthew was actually a Levite by birth and if it is so he would have grown up studying the scriptures and being given the opportunity to perhaps serve the Lord in the temple duties as a priest...They say this about him because if you read his Gospel it is clear that he had a vast understanding of the scriptures as over and

over he records the things that were spoken of about the Messiah in the Old testament and how Jesus fulfilled them.

Now I love what happens next and surely this made the religious folks of the time squirm in their seats as the actions of Jesus challenged their thoughts about the heart of God...Look at verses 15-16 which say **<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> And when the scribes <sup>[c]</sup> 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?"**

Just so we can understand something about the culture of biblical times when you ate you would often have food placed before you and then you would tear off pieces of bread and you would dip the bread in the same dish as someone else. Eating together with another person was considered kind of like a soul binding, becoming one kind of activity.

And so in the minds of the religious world to eat with sinners was a major no-no...it was like you were saying you approved of the lifestyle of those that you ate with and so when they saw Jesus doing this they were just flabbergasted and asked why he would do such a thing to His disciples...Notice they didn't question Jesus Himself as they probably knew He would speak against them and put them in their place.

For Levi the tax collector understand that because of who he was the only people that spent time with him were others that had been cast away from society...So the sinners, the rebels, the other tax collectors

would have been who he knew...and this meal may have been like a farewell meal to his old friends.

It may have also been his way of saying that his life was going to be different and I think that you and I should also as we come to Jesus look to minister to the hearts of those that we once spent time with...We aren't condoning their sin and certainly Jesus was not doing that but instead we are saying look at my life and how Jesus has changed me and why don't you leave your life also and follow the King.

Then we come to verses 17-18 as Jesus catches wind of what the religious folks had to say. It says <sup>17</sup>**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, <sup>[d]</sup>to repentance."**

Jesus in saying this displays his love for the sinner while at the same time speaking against those that were religious.

Those who think they are religious, those that have confidence in themselves are like those who believe they have no need of a physician...They think themselves to be healthy. They can't see their sin.

Those who are far from God however can often quickly recognize their failures and their fighting against a holy God...and as the Lord ministers to them they can start to realize that they have a huge need for a spiritual physician in their lives, someone that can help them and forgive them and set them on the right path.

It was like Jesus was saying you so called “righteous” men who are here have no idea how blind you really are but these so called “sinners” know they need someone to help them.

And simply said the Lord is quick to respond to those that have nothing to offer, that are crying out to Him while those that are stuck in their pride thinking they have no need of a Savior will be resisted and left behind if they don't come to their senses.

I would submit to you as we close today that the reality is that all of us before we come to Jesus and find the forgiveness of sins are in the same boat with those who are sick and in need of a physician...and what I mean is that we all without Jesus are desperately lost in our sin.

The reality is that Jesus came not for those who think they are healthy spiritually but for those that know they are sick and in need of help. God cannot minister to those who feel they have no need for help.

It's interesting that Jesus looks on the heart of a man or a woman and if they begin to recognize they are sick with sin and they are lost and hopeless the Lord will go to that person and reach out to them and look to bring them to the Father...and I hope you have experienced that in your own life...that you like Levi the tax collector knew that you were in a place that you had nothing left and the Lord called to you and you by His grace chose to walk away from the life of emptiness that you were living to follow after Him.

It's good to keep in mind that Jesus called Matthew to follow Him and then He changed His life and sent him on a new path. That's what Jesus wants to do for us also and today if you are here and the Lord Jesus is calling you to follow after Him I would just say that you should

respond to His calling in your life like Levi did...and if you are here and you know you are a sinner and you know that you have a need in your heart to visit the great physician of our souls who is Jesus and you need to be forgiven of your sins I would just encourage you to call out to the One that can save you.

Let me pray for us and look if you need to receive Jesus in your heart today I just encourage you to grab me after the service and I would love to talk with you about the love of the Lord, the one that forgives the sins of humanity.

Let's pray.

## **Mark 1:40-2:17 “New Beginnings in Life”**

### **Cross References**

#### **Chapter 1**

#### **Verse 40**

2 Timothy 4:20