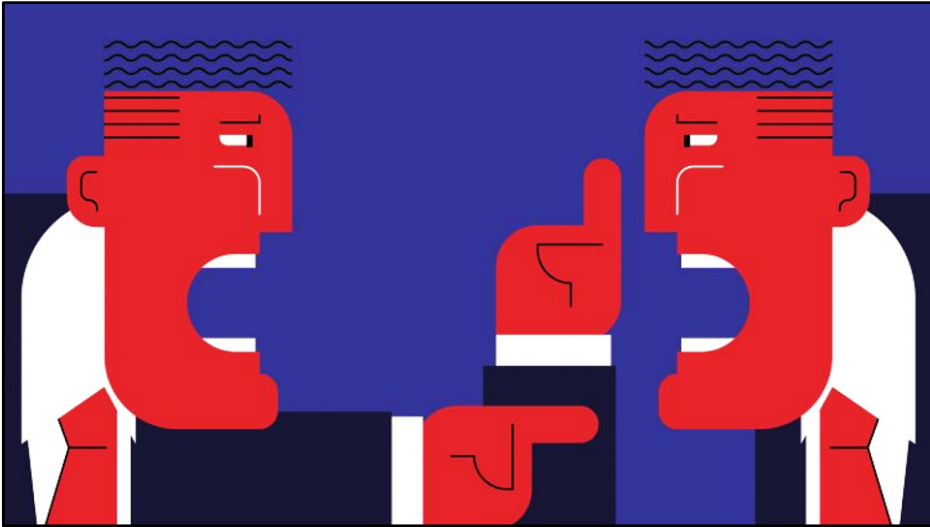




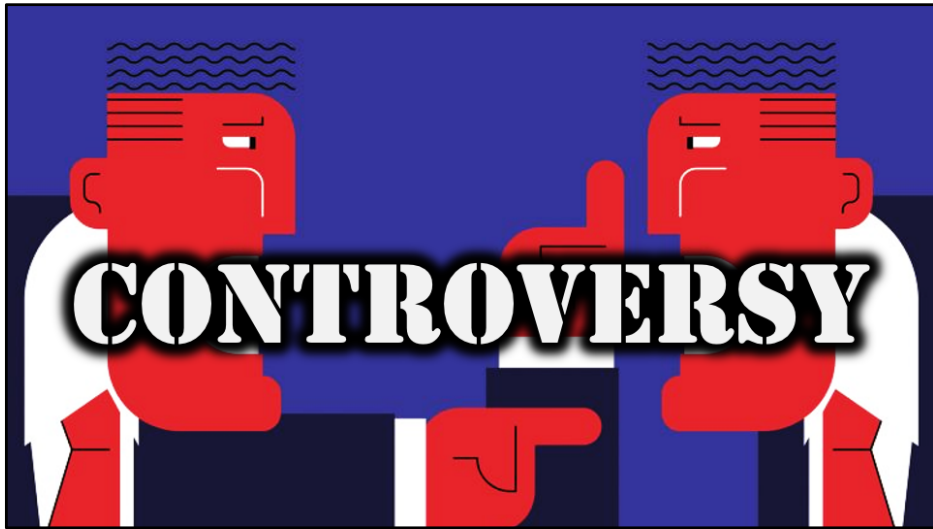
1

**(Title Slide)**



**It is all around us.**

**TR: Isn't it?**



3

**I'm speaking of controversy.**

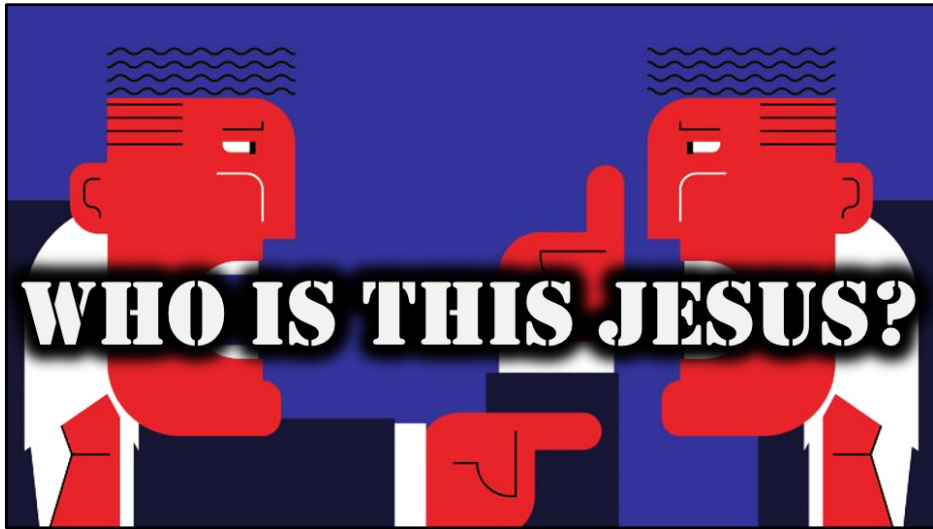
**TR: And things really get hot and ugly when the controversy is laced with the arsenic of . . .**



4

**. . . *ad hominem* attacks, where we attack an opponent's character or motives rather than answering the argument or claim,  
-- these are attacks "against the man/person"  
-- We live in a world where we rarely discuss policies, but rather attack the person.**

**TR: and we may have missed the greatest controversy of all . . .**



## READ SLIDE

**TR: In the first century they did not sport crew cuts and ties, but Mark's Gospel brings this most important of controversies to the fore.**

- **baptizes with the Spirit**
- **identifies with us sinners**
- **is the unique Son of God**
- **was tested & found perfect**
- **proclaims a radical Gospel**
- **has radical authority to teach**
- **has radical authority over evil**
- **was mission-focused**

6

**Who is this Jesus . . . He is the One Who . . . READ SLIDE  
-- (last point) Jesus was mission-focused, not looking for  
the demon's testimonies, the crowds' accolades, nor  
off-mission proclamations.**

**TR: He came . . .**

Mark 1:14b-15

. . . Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,<sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

ESV

7

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: As we begin with chapter 2 of Mark’s Gospel, we come to a section with . . .**

**2:1 - 3:6**  
***Five Controversies***

8

**. . . the accounts of five controversies.**

**TR: The first one is found in 2:1-12. All these address the BIG CONTROVERSY by declaring Who this Jesus claimed to be . . .**



# WHO IS THIS JESUS?

**He is the One with . . .**

- **Authority to Forgive**

9

## READ SLIDE

- We minimize the controversy about forgiveness . . .
- . . . until some court or judge or boss seems to offer forgiveness to someone who has deeply wronged us.
  
- Isn't that what all the racial tension is about . . . anger at the thought that wrongs against us or our group can be declared inconsequential?
- EX: [cancel culture] = popular practice of canceling support for public figures and companies after they have done or said something considered objectionable

or offensive.

-- The One Whose claims are so radical as to require<sup>9</sup> us to either CANCEL Him or Embrace . . . Stone Him or Own Him (as I said one Easter years ago)

TR: Let's better understand this controversial, radical Jesus . . .

Mark 2:1-2

And when (Jesus) returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. <sup>2</sup>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.**

ESV

10

## READ SLIDE

- Capernaum, on the northwest shores of the Sea of Galilee, seemed to be Jesus' base in the area.
- [home] was probably the home of Simon and Andrew.
- The word got out that Jesus was back and people packed in and around.
- But He was not healing and casting out demons, He was speaking the word . . .
- cf. 1:15 . . . "the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe"

**TR: Into this teaching moment . . .**

**10**

**Mark 2:3-4**

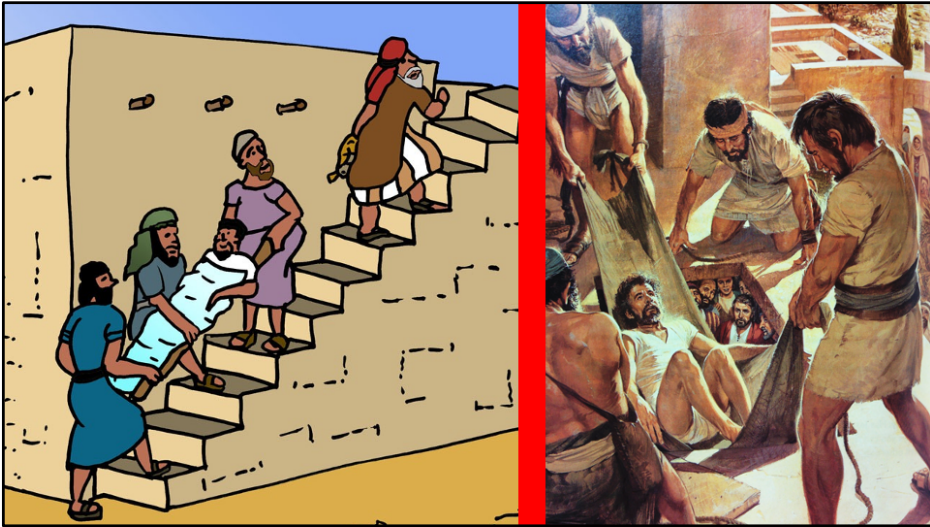
And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. <sup>4</sup>And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.

*ESV*

11

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Most houses had flat roofs, as depicted in these snippets of children's material art . . .**



12

**. . . there were often steps on the outer wall that lead to the roof.**

**TR: While I really like how the artist portrayed the paralytic's facial expression in the drawing to the right, he depicts the roof incorrectly. It was not a thin slab.**



13

**While in Israel, one of our leaders taught sitting in the doorway to an upper room. Though it was daytime, the room was lit only by small high windows and the oil lamps really helped.**

**-- Sitting there, looking up at the roof, the picture of what happened seemed much clearer.**

**-- Timbers 2-3 foot span between**

**-- Crosswise sticks**

**-- Then reeds, branches, thistles, overlaid with a foot of earth**

**-- Packed down to resist water . . . total of 2 feet<sub>3</sub>  
thick**

**-- During spring, the grass flourished on these roofs  
(Hughes, p. 62)**

**TR: The room Jesus was teaching the Word in wasn't  
bright and when the men tore the roof apart, it  
wasn't a clean event.**





**Perhaps the hole looked more like this, with a lot of dirt and building materials falling on the heads of people gathered there.**

**TR: The four men, and the paralytic, believed if they could only get to Jesus then life would be different.**

Mark 2:5

**And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”**

ESV

15

## READ SLIDE

-- Wait . . . wait!

-- If this were a movie set, you could hear the director call out, “Cut! Cut!” “Those aren’t your lines, Jesus!”

-- “You are supposed to say, “Get up and walk.”

-- Many sermons make this account about the faith of the four. Perhaps they are a good illustration of being persistent and creative in bringing people to Jesus. But that is not the point Mark is trying to make.

**TR: The controversial Jesus goes off-script, at least the script that the demons and crowds and healed lepers would want to write for Him. He initiates the controversy . . .**

Mark 2:5

And when Jesus saw their faith, **he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”**

ESV

16

**. . . when He says, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”**

**TR: Perhaps Jesus was pointing to the connection between sickness and sin.**

# **SIN & SICKNESS**

**ALL SICKNESS ← SIN**

**NOT EVERY SICKNESS ←  
SOMEONE'S SPECIFIC SIN**

17

**Clearly, all sickness is caused by sin . . . capital SIN.  
-- But Jesus elsewhere makes clear that not everyone's  
sickness or having bad things happen to them is caused  
by their or someone else, like their parents', sin.**

**TR: WHETHER Jesus was trying to say that true healing  
has to go deeper than mere physical healing, we know  
that what He said brewed a controversy.**

Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup>“Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

ESV

## READ SLIDE

- The crowds pressed in, but the scribes are sitting . . . best seats in the house?
- The scribes were the ones who copied the Scriptures. Having great familiarity with what we call the Old Testament, they were looked to for explanations of what the Word meant and how it should be applied.
- Perhaps the Spirit gave Jesus insight into their hearts.
- Perhaps Jesus was able to read their facial expressions and body language.
- Perhaps it was a combination of the two.

**-- Jesus declared the forgiveness in such a way that either He was claiming to be God OR claiming He was in a position to know if God forgave someone. Either way, He was taking a prerogative to Himself that only belonged to God.**

**TR: Jesus does not allow the moment of controversy to pass, He turns the table from their questions to His.**

Mark 2:8-9

And **immediately** Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup>**Which is easier**, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’?”

ESV

19

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Which is easier . . . easier in what way? Easier for whom?**



# **EASIER?**

**To say?**

**To do?**

20

**Which is easier to say? Probably “Your sins are forgiven,” since no one could objectively verify whether they were.**

**-- A healing would be verifiable, so it would be harder merely to say.**

**-- But which is easier to do? Healing a lame man is impossible without a miracle.**

**-- Forgiving someone’s sin is impossible for anyone except God.**

**-- But for God, healing a lame man OR forgiving sin is**

**equally “easy.”**

**20**

**TR: Sin is . . .**

# **FORGIVENESS**

**All sin is ultimately  
against God!**

21

**. . . ultimately against God. All sin!**

**TR: We imagine that the children of Israel's grumbling against Moses and Aaron was a sin against them.**

Exodus 16:8

And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? **Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.**”

ESV

22

**But as Exodus 16 makes clear . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: All sin is ultimately against God, so Who but God could have the authority to forgive sin? Back to Mark . . .**

•

Mark 2:10-11

“But that you may know that **the Son of Man** has authority on earth to forgive sins”— he said to the paralytic — <sup>11</sup>“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”

ESV

23

**Jesus goes on . . . READ SLIDE**

**-- The abrupt change from “that you may know” to “he said to the paralytic” makes some think that this is Mark’s comment explaining what happened.**

**TR: The title “Son of Man,” Jesus’ favorite self-description is common in the second half of Mark’s Gospel. Whether Mark or Jesus, the title goes back to . . .**

**Daniel 7:13**

**“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a **son of man**, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.**

*ESV*

24

**. . . Daniel 7. READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 14**

**Daniel 7:14**

**And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.**

*ESV*

25

## **READ SLIDE**

**-- Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom of God is at hand.**

**TR: And Jesus, the Son of Man, Whom we are getting to know through Mark's good news tidings . . .**

But that you may know that the Son of Man has **authority on earth to forgive sins**— he said to the paralytic — <sup>11</sup>“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”

ESV

**. . . has the authority on earth to forgive sins.**

**-- This claim of authority seems to make the “divine passive” of “your sins are forgiven” clearly a claim for equality with God.**

**-- Jesus has declared what is easier to say but harder to do . . . and now he says what is harder to say but easy for God to do . . . “rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”**

**TR: Can't you picture the man, who came with faith, now having to live out his faith? What did his face look**



**like?**

**26**

Mark 2:12

And he rose and **immediately** picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all **amazed** and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

ESV

27

**What we do know is . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: In the midst of the amazement about the paralytic being healed, don't miss the real controversy . . .**

# WHO IS THIS JESUS?

**He is the One with . . .**

- **Authority to Forgive**

28

## READ SLIDE

- The biggest controversy is tied to the person of Jesus of Nazareth.
- He can't merely be a good man or even a prophet . . . His claims are too controversial.
- The Muslims want to still respect Jesus, so they bury the evidence of the New Testament and suggest that Jesus never made blasphemous claims.
- Jesus, the Son of Man, demands that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him!

**TR: As we apply this (NEXT SLIDE = SAME)**

**28**

# WHO IS THIS JESUS?

**He is the One with . . .**

- **Authority to Forgive**

29

**(SAME SLIDE)**

-- . . . we should consider that . . .

-- If Jesus forgives someone, who are we not to extend forgiveness to them?

-- If Jesus forgives us, who are we to say, "I cannot forgive myself."

-- In reality, we may be people without the faith to believe in the authority of the Son of Man.

-- It is blasphemous to think that our standards or authority are higher than the One Whose Kingdom will not be ever be destroyed.

**TR: The second incident that Mark collects together for us in the 5 controversies, not necessarily in chronological order, shows us . . .**

# WHO IS THIS JESUS?

**He is the One with . . .**

- **Authority to Forgive**
- **Authority to Call Sinners**

30

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Begin with me in verse 13 . . .**

Mark 2:13

He went out again beside the sea,  
and all the crowd was coming to  
him, and **he was teaching them.**

ESV

31

**READ SLIDE**

-- Note, as in the previous event, Jesus was teaching the Word.

**TR: The controversy starts when . . .**



**Mark 2:14**

**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.**

*ESV*

32

## **READ SLIDE**

**-- Many think this is Matthew, whose name means "Gift of God."**

**-- Perhaps Levi was his actual name, and "Gift of God" was his nickname give by Jesus.**

**-- Mark records action . . . Jesus' command . . . Levi's response of discipleship.**

**TR: Levi seemed to call for a party to honor Jesus and perhaps introduce others to Him.**

Mark 2:15

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.

ESV

33

## READ SLIDE

- At first it says Levi reclined at table.
- But then it pictures many reclining “with Jesus” – like Jesus was the host.

TR: Who were these tax collectors?

# Tax Collectors

34

- **Tax-farming**
- **Stated Taxes: Poll, Ground, Income**
- **Duties: Road and harbor usage, sales tax, import and export fees**

## READ SLIDE

- They were people who has made bids to Rome to have the “tax franchise” for a certain area.
- Whatever the set tax burden Rome or Rome’s representatives imposed, they were to deliver . . .
- . . . but they could claim as much as they could.
- There were **STATED TAXES** with fixed rates.
- And **DUTIES** with lots of opportunity for graft. Could be called “toll collectors”
- John the Baptist told tax collectors in Luke 3, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.”

**-- EX: Said that honest tax collector so rare that there actually was a statue of one.**

**-- Because they aligned with Rome and interacted with Gentiles, they were excommunicated from the synagogue.**

**-- They were often disowned by their family and friends, having given in to a traitorous way to get rich quick.**

**TR: Our text says, “tax collectors and sinners.” Who were the “sinners?”**

## **“Sinners”**

- **technical term for people Pharisees felt were inferior because of lack of interest in scribal traditions: “cleanliness”, consorted with Gentiles**

35

### **READ SLIDE**

- In one sense we are all sinners, but here it seems a technical term.
- Remember Jesus story elsewhere about a Pharisee and tax collector who go to pray.
- The Pharisee said, “Thank you that I’m not like other men . . .” (Luke 18).

**TR: So, this house party was full of cultural traitors and the common, low life people of the land.**

Mark 2:16

And the **scribes of the Pharisees**, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

ESV

36

**The controversy hits full speed when . . . READ SLIDE  
-- To eat with someone was to have fellowship with them**

**TR: To these scribes (their job) who also were Pharisees (the brand of Judaism) these folks were unclean!**

# Pharisees

37

- **“Separated Ones”**
- **Included most scribes and lawyers**
- **Guardians and interpreters of the Law**

**The Pharisees were . . . READ SLIDE**

- **They were typically conservatives, though there were different schools of thought**
- **They were meticulous about tithing and cleanliness**
- **They had created the oral Torah . . . the collection of precedents that they used to apply the Law of Moses to daily life.**
- **Some were undoubtedly sincere in seeking God . . .**
- **. . . but Jesus calls them out as hypocrites, who twisted the Word for their own benefit.**

**TR: The adoring but shallow crowds of Mark 1 slip to the background, as the controversial Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners.**



**Mark 2:17**

**And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”**

*ESV*

38

## **READ SLIDE**

- All would agree that it is the sick who need a doctor.**
- Jesus, with His calling of Levi to follow Him, modeled what He came for . . . to call sinners.**
- They would have said, “We CANCEL him for being a traitor.”**

**TR: I appreciate the way the New Living Translation renders this . . . capturing what I think was Jesus’ intent . . .**

**Mark 2:17 NLT**

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.**”

39

**READ SLIDE**

- The scribes of the Pharisees “thought they were righteous.”
- They thought they were clean.
- They did not need Jesus, or anyone, to forgive them and call them into discipleship.

**TR: These first two controversy stories play off each other.**

# **WHO IS THIS JESUS?**

**He is the One with . . .**

- **Authority to Forgive**
- **Authority to Call Sinners**

40

**Because Jesus has the authority to forgive, He also has the authority to call sinners to be His disciples.**

**-- For those who think they are righteous, the upper crust of society, the good people because of the philanthropy . . .**

**-- . . . or the deeply conservative, churched folks who know how church is rightly done . . .**

**-- . . . Jesus stirs a big and deep controversy.**

**-- Over the past two years I worked to try to prevent the destruction of a local church. The declared**

controversies were nothing compared to the 40  
unwillingness to accept Jesus' authority to forgive  
and to call "sinners" to be His followers.

-- The horror of people sitting in a dark "sanctuary",  
unwilling to join the church gathering in a smaller,  
more size appropriate room. Of people walking  
away mad because things were not being done  
"their way."

TR: I can end on a sad note, looking around and  
seeing controversial divisive thoughts and actions all  
around. Ad hominem attacks. Or I can ask . . .

**WHY ARE THE TRUTHS  
BEHIND THESE  
TWO CONTROVERSIES  
SUCH GOOD NEWS  
FOR US?**

41

**READ SLIDE**

- I can consider Jesus, fixing my eyes upon Him.**
- The One with the authority to forgive and heal my deepest wounds.**
- The One with the authority to call a sinner like me to be His disciple.**

**TR: I THINK OF A STORY I RECENTLY RE-READ . . .  
(HUGHES, P. 70)**





**(Review story)**

**-- I believe Jesus delights when we have faith to believe that He can heal our paralysis and our even deeper wound of sinfulness. When we tear through the roof to be with Him.**

**-- I believe Jesus delights when He looks at us sitting at our toll booth and says, Leave it all and follow me, and we do.**

**-- There was no going back for Levi . . . and for those who do turn back, Jesus would say they are not fit for**

**the kingdom.**

42

**-- But for those who bow the knee to the authority of the Son of Man, He can make us into a masterpiece of His grace.**

**-- The most important controversy you will ever settle in your heart is “Who is this Jesus?”**