

# Keynotes from Tim Shenton's am Sermon on 21/11/2021

## Text: Mark 2 v 13-17

### “The ministry of Jesus”

#### Scripture references from the NIV

**Mark 2:13-17** Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. <sup>14</sup> As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him. <sup>15</sup> While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. <sup>16</sup> When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?' <sup>17</sup> On hearing this, Jesus said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'

These few verses take us to the heart of Jesus' ministry and answer two questions for us:

- I. Why did Jesus come? Why did he leave the glory and majesty of heaven to come to the filth of this earth?
- II. For whom did he come to live and die?

The answers to these questions were misunderstood by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who regarded themselves as being morally upright. It is true that they looked good on the outside. They had had a religious upbringing and were able to quote scripture almost at will. Yet when Jesus came, they could not answer those two questions and misunderstood his ministry.

Anyone who has tried to live a moral life in their own strength and takes a self-righteous view of themselves will have the same problem.

In **v15** (above), we see the Pharisees passing judgement on others, so when Jesus comes and starts to eat with tax collectors and sinners, it leads to misunderstanding. The Pharisees despised tax collectors and would not have expected the promised Messiah to seek their company.

## 1) Jesus' ministry was full surprises:

- **Jesus was baptised** – baptism is an outward sign of inward cleansing, yet Jesus was without sin. John was surprised that Jesus wanted to be baptised and tried to deter him (**Matthew 3: 13-15** see p4), but Jesus came to identify with his people. That is why he was tempted as we are tempted. The Lord Jesus Christ was baptised to fulfil all righteousness, but at that point, it was a surprise that he should do this.
- **Jesus carried out exorcisms (Mark 1:25-26** see p4) – no exorcisms had taken place in the Old Testament. It was unheard of, yet right at the beginning of the New Testament we see the carpenter from Nazareth casting out demons.
- **Jesus chose Simon and Andrew (Mark 1:16-18** see p4) – they were uneducated fishermen! We would have expected to pick men of education and standing, not these nobodies.
- **Jesus avoided crowds (Mark 1:36-38** see p4) – surely Jesus would want to go to the crowds to preach the gospel to them! Apparently, this was not what he wanted to do. It seems to us that he was missing a wonderful opportunity to save hundreds of souls, but he chooses to go somewhere else. In the same way, he told the cleansed leper not to tell anyone what had happened (**Mark 1:43-44** see p4). We would want everyone to know if that happened here! Jesus was the opposite.
- **Jesus was able to forgive sins (Mark 2:5** see p4) – the immediate response is that only God can forgive sins. It is surprising to hear Jesus say to the paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven, all the more so because he had not yet been crucified, shedding his blood and dying as a sacrifice of atonement.
- **Jesus chose Levi (Mark 2:14** above) – tax collectors were basically extortionists. They were regarded as traitors because they worked for the pagan government of the Roman Empire. Levi can be described as a disgraced Jew, unfaithful to his people and therefore hated by them. Yet Jesus goes to him, calls him to be

his disciple, changes his name to Matthew (which means gift of God) and uses him to write the first Gospel. We would never have chosen a man like Levi.

**Jesus' ministry is full of surprises in what he does, what he says and who he chooses.**

**2) Jesus' ministry was full of sinners** – at this meal there were many tax collectors and sinners (v15 above).

Jesus did not condone their sin, but he knew they needed help, like many others he met with.

- **The Samaritan woman (John 4:4ff see p4)** – Jesus had to go through Samaria, because he knew a divine appointment awaited him there. The woman was morally bankrupt, yet Jesus spoke to her and revealed himself as the Saviour of the world to her.
- **The crucified robber (Luke 23:39-43 see p4)** – Jesus spoke to him and promised this man who had lived such an evil life that he would be with Jesus in paradise.
- **Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:1-2 see p4** – there are many other examples of the demon possessed) When Jesus met Mary Magdalene, she had seven demons.
- **The woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11 see p4)** Everyone else was ready to pick up stones to stone her, but Jesus told her to go and leave her life of sin. He did not condemn her

This is the hope we have if we know that we are sinners. When we recognise that we are evil, we need to listen for the call of Jesus. He will say just two words to us:

### **Follow me**

Many have heard this call including the immoral Augustine of Hippo, the drunkard Billy Bray, violent gang

member Nicky Cruz and slave trader John Newton.

However, those who are deaf and are too busy shouting about their own righteousness will never hear the words '**Follow me**'. That call is only for those who

know they have gone wrong in life. If you think you are good enough, all you will hear is silence.

### **The ministry of Jesus is full of sinners**

#### **3) The ministry of Jesus is full of grace and mercy**

Jesus did not despise the tax collectors and sinners. He looked on them as patients, with himself as the great physician (vv16-17 above). Jesus knew he was the only one who could heal them from their sin sickness – they were diseased people who needed his help. None of them could heal themselves.

- Christ has not come to heal the righteous, but sinners (v17 above)
- The parable of the prodigal son shows us his grace and mercy. (Luke 15:11-32 see p4)

Throughout the gospels, we see how Jesus went:

- to the poor, the sad and the hungry
- to the weary and burdened
- to the crippled, blind and lame
- to the lost – ‘For the Son of man came to seek and save the lost’ (Luke 19:10)

He will hear our cry for help. We are sick with sin and need the great physician

### **Jesus is full of grace and mercy**

If you are like the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, always criticising and finding fault in others, there is no hope for you. You will find that your own so-called righteousness will not save you.

- If you are like Levi, knowing yourself to be a vile sinner, then Jesus is calling ‘Follow me’.

**Do not delay.** Levi immediately got up and followed Jesus. Indeed, we read in **Luke 5:28** that Levi left everything. He left his lucrative business.

**Levi lost his job but saved his soul.**

**Jesus’ ministry is full of grace and mercy.**

The following is a true story.

A note was given to the great preacher Rowland Hill, which said:

'Dear Sir, for your encouragement I send you this, not to exalt you, but to lay you low at the feet of

Christ Jesus. A man of a small fortune married a young woman with a little money. In a few years,

through their extravagance, they spent all they had, which drove him to such ways which made him

a terror to his wife and father-in-law, the latter of which he was determined to murder, and he set out

last summer on a Sunday with a full determination to do it. Going across White Conduit Fields

while you were preaching, he stopped to hear you, and the Lord pleased to send the word home with power, and it entered into his very soul, and the lion became a lamb from that very moment. The

Lord showed him what a devil he was; so that his heart of stone became a heart of flesh, and he is

now become the best of husbands, the best of fathers, and the best of sons-in-law; and as he was a

terror to the neighbourhood, he is now become a wonder to all'

**Jesus said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill.**

**I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'**

**Matthew 3: 13-15** <sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?' <sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.' Then John consented.

**Mark 1:25-26** 'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' <sup>26</sup> The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

**Mark 1:16-18** As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' <sup>18</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.

**Mark 1:36-38** Simon and his companions went to look for him,<sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!' <sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else

**Mark 1:40-44** A man with leprosy<sup>[h]</sup> came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'<sup>41</sup> Jesus was indignant.<sup>[i]</sup> He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' <sup>42</sup> Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.<sup>43</sup> Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: <sup>44</sup> 'See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.

**Mark 2:5** When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'

**John 4:4ff** Please read this in your Bible

**Luke 23:39-43** But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence?' <sup>41</sup> We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.'<sup>42</sup> Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'<sup>[d]</sup><sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'

**Luke 8:1-2** After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him,<sup>2</sup> and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out;

**John 8:1-11** Please read this in your Bible

**Luke 15:11-32** Please read this in your Bible