

# Welcome to the Hospital

## Բարի Եկար Հիանդանց

### Mark 2:13-22

Jesus was gaining popularity within the crowd. As I mentioned before, he was not interested in fame. He did not want to become a celebrity. In fact, he did not want all this recognition.

While we see masses of people who follow him, we also see opposition build up among the religious crowd.

In this section Mark 2:13-3:6, we find **four** disputes regarding Jewish ritual laws and customs which made the religious crowd very uncomfortable.

#### 1. Jesus eating with the sinners

**“Why does he eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners?’”** (2:16 NIV) is answers: **“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners”** (2:17 NIV).

#### 2. The disciples not fasting

**“How is it that John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?”** (2:18 NIV) He answered use a familiar saying about not patching the old garment with a new cloth or putting new wine into old wineskins (2:19, 21–22).

#### 3. The disciples doing unlawful things on the Sabbath

“Why do Jesus’ disciples do what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” (2:24) He answers with the proclamation, **“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,”** and, **“The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath”** (2:27–28).

#### 4. Jesus doing unlawful things on the Sabbath

Jesus asks those who have gathered around him in the synagogue to watch him closely find a reason to accuse him: **“Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”** (3:4).

The Pharisees have no answer. When Jesus restores a man to a healthy life, their only response is to plan with the Herodians to kill him (3:6).<sup>1</sup>

We cannot cover all today, let us start:

I wonder how you would feel if you saw your pastor in the company of a famous thief. I wonder how you would feel when you saw one of our church deacons having lunch with a famous immoral person. As Christians, we are called to lead a

holy life, a new life separated from the old. Yet we are not called to a monastic life. We are **in** the world but not **of** the world. (Insulation and not isolation)

Jesus, the simple carpenter from Nazareth, keeps moving and bringing change. Jerusalem used to be the center. Now with Jesus, any town, even the seashore is a pulpit used for teaching.

His presence **brought joy** to some and **caused anger** among others.

Jesus was preaching, teaching, serving, and healing. Nothing would stop him. He kept moving from city to city, from Capernaum to Galilee and back. **Jesus was moving.**

In today's passage we read:

**"He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them."** (Mark 2:13 ESV)

The crowd keeps coming. Again, I see that Mark stresses that Jesus **came to teach**. Teaching the Word was the center of his ministry.

**"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."**  
(Mark 2:14)

Jesus called Andrew and Simon near the sea. They were fishermen. They left their nets to be able follow Jesus. Now, Jesus is inviting a tax collector. Fishermen, may be acceptable by some, but a tax collector? (*Tax collectors were hated in biblical times and were regarded as sinners. They were Jews who worked for the Romans, so this made them traitors.*) Fishermen can always go back to their old business. But tax collectors? What is going on?

**-Jesus can see new opportunities** that we humans cannot see. **Jesus never loses an opportunity.** As he was walking, he saw the man that could be a disciple.

I wish I had those eyes that could see new opportunities along the roadside. Yes, Jesus found a man who was willing to follow Him. I don't know if Levi (Matthew) knew Jesus before. But one thing is clear; Matthew was ready to follow Jesus.

Who is Levi, Matthew?

His name indicates that he comes from the Levite tribe. Michael Green writes: "He was a living contradiction of his ancestral name. Levi was the Old Testament tribe was dedicated to serve in the sanctuary. They were to have no possessions; the Lord alone was to be their inheritance. By faith they were to live off the offerings of their countrymen; they were to have no business distractions." (Deut. 10:8-9) <sup>2</sup>

However, Levi had dedicated his life to collect money. What a contradiction! Levi was collecting taxes for King Herod Antipas who, in turn, collaborated with the Roman Empire. As the occupying political force in the Jewish land of Palestine, Rome and all who collaborated with Rome were enemies of the Jews.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, these tax collectors cheated. They were no fixed laws about the amount of tax to be paid. Therefore, the collectors took from people as much as they wanted. And of course, some of that went into their own pocket. No wonder people hated tax collectors.

**Yet, Jesus found a new beginning with this man.** Most likely Levi was sitting at a table collecting more and more... For the first time Levi learned to give up his “collection” and pay “the best new tax” to the real King, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Like last Sunday, we have complainers, the scribes, and the Pharisees:

**Jesus loves to celebrate**, just like when the prodigal son came back home, and his father invited everyone for a feast.

**“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.”**(Mark 2:15 ESV)

Do you see what is happening? It is not just Levi who followed Jesus. Yes, Levi became a disciple, but more than that, his friends, other tax collectors joined Jesus. We read: they all reclined to have dinner “**...for there were many who followed him (Jesus).**”

**Jesus brought the Messianic age.**

**The Messiah is here.** And with him there is a **Messianic feast.** Yes, it is a feast. Jesus was having dinner with people who needed Him. It is a hospital and there is one doctor called Jesus.

Reaction:

**“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?’ 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.’”**(Mark 2:16-17)

“How dare you eat with sinners?”

“How dare you associate with these people?”

## Let's talk about the Pharisees

When the scribes and Pharisees called people sinners, they were thinking of the Jews who were not committed to study the Torah in depth, especially the law of God.

"The word pharisee is derived from Hebrew word meaning 'separated,' for the Pharisees were strongly committed to keeping the law of God and they believed that salvation came from distancing themselves from anyone who was morally loose."<sup>4</sup>

Let me tell you Jesus' response:

**"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."** (Mark 2:17)

Another translation is: **"it is not the healthy who need..."** The literal Greek translation is: "It is not the **strong** who need a Physician."

Question: who is righteous without Jesus?

**Whoever thinks he is strong should wait for a while only to find out how fragile he/she is and needs a Physician.**

By being with them (the sinners), Jesus does not compromise his mission.

**"Jesus pursues personal purity and the fellowship of mercy.** Such table fellowship implies welcoming these people into extended interpersonal association, which the Pharisees thought would make a person "unclean." But just as Jesus would cleanse the leper rather than being made unclean by the leper, so Jesus will bring sinners to repentance and forgiveness rather than being defiled by association with the sinners."<sup>5</sup>

Jesus does more than preach repentance to sinners, he becomes their friend. He does not encourage to sin. He touches them; he cares for them; he loves them; and he leads them to repentance.

**"His goal in reaching out to the sick is to bring about healing and transformation in their lives,** not to gather them together for a fun time. Instead of sorting people into classifications, holy and unholy, clean and unclean, righteous and sinner, Jesus gathers them under the wings of God's grace and love."<sup>6</sup>

**Application:**

## **1. God's call is open to everyone**

I don't think Levi (Matthew) would be on my list if I were to look for disciples to follow me. God works differently. He called Levi and gave him a new name: Matthew (In Hebrew *Mattityahu*: gift of Yahweh).

God can take a quitter like Mark to make him a Gospel writer. God will take a tax collector, an unfaithful man towards his nation, a lover of money, and change him into a Gospel writer and a disciple of Christ. **Only God can bring such change in people's lives.**

Are you a "Levi"? Do you feel you are done? The Good News is that God is not done with you. A simple invitation, yet a very deep and meaningful request from Jesus: "Follow me".

## **2. We are IN the World and not OF the World**

A young man asked me one day. "Badveli, why is the church not a welcoming place for people?"

I told him that we made a mistake, and we did not read the Bible carefully.

When the prodigal son came back, there was a feast. The older brother stayed outside, he did not come to rejoice.

Sometimes I feel we in the church stay inside but in reality, like the older brother, we are outside. We are not sharing in the feast of the lost brother who was found and brought home. How sad is this....He is quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer from the book "life Together":

**"Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is that we are sinners!"<sup>7</sup>**

Remember, we at the hospital constantly in need of THE PHYSICIAN.

My friend Brian Morgan says:

**"The church is not the place where we separate from all that is unclean to remain holy; it is the place where we expose our sickness to become holy. The church is not a monastery; it is an emergency room."**

I will add: emergency room, recovery room, operating room, rehab room, comfort room... (Confessing to God and to each other is part of the healing process).

Only when we go to heaven we will get out of the hospital. Meanwhile, we need to abide in a relationship with Jesus who cleanses us daily from our sins and gives us freedom, comfort and peace.

Mark the quitter became a gospel writer.

Matthew the crooked tax collector became a gospel writer.

Jesus is calling you: Follow me.  
Let us approach the table  
Amen

1. David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary*, Mark P 102
2. Michael Green lectures on Mark
3. ESV commentary on Mark
4. R.C. Sproul, *He Thought Them as One Who Had Authority Mark*, P 41
5. ESV commentary on Mark
6. David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary*, Mark P 104
7. Quote from "Life Together" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer – Part 4

"Confess your faults one to another" (Jas. 5:16). He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone. It may be that Christians, notwithstanding corporate worship, common prayer, and all their fellowship in service, may still be left to their loneliness. The final break-through to fellowship does not occur, because, though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the undevout, as sinners. The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners. Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is that we *are* sinners!

But it is the grace of the Gospel, which is so hard for the pious to understand, that it confronts us with the truth and says: You are a sinner, a great, desperate sinner; now come, as the sinner that you are, to God who loves you. He wants you as you are; He does not want anything from you, a sacrifice, a work; He wants you alone. "My son, give me thine heart" (Prov. 23:26). God has come to you to save the sinner. Be glad! This message is liberation through truth. You can hide nothing from God. The mask you wear before men will do you no good before Him. He wants to see you as you are, He wants to be gracious to you. You do not have to go on lying to yourself and your brothers, as if you were without sin; you can dare to be a sinner. Thank God for that; He loves the sinner but He hates sin.... <https://dradney.wordpress.com/2010/11/08/quotes-from-%E2%80%9Clife-together%E2%80%9D-by-dietrich-bonhoeffer-%E2%80%93-part-4/>