

LESSON 2

THE PURPOSE OF JESUS' MINISTRY

Scripture Text: Mark 2

Jesus came to earth on a mission; that is, He was sent for a specific purpose. We will find that purpose unfolded in the Book of Mark. We will see in our studies that Jesus came (1) to call sinners to repentance, (2) to forgive sins, and (3) to set up the new dispensation, the Kingdom of God. He came to supply the needs of mankind, both physical and spiritual.

MEMORY VERSE: *When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Mark 2:17

Four Faithful Friends

Jesus had left Capernaum because of pressure from curious crowds which would have hampered His work of preaching. Now He returns and is thronged by people filling the house where He is.

Mark 2:3-4 One who came was so helpless from palsy that four men carried him. With faith not to be hindered and love for their ill brother, they opened the roof and let him down where Jesus was. He had great need. He had come to the One with power to supply that need.



Notice the obstacles these men faced—(1) natural hopelessness of the sick man's condition, (2) obstructing crowds—people standing in the way, blocking the door, (3) difficulty of transporting him, (4) difficulty of entering the roof, and (5) the preoccupation of Jesus. Why did they press on in spite of these? They had faith. It was strong. It was persevering. It was **violent** (Matthew 11:12), refusing to accept no for an answer. These men would not be turned away by those who refused to budge. They apparently climbed an outside stairway, tore up the roof, and lowered the crippled man to the feet of Jesus. What might have happened if one or all of these men had proven unfaithful to his responsibility?

More Than He Asked

Mark 2:5-12 When Jesus saw their faith, He was touched by it. In every age great difficulties are overcome by faith. We can be sure that to this very hour faith secures the sympathy, encouragement, and divine help of Jesus. **Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.** The sick man came to ask Jesus for physical healing, but Jesus could see in his heart a desire for salvation. Could he have received it if he had not? Is one ever saved without repenting? Jesus filled his greatest need first. Here was a sick man, and Jesus went to the root of his problem. It is a proven fact that spiritual problems are the cause of many physical problems. Looking through the eyes of God, sin is so much more serious than bodily disease.

Some unbelieving scribes **in their hearts** accused Jesus of blasphemy for exercising power that belongs to God alone. Then Jesus did another miracle to prove His authority in the first one. **Arise, and take up thy bed, and go . . .** This brought amazement to the people and glory to God. Jesus had given life to both soul and body. Jesus always overflows our measure. Our part, in order to receive, is to yield, to open our measure.

Jesus Came to Call Sinners

Mark 2:13-17 The scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners. He was an invited guest at Levi's (Matthew's) table, whom He had called to follow Him (Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32). The scribes and Pharisees



criticized Him for this. Would Christ, a sinless, divine One, associate with such sinners? They tried to prove through this that He was not the Messiah. This was His purpose in coming to earth. **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.** He came not to the whole but to the sick, not to the righteous but to sinners. He did not associate with them to sanction their sins, but to save them out of their sins, to call them to repentance, the way of salvation. What if Jesus had come to gather the honorable and wealthy but to destroy the sinner? Then where would each of us be?

Jesus Came to Start a New Dispensation

Mark 2:18-20 These same people questioned Jesus as to the difference in practice between His followers and those of John. Jesus explained that this was a time of joy—while He, the Bridegroom, was with them. After He was gone they would fast. This was a new dispensation, and it was not to be held to the rules of the old one.

Mark 2:21-26 **New cloth on an old garment . . . new wine into old bottles . . .** The laws being established in this new dispensation which Jesus was starting would not fit into the old one that man had held on to for many years. Men were being fitted into new garments, righteous garments. Man's old experiences could not contain this new wine. New lives must be obtained before this new Spirit could be invited in to do His work. In this change old things would pass away and all things would become new. The new dispensation was not to be limited by the laws and forms of the old law dispensation. This was a time of change from the old to the new (Luke 16:16; Hebrews 8:7-13).

The Pharisees criticized Jesus for allowing His disciples to pluck corn and eat it on the Sabbath day. Christ set aside one law, that of forms, for a higher one. He fulfilled the old Sabbath by becoming our new Sabbath. As the old Sabbath provided one day of rest in the week, Jesus provides rest from sin every day in this dispensation.

Lesser Gave Way for the Greater

Mark 2:27-28 **The sabbath was made for man**—was to serve man's highest interests. **The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.** The Sabbath day was a tool, a means to an end. It must not be taken out of its place as servant and made an oppressive master. Jesus is Master of all His laws and forms. He is greater than they. He is greater than the temple (Matthew 12:6). The lesser must always give way for the greater.

We have learned today that Jesus came (1) to call sinners to repentance, (2) to forgive sins, (3) to heal the body, and (4) to set up the new dispensation, the Kingdom of God. Jesus came to supply man's needs, both physical and spiritual.

JUST A THOUGHT

**If you would live long—live right, for folly
and wickedness shorten life.**

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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