



GROUPS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Series: Mark Part 1 - Week 2 October 29, 2023

Scripture: Mk 1:29-34, Mk 1:40-42, Mk 2:1-7 (NIV11)

Community is shaped by the conversations we share.

These questions are just a tool to help you meaningfully engage with the themes of this week's teaching.

Message Summary: This week we looked at Mark 1 and 2 and a sequence of four healing stories. Mark uses the narrative itself as a tool to give us a picture of what the kingdom of God is like when we grasp its communal aspect and see how God is at work to heal everything that separates us.

- **Symbolic Action** Mark begins with a rapid fire sequence of healing stories. Scholars often call those “symbolic action”, but that term is not a statement about a historical veracity of the events or lack thereof. Gospel writers selected the stories for us with particular intent behind them. The text we have is a curated story, “it’s all symbolic action, but it’s not less than historical and it’s more than just a thing that happened. These are all stories deliberately crafted to communicate the profound experience of encountering Jesus in the world.”
- **Two pairs of stories** Jesus heals Peter’s mother-in-law, he heals demon possessed people. When the sick and demon-possessed people started coming to Jesus, Mark uses the word “therapeao”, which means to care for or wait on someone medically. It’s not a

magical term, and implies a slow process of healing. So the idea is that Jesus took time with them, listened to them, calmed them down. It doesn’t preclude a miraculous intervention, but it also hints at the slow process of reintegration of those people into their communities. And with Peter’s mother-in-law, Jesus does not only heal her, he restores her to the place of her identity and calling, which was hospitality.

- **Separation** In the story with a leper, Jesus is indignant. The original word we have in this story is not clear, it can be either - angry or compassionate, some transactions go with compassionate, because they don’t want to present Jesus as angry at this man. Jeremy’s take is that Jesus is not angry at the man, he is angry at the situation, when an illness that a human being has no control over, pushes him outside the bounds of society. “For Mark, the kingdom of God seems to start with the re-integration of our communities and the repair of all that pulls us apart.”
- **Restoration** When Jesus says to the paralyzed man “your sins are forgiven because of their faith”, he does two things. First, he says that the kingdom of God is a team sport, none of us get there on our own. And second, “Jesus intends to weave together our bodies and spirits, our communities and relationships, our fundamental dependance on each other toward the wholeness his kingdom implies.”

Connect: In what ways have you experienced being connected this week, or dependance on others? Maybe you felt connected to the world

outside, or your kids or friends, or neighbours. What form did that connection take and how did it make you feel?

Share: What stood out to you from the four healing stories that we looked at in the sermon? Feel free to read them together. How does Jeremy's take on Jesus' healing of people (especially it being more of a therapeutic process than we sometimes wish to acknowledge) expand or challenge your understanding of divine healing?

Reflect: When talking about a leper who came for healing, Jeremy talked about Jesus' indignation. And how Jesus was not angry at the man, but at the situation that pushed the man to the margins of society. Jeremy asked a question, *"if someone uses a cane, is Jesus more interested in healing their legs or in healing a society that can work toward making everything as accessible as possible?"* How would you answer that question?

Feel free to reflect on this thought from the message:
"Part of being human is reconciling ourselves to the finitude of our bodies, the beauty of our aging, and Jesus does not promise any of us an escape from that. So if the kingdoms of God is coming near then it can't just be about a return to what was for me in my body. It must— at some level— also be about the transformation of what could be for all of us together, right? A society where being human isn't a barrier for anyone."

Engage: What is your relationship with being dependant on others? Do you accept it or do you struggle with it? How does the concept of the Kingdom of God as a "team sport" challenge or affirm your understanding of community and interdependence, especially in the story of the friends who bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus? The man would have been socially and economically isolated, and there would have been a lot of speculations about why he was paralyzed, whose fault and whose sin were the reasons for his condition.

*"The men want their friend made whole, and so does Jesus, but that starts with the stigma that sets him apart from the crowd.
Being dependant on friends is not a curse.
It's a blessing.
The kind that will get you forgiven.
Because it's an acknowledgement of the reality that we already live in—
That none of us make it on our own."*

Take away: In the message, Jeremy talked about Jesus' healing as more than just physical restoration, but also about repairing what separates us. What do you think about this perspective and how does it aligns with your understanding of healing and wholeness? How can we contribute to the "repair of all that pulls us apart"?

Pray:
*God of good news, who has been present from the very beginning,
Leading and guiding and watching and helping.
Moving us to understand and embrace what is truly good in the world.
Might we slowly become aware of the contrast between your good news and ours,
Between our striving attempts and your gracious invitation,
Between our desire to impose and your patient embrace of all.
May the gospel slowly steadily undeniably become good news for us and for those near us
And in that, might we become implicated into the ongoing creation of your kingdom imagination.
If we have come into this space today weary and burdened by expectations we were never intended to carry,
Might we lay them down and leave them here in exchange for the good news of your welcome.
If we have come into this space today unsure of our place in your story, might we slowly come to see your vision for the world
And the ways that our choices, our politics, our finances, and our love
Can push back against an empire that seeks to dehumanize and commodify all of us.
May good news transform us and then move us forward into your kingdom.
In the strong name of the Risen Christ we pray, amen.*