



GROUPS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Series: Mark Part One - Week 3, November 5, 2023

Scripture: Mark 2:13-17, 2:18, 2:23-24, Mark 3:4, 3:5-6 (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 look at four more stories in Mark, to see how Mark uses a package of confrontations to bring differences to the surface and show us how Jesus steadily works on expanding our imagination of the kingdom of God and what the good news is all about.

- **Commons Ground** In Mk 2:13-17, we witness the first confrontation. First we need to address some of our misconceptions about the Pharisees: they had religious influence but not power in Israel at that time, they were largely the liberals of the day trying to democratize some religious practices (it's a misconception to think they were harsh and therefore hated by people), they were often criticized for challenging the divide between the sacred and the secular. The root of the pharisaical tradition was that we don't need the temple, we have God with us through Scripture. When they ask Jesus why he eats with sinners, he quotes from a pharisaic source - if they were not sick why

would they need a physician? Jesus looks for common ground, and looking for common ground can often prevent the fight from ever happening.

- **Something New** In the next story, Mk 2:18, Jesus is asked about fasting. The day of Atonement was the only one day when Jewish people were required to fast, all other fasts were voluntary. The question that Jesus and his disciples are asked about fasting is not about obligation, but about differentiation. What is different about you as opposed to John the Baptist's disciples (who fast in mourning of John's death) or the pharisees (who fast on Mon or Thurs)? Jesus responds with a parable. His disciples do not fast, because Jesus is with them, and to the pharisees he responds that he doesn't fast because it's not his thing. He is busy over here doing something new.
- **Missing the Point** But new can often be scary, so things start to escalate in Mark 2:23-24, and continue in Mark 3:4-6. When Jesus quotes the pharisaic teaching about breaking one law to fulfill the greater law (breaking a sabbath to save a life), they begin to plot to kill him.
- **How to Save a Life** All of what Jesus does here is about a fundamental expansion of imagination that plows through our boundaries. The moment of Jesus healing the man with a shrivelled arm provokes an outsized reaction because it sums up everything that's been happening to this point, all the ways that

Jesus has been healing the structures that welcome some people and exclude others.

Connect: What was one moment of delight that stayed with you this week?

Share: What do you think about the misconceptions we often hold about the pharisees and how having that mental pictures of the pharisees influences our interpretation of Jesus' interactions with them?

How does Jesus' approach to the confrontation resonate with or challenge you? How does it challenge or affirm the way you engage with those who disagree with you?

"Starting with what you hold in common and intentionally looking for shared space can fix a fight before it even happens... God also looks for what God shares with you and then God will work from there."

Reflect: When talking about the parable of keeping new wine in old wine skins, and putting a patch from a new cloth on an old pair of jeans, Jeremy reflected on how Jesus responded to the criticism of his disciples who did not fast as much as the pharisees or John the Baptist's disciples. Jesus just wanted to do his own thing. He will not shy away from criticizing the Pharisees, especially when it comes to wielding power over vulnerable people, but he was not at all that enamoured with tearing down, at least not in the way he was committed to building something new.

How was this parable true in your life?

Share about times in your own spiritual journey when you have had to uncover new means, language and paths to follow Jesus.

Engage: When talking about Sabbath and then healing the man with a shrivelled hand, Jesus quotes the teaching of the Pharisees back to them, that it is ok to break one law to follow the greater law. "You must do work on the sabbath if it saves a life."

Why do you think the pharisees reaction was so strong (they went on to plot how to kill Jesus) to the way Jesus challenged them?

Did you have a situation in your life where you chose compassion over rules or tradition? How did it make you feel? And what did it cost you?

Take away: Read the quote from this week's message below and talk about one way your understanding of good news has changed. Or, alternatively, share about one of your boundaries that became penetrable or disappeared for you the more you embrace Jesus' good news and his imagination for the kingdom of God.

*"The kingdom of God is near
Repent and believe good news - that's chapter 1.
And that good news is Simon's mother law participating in the way that she knows how.
And that good news is the demonized returned to their status as neighbours.
And that good news is social contagion is erased.
And that good news is religious stigma is wiped away - that's chapter 2.
But now we find that good news is also tax collectors and sinner welcomed without condition.
Good news is that rest and sabbath implies abundance and full bellies not artificial limitations.
Good news is that saving a life includes all of this and more."*

Benediction:

May Jesus confront us today with a new way to be good news for someone unexpected, and might we find ourselves both terrified and inspired by the prospect

Pray:

*God of welcome,
Who enters this space with us today with arms wide open
Ready to embrace each us as we are, where we are,
Might we slowly get glimpses of your kingdom all around us
In the ways we make room for each other
In the ways we learn to listen to each other
In the ways we begin to let go of preconceived ideas about who we
are and where our value comes from.
We trust that your kingdom draws near even now
And so it as it does
We ask that it would start in us
With our attitudes and ideas
With our values and what we give value to,
Might all of it shift and become something holy
And gracious and good
If we have ever felt ourselves disconnected
From our bodies
From our creator
From our goodness
From our breath
Might you heal us today, make us whole and ready for tomorrow.
And might that grace flow through us to another.
In the strong name of there Risen Christ we pray. Amen*