



DIGGING DEEPER

Mark 2:13 – 3:6 – The King's controversy

PLEASE READ – Mark 2:13 – 3:6

GETTING STARTED

Jesus has already made some claims and comments that provoked concern (see 2:6-7). Sometimes the questions asked are fair enough. But as you progress through today's passage, what do you notice about the successive responses Jesus receives? Is Jesus to blame for the final result of 3:6 by being *too* confrontational?

Three assumptions to challenge

- *There are people beyond the pale?*

So consider **the King's disreputable company** (2:13-17)

Are we *too* fussy about the company we keep? How do we get the right balance between Jesus' example here, associating with "the sinners and tax-collectors" (16), and Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 15:33?

Jesus seems to give us only two choices in v17: "righteous" (or more like *self-righteous*) or "sinner". What do you make of the following quote about the reality of *sin*?

We who are believers tend to evaluate our character and conduct relative to the moral culture in which we live. Since we usually live at a higher moral standard than society at large, it is easy for us to feel good about ourselves and assume that God feels that way. We fail to reckon with the reality of sin still dwelling within us.

Jerry Bridges, *Respectable Sins*, p24

- *Following God is really just about keeping a set of rules?*

So consider **the King's liberated disciples** (2:18-22)

Jesus' styling himself as "the bridegroom" surely means he's unique, totally different from any previous teachers or prophets – as John the Baptist had insisted. So is there a hint here of Hebrews 1:1-2?

Also consider **the King's outrageous claim** (2:23-28)

What extravagant importance is attached to trifles by those who are mere formalists in religion.

Ryle, J.C. Commentary on the Gospel of Mark

Are we ever guilty of this kind of mistake? What is important to *you* about how we do church, for example? Do you ever fall victim to what is basically, at heart, superstition? Or legalism?

How would you apply "the Sabbath was made for man" (v27) nowadays? Do we still need such a principle, and see it as a blessing from God, rather than a frustrating restriction? Is there any sense in which this could be broadened, that *laws generally* were made for the benefit of humanity, and not the other way around?

And what does that phrase "the Lord of the Sabbath" (v28) teach us about Jesus himself?

- *"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild" is the whole story?*

So consider **the King's deliberate provocation** (3:1-6)

A quote about anger, generally:

A sinless wrath is a very rare thing. The wrath of man is seldom for the glory of God. In every case a righteous indignation should be mingled with grief and sorrow for those who cause it, even as it was in the case of our Lord.

Ryle, J.C. Commentary on the Gospel of Mark

Jesus, Mark tells us, was *angry* and *distressed*. Precisely why? Could there be circumstances when he might feel the same about *our* conduct?

Theological point about the healing itself, when Jesus tells this disabled man to do *the very thing he was unable to do ...*

... but if *faith* is "the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8), isn't a preacher doing something similar when he tells someone to *believe* in Jesus? Isn't such belief really a very comparable miracle?