

Jesus: Living with Conflict

Mark 2:1-36

January 15th, 2012

We are following our Advent series with a series about the life of Christ. We are using Mark's gospel for the outline of the life of Christ' teaching as we begin to celebrate Epiphany. This is not a verse by verse teaching of the gospel of Mark, but we are using Mark for our basic outline of the study of the life of Christ.

Nearly 29 years ago, we came to HBC as pastor. When we came here, Hardin was known for fish. There were a couple of restaurants downtown, who were very famous for fish. It was amazing at that time, you could go to one of those restaurants, and literally 29 years ago, have to wait an hour to an hour and a half to get in. To my knowledge, that restaurant had the best advertising policy of any restaurant known to man. And to my knowledge, the 1st 15 years it was here under its present ownership, never spent a dime on radio advertising, or newsprint advertising. How did they advertise; satisfied customers. A customer tasting their fish, and then having a desire to go tell someone who had not tasted their fish, how tasty their fish actually was. As we study the life of Christ, it is apparent; in the beginning of Jesus' ministry, no matter how hard He tells people not to go tell anyone who He is, they just cannot resist. No matter how much He tries to silence His satisfied customers, they have to tell others what He has done for them. By the time the 1st chapter of Mark closes, Mark has established the authority of Christ. As He begins His teaching ministry in Galilee, and begins to call His 1st disciples, the crowds have never heard a man teach like this, a man who taught with authority. So in Mark chapter 1, we clearly see in the early life of Christ that Jesus established authority. In Mark chapter 2, and the beginning of chapter 3, in the life of Christ, we

are going to see His authority challenged. I want you to pay close attention to what Mark does. Mark takes 5 stories, 5 events in the life of Christ and puts them together immediately at the beginning of His ministry. These 5 stories that you heard read from the Word of God, beginning with chapter 2, verse 1 until the end of verse 6 of chapter 3, all have something in common. In each one of the stories there is conflict. The reason there is conflict in these stories is because the authority that Jesus establishes here on earth is actually going to be challenged. And what Mark is going to do in writing his gospel is he's going to introduce us to the villains of the story. The scribes, and the Pharisees, and the Herodians, and from time to time common people, get caught up in the plot of being the villain of the story. We're going to title this teaching on the life of Christ, on the 2nd Sunday after Epiphany- Jesus: Living with Conflict. Now I think you and I have lived long enough to understand when conflict takes place. Conflict usually takes place between people in a relationship when one person's actions, or beliefs, behaviors, threaten the needs, the interests, or the concerns of another. If you're living a life that is absent of conflict, what that means is what you are doing right now is not a threat to anybody in your circle of influence, either a need, an interest, or a concern. But I promise you, the moment you threaten them, either by your presence, or by one of your actions, there will be conflict. Jesus, the Son of God, lived with conflict. Why? Because as His authority was established of who He was, the Son of God, the Son of man, that authority threatened the villains in the story. It threatened their way of life, it threatened their belief systems. So what we see is Jesus living with conflict. Why does Mark weave this in the beginning of his gospel narrative about life of Christ? It is because he wants us to understand that as we follow the Suffering Servant, if He lived with conflict, you and I will live with conflict. There will come a time in your life when you will so have the favor of God upon you, when you will so live out the life of Christ, that your life and your lifestyle will force you into confrontation with other people. I promise you that if you sell out for Christ, and live for Christ, follow the Suffering Servant, you will not be that person when they file by at your cemetery and your funeral, no one will

say; I never heard anybody say anything bad about that man. I promise you they will talk bad about you. I promise you people will not like you. Why...because they did not like Jesus, wow. Now here is the conflict; Jesus, in northern Galilee, preaching, teaching, healing, casting out demons, establishes authority, and He tells people not to tell. But what did the leper do? He goes and tells everyone he meets who healed him. Now Jesus in Mark chapter 2, slips back home to Capernaum. I do not know if you have ever noticed that statement or not, but Jesus had a home. Scholars still do not know if He rented a house perhaps, or if perhaps He was using the home of Simon and Andrew that is mentioned in Mark chapter 1. But Jesus has now settled down, and He has got a home. He has got a place to go to be refreshed. And He slipped away back home, He has been away from the crowds for a few days, when all of a sudden somebody spots Him in the yard, and they recognize He is at home, and the crowds begin to pile in. Jesus, being very hospitable, opens the doors of the homes, and before you know it the house is crowded with people. The home is so crowded that people cannot even get into the doorways anymore. When all of a sudden, in the story, 4 friends who have a man who cannot walk, knowing Jesus is in the house, try to get the man in the presence of Jesus so that Jesus can heal him as He has healed others, suddenly find there is no way to get to Jesus because of the crowd. Now I want to tell you something; if we were doing a verse by verse study of the gospel of Mark, each one of these 5 stories, there would be a sermon in each one of them, amen? And boy there is preaching material here. Would it not be sad if the place were so crowded with people who just wanted to hear Jesus preach, that we actually prevented people who really needed Jesus from being able to get to Him? Wow...I would never want to be in a crowd of people that was so concerned about the particular thing for me, that I never noticed there was someone worse off than me who needed Jesus more than I did, and I kept them from getting their need met because they could not get to Him because of me, amen? The scribes are sitting in the house, waiting to hear this man of authority teach, and there is a crippled boy out on the property and no one notices, except those 4

friends who brought him. And when they realized they cannot get in the house, do you know what they do? They get up on the roof, taking him with them. Can you imagine how difficult that would have been? Jesus is teaching, get this picture, in the biblical world they had timbers on their roofs. They had thatch, they had branches, and then they had about 2 feet of earth. And all of a sudden those 4 guys start destroying the roof, and Jesus is preaching. Now can you see as the racket is being made, and dirt starts falling on the floor, and people start brushing it off their robes, Jesus continuing to teach, and people being distracted? Good thing they did not have ushers in those days or they would have stopped it, amen? All of a sudden this boy who cannot walk is being lowered to the floor, and when Jesus sees the boy, and the friend's faces holding onto the rope as they lower him down, He does something amazing. He does not scold them for destroying the roof, but He actually says, as He sees their faith, your sins are forgiven. Wow...Now we already know in Mark chapter 1 that Jesus has the authority to cast out demons, amen, and the people marveled at that. Now we're getting to the truth of the story about the Son of God. And that He didn't come just to cast out demons, but He came to do what? Cast out sin out of people's lives. And so when He announces that this man sins has been forgiven, that his sins have been cast aside, there were the scribes. Now let's be careful, for every one of you that are here, that has been here at least 3-5 years or longer, I promise you this would have been talking about us. There is a point in our Christian life, when we do what we do for so long, that we think we are doing it right, and any other way is wrong. The number one reason Baptist churches have division is because anything new is a threat to my need, my comfort zone, the way I want to do it, my concerns, or my interests. So let's be careful. When the Bible mentions the Pharisees and the scribes, it is talking about the religious establishment who had built their belief system upon the law of God as revealed in the Old Testament. These were not mean-spirited people! They thought they were serving God. And now they begin to question; how can this man forgive sin? He is committing blasphemy, only God can forgive sins. They pick up real quick what Mark has already told us in the 1st chapter, 1st

verse; that Jesus is the Son of God. They recognize He is saying He is God because only God can forgive sins. Jesus perceives in their spirit what they were doing and so He says, "Hey, which would be easier, for a man to say your sins are forgiven, or for a man to say to a paralyzed man, take up your bed and walk". Now which would be easier? It would be easier to just say your sins are forgiven, amen? Now watch this; Jesus says, "So that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins, I say to this man, take up your bed and walk". And immediately what happened? He took up his bed and walked. Wow...now you would think anybody experiencing that miracle would rejoice, but no. The actions of Jesus, if He was who He said He was, would destroy the lives of this group of people, because they were not ready to bring their life under lordship of Him. Do you see this? Now I do not want you to miss this; as we celebrate the 2nd Sunday after Epiphany, do you remember what Epiphany is? It is the day we celebrate to recognize that the 3 magi, the Persian priests, were used of God to reveal to Jerusalem that their Messiah had been born. And we realize in a real way, God uses us as Gentiles in the Church to bring others to the truth that their Messiah has been born. As we celebrate this day, please remember this; the primary purpose of Jesus coming to the earth was to forgive people of their sins. There is a group that has done a really good job of advertising that says "friends do not let friends drive drunk". Would that not be a great motto for the Church? "Friends do not let friends live without Jesus". Have you noticed about the gospel, that everywhere Jesus was, people showed up? I just wonder what would happen when we begin to live our life in such a way that people really believe Jesus is here, if we would not have to go to 4, 5, 6, 7, on to 14 services on the Lord's day. Now are you ready for this? Story number 1, authority is established, authority is challenged, Jesus is here to forgive sins and immediately He is back on the scene in Mark's gospel and guess who He meets? He meets a tax collector, not a seminary graduate, not a Pharisee, not a scribe, but a tax collector. Now you have to remember this to understand the story; in the biblical day, the Roman government bid out tax collecting jobs. What you would do is look at the government bid, and you would know that this

much money was to be collected from this region. You would then look at that region and make a determination whether or not you could collect that much taxes from the people under the authority of Rome. Then you would figure how much more you could collect, determine what kind of living you would have, and then bid on that region, knowing that you have to give the amount the Roman government wanted to them, but you got to keep anything you collected more than that. So do not picture this as an IRS agent. No, these people were notorious, bad people. And here this sinner is, a turn-coat, a Jew, and he is collecting taxes from the Jewish people for the Romans, and Jesus calls him. Now if I understand John's gospel right, Andrew was hanging out with John the Baptist. John the Baptist pointed Andrew to Jesus, and when he discovered Jesus, he goes and tells his brother Simon. So we can say that Andrew was raised in Sunday school, and in church. He was religious before he met Jesus. Now you have Andrew following Jesus and all of a sudden Jesus calls Levi, also known as Matthew, and he is a notorious sinner. He has never been to Sunday school a day in his life. He is a cheat, a fraud, an extortionist, and he is wealthy! And he does the same thing Simon and Andrew did; he immediately left his booth and started following Jesus. Except watch this; in story number one Jesus is in the house, and friends bring a friend to Jesus. In story number two, a friend meets Jesus, the friend takes Him home with him, invites his friends and introduces them to Jesus, and guess what Jesus does? He goes home with the sinner. Can you imagine how news spread when Jesus walked into the house of Levi, and there were other tax collectors and sinners? Now why is this story so graphic? It is because if you are a tax collector you do not know Pharisees. You do not know good people, and the only friends you have are people like you. If you want to know what kind of person you are just look at who you hang out with; that is you. So he invited his friends, they were all sinners, and guess what Jesus did? He ate with them. He sat down at the table with them. Now in the biblical day, if you sat down at the table with someone that meant to associate with them. Jesus is associating with sinners, and he has his disciples in there. I do not know how long it took Simon and

Andrew to warm up to this, but if I had been an early follower of Jesus, and I had been raised in Sunday school, been raised under the Jewish law, and now Jesus has got me in the house of Levi, I would probably be squirming. Because there would be things going on in that house that I had never seen in my life. I have been to a few of those places before as a Christian, and it felt terrible! Now there is a group watching, the villains of the story, and they are the scribes and the Pharisees. The word Pharisee means "holy one, set apart one", they were the separatist. They were the people that were known in Israel, 6000 of them, who had set their life apart to live out the law of God, believing if they kept all 613 laws of God, the Messiah would come. These men see the one claiming to be the Messiah sitting with tax collectors and sinners. Their thought is, if He was the Messiah He would not be with sinners, He would be with us. But Jesus teaches that He did not come to call the righteous, He came to call the sinners. Now please understand what He is saying here. He is not saying the Pharisees are righteous and are right with God. There is some irony in His voice here. What He is saying is that He can only help those who recognize who they are. The problem is that many of those Pharisees were going to the wellness center, not realizing they were not well, and they should have been in the hospital. Jesus did not go to the wellness center, He went to the hospital. He showed up where people needed Him the most, and that was with sinners. Now I want to say that there is a sermon here. But quickly, here is what we have to understand. When Levi followed Jesus, He did not leave his friends out. He tried to get them in on what he was in on, and that was a relationship with Jesus. He learned that you can still be *with* and not be *of*. Did you get that? Here is the line Christians walk with unbelieving friends, family members, and neighbors; you can still be *with*, and at the same time, not be *of* them. I believe many Christians are making a mistake here, and it is hurting the authority of the Church, and some of you are involved in this. You still want to go back to the same old places you used to go to, under the guise that you are there to help people. But you are there because you still like to partake of the pleasure of what was pleasurable before you met Christ, instead of really being

there with a purpose. That purpose being to influence your friends with Christ. Let me make sure I am clear on this. You had better check your motive, and to see if you are where you are because you like to sin or you love the sinner. Many of us still hang with sinners because we like the sin. And because you still like the sin, and you still hang with the sinners, you are leading your sinning friends to the pit of hell. But because they do not see a change in you, and you name Christ, they will never see a need for them to change. You see the conflict, the authority of Christ; he hung with sinners. If people are going to question Jesus, they are going to question those who follow Him, and you had better get ready for this. You see, in our conflict stories, we have been questioning Jesus' behavior. Now we begin to question his disciples because John the Baptist' disciples, and the Pharisee's disciples fast 2 days a week. For 2 days a week they rid themselves of food and private pleasure, and they fast for the kingdom of God to come. When you saw them, it was excruciating. They were sincere, they were solemn, and they were sober. For 2 days a week they did not enjoy being alive, they were sincerely mourning for the coming of the kingdom. And so when you saw the disciples of Jesus not fasting, the question was why were they not fasting? Now Jesus answered that when you get invited to a wedding and you are the friend of the bridegroom, you do not insult the bridegroom by fasting in his presence. You actually feast when you are in the presence of the bridegroom. Now what this is eluding to is when there is a wedding going on, and the bridegroom was there, there was a feast that went on for a minimum of a week. And depending on how wealthy the family was, sometimes a month. If you are invited to a wedding of a king's son, it could last a year! Now if the king's son was getting married, and you were invited, and you were a friend, do you think you would fast while everyone else was feasting? Absolutely not! Jesus is trying to teach that if you just have a form of religion, you will have to fast a lot. But when you are in a living relationship with Him, the Son of God, the Son of man, it is going to be a time of feasting. Then to make sure they got it, He said that if you have a tear in your old jeans, you would not put an unwashed patch on it would you. Because if you sewed a piece of

fabric that had never been shrunk to a piece of fabric that had washed many times, when you wear it, it will tear worse. The reason is because there is no flexibility in the old cloth, but there still is in the new piece. He said that by the same token you would not take new wine and put it in an old wineskin, because when you do, the stiffness of the old wineskin will shatter when the new wine begins to bubble and breathe. What is Jesus trying to say here? He is trying to say that when you look at my disciples, please understand they will be different than their disciples because they are in a new and living relationship with the Son of God, and the old way cannot handle it, and cannot hold it! So do not judge my disciples by what you have already seen. I discovered during my research this week that historically, when the Methodists came into a living relationship with Jesus, they decided to take their hymns that they had sung to opera music and turned them into dance tunes. They begin to sing their songs, not to opera music, but to dance music, and it changed their countenance. Did you know that when the San Friskin monks, those men who had taken vows of silence, came to know Christ and begin to hear the Word of God, they began to laugh in church? It almost got them kicked out. Saint Teresa introduced musical instruments into her church group, and they were ostracized. The Salvation Army was the 1st group of Christians to allow their worshippers to be excited in a worship service and actually leap to their feet if they wanted to. And once they were given permission, it transformed their culture. That is what Jesus is saying! I want to say as politely and reverently as I can, I get tired sometimes of us seeming like we are at a funeral. I do not mean for us to lose our reverence for God, but our worship, our being, should say that we are in a living relationship with the Son of man who is the Son of God, and He came to cast out my sin, and not just my sin but your sin too. And once your sins have been cast out, your life is radically changed! And that is going to cause conflict, and Jesus lived with conflict. The last 2 stories are stories pertaining to the Sabbath. You know the law says you cannot work on the Sabbath. And in the story it is the Sabbath day, and Jesus' disciples are hungry, so they pluck heads of grain and feed themselves. Now they get called on the

carpet for doing it. You have to understand that the scribes had spent years studying exactly what it means to work or not work on the Sabbath. It was considered a holy day, and here was a group of men who simply fed themselves, and they got called on the carpet for it. Jesus reminded them about David and the bread that stayed in the temple that was to only be eaten by priests. When David and his men went without food for days, they went into the temple and actually ate the bread of presence. Is it not amazing how we can totally forget the essence of God and His concern for people when we become legalistic, and we become traditionalist? We begin to think that God is more concerned about the observance of a day than He is about the people who are observing the day. In our last story Jesus goes into the synagogue on the Sabbath and the villains go there, not to worship, but to see if He will heal, and He does. But before He heals, He asks them; was the Sabbath established to do good, or to do evil on; to save life, or to kill on? Now the other gospel writers tell us that Jesus makes an illusion to a man getting his ox out of a ditch on the Sabbath. Can you imagine being a Pharisee, or a scribe, and you have dedicated yourself to God? Just to make it personal, can you imagine being raised by godly parents, being active in church all of your life, you go to Sunday school, and you believe it is ok for a farmer to get his ox out of a ditch to save the life of his ox, but you do not believe it is ok for a man to have his hand healed on that same day? Now, we honestly would never be there, because we could never do what we are telling other people not to do. No one at HBC would ever see the kids we pick up and bring here damaging something, and be more concerned about what they were damaging than the damage that is done to that little soul by not living in a home where Jesus is Lord. We would never see a mark on a chair, and think more about the mark on the chair than the person that marked on the chair. We would never come across a mess in the building, and be more concerned about the mess, than the mess of the life of the person who caused it. This is who you are following, a Man who stepped out of heaven into a body like yours and lived with conflict, knowing His authority would be challenged. The irony in the story is the Pharisee who knows not to work

on the Sabbath, reacted to Jesus by plotting to kill Jesus. Do you see the irony? They are so upset about a man breaking the law of the Sabbath, that they themselves are plotting the very law they think they are defending.