

The Gospel is Bad News to Good People



Jesus | Our Servant King

Mark 2:13-3:6

I woke up at 5:45 this morning absolutely panicked. I woke up and realized I have no introduction for this sermon. I'm in a doctoral class about preaching, so I'm reading all of these books about preaching, and most of them say that for any sermon you have to have a good introduction because I've got about ninety seconds for whether you're going to continue to listen or tune me out. So I woke up at 5:45 knowing I've got the text, I've got what God wants me to say, but I have no introduction. I know in the introduction I'm supposed to come up with a problem to get you thinking I want to listen to this guy, or I don't really care what he has to say, so I know how important it says. So at 5:45, I pulled out the laptop to find, think through, and pray about what a good sermon introduction could be. Crider wakes up about the same time, he's sitting beside me, and he says, "Dad, what are you doing?" I said, "I'm trying to get an introduction to this sermon." 6:00 comes, 6:15 6:30, then 6:45, and I'm still just blank on how in the world I am going to introduce the sermon text. So I think I'm just going to go get ready and maybe that will jog some memory or

maybe it will help me get in the zone. I go and get ready, go through my ritual, I'm in the bathroom looking at the mirror, and I hear Evie Kate. It's about 7:15 and I've got to go, and I have no introduction. I hear Evie Kate in the other room say, "Mommy, where my daddy at?" I hear Katie saying, "Daddy's busy. He's stressed out. He's trying to figure things out, just leave him alone. What do you need?" "Where my daddy at?" "He's in the bathroom, but you don't need bother him right now." She said, "No, I'm going to go see my daddy." I hear little footsteps coming into the bathroom area. I'm in here trying to think about what I'm going to say in just a few moments, and she comes running into the bathroom and she holds up the Bible, my Bible. She says, "Daddy, I gotta preach," and she just walks out. I'm just like standing there thinking about a little blue-eyed, curly headed girl holding the Bible us saying, "Daddy, I gotta preach." I think at that moment, God was reminding me of my bigger task I have to do this morning. It's not just to give a good illustration; it is to preach the Word of God, so He said let's skip the introduction, let's get right to the preaching. That's what we're going to do this morning. We're going to skip through the introduction because there's something that I must do this morning and that is to preach the Word to you, and there's something that you must do this morning, and that is respond to God's Word because what we're going to read is truly God's Word. If you have your bibles, let's go to Mark chapter 3. We're going to jump right into the text. We will begin to see these different conflicts that Jesus has with the religious leaders of His day, so much that the religious leaders want to kill Jesus. Some of you maybe came in, you haven't grown up in Christianity, and you've seen Jesus as this really nice guy. How in the world could people want to kill this really nice guy? We're going to find out that the gospel is actually bad news to good people. We're going to see that in Mark chapters 2 and 3. We're going to start in chapter 3 and end with the ending of our verses we're going to study. We're going to read Mark chapter 3 beginning in verse 1.

Scripture

"Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would

heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him."

(Prayer)

Father God, I pray that You would help us as we look at Your Word that we, maybe some of us, we don't have a withered hand, but maybe we have a withered heart, and what we desperately need to do is, by faith, reach out with our withered heart so that Jesus can save us. We pray that we would see the gospel as good news because we're actually bad people, but if we think we're good people, then the gospel is actually bad news. We pray this in Jesus good name, amen.

Jesus Heals a Withered Hand

So, kind of a little preview, we're going to walk through five different conflicts Jesus has with the scribes and the Pharisees. We will see this explosive truth that the gospel is bad news to good people. The gospel literally means 'good news.' How could the good news be bad news? Well, the good news of the gospel is bad news if you already assume, already think, I am a good person. I've got life figured out. I've got morality figured out. I've got my own plan for how I'm going to live my life. I've got my own quest back to God. If you feel like, you know when I look around the world and I see those people, then I see myself, I realize that I'm pretty good. I'm doing ok. God loves me because of my goodness. If that's you, if you feel like apart from Christ that you've kind of got it figured out, then the gospel is going to be offensive. The gospel is actually going to be bad news because what the gospel says is nobody has got it figured out; all people need to repent and believe in the gospel.

So let's just think about the text that we just read. Jesus shows up at the synagogue, the assembly of God's people. There is this man with a

withered hand, and the Pharisees and scribes are watching to see what Jesus is going to do. They've kind of set it up because they want to see if Jesus is going to break the Law or not because they thought to heal somebody on the Sabbath was to break the Law because you're supposed to rest on the Sabbath day. They are kind of setting Him up and they're waiting and watching. Jesus pulls the guy into the center of the room. He brings the guy on stage. Imagine the Pharisees. They are trying to this and Jesus says hey you with the withered hand, just come on up here. Let's put you on the front and center stage. Everybody has got His attention, Jesus and this man with the withered hand, and the Pharisees and scribes are like this is going to be good. We've got Him; He's going to do something foolish. Then Jesus asks a question. Is it lawful to do good or evil? It's a basic question...do you think God wants you to do good or evil? Do you think He wants you to heal or save? The Pharisees, the scribes, who know the whole Bible, know the laws of God, can't even answer a basic question: Is it right to do good or bad? Jesus gets angry at them, and He's grieved at them. He says here is the problem. The problem is they have a hard heart. Here's a man in their presence with a withered hand that doesn't work right, it's dried up, it's shriveled, it's withered, but what the Pharisees can't see is they actually have a hard dried up withered heart. They have a heart that can't see Jesus properly, so it makes them not see themselves properly. It makes them not see others properly. Their hard heart is the problem. What they need to do is with their hard heart reach out to Jesus by faith. That's exactly what the man with the withered hand does. Jesus says reach out your hand, and by faith he reached out his hand and was restored; he was healed. Imagine seeing that miracle up on stage right now, and your response to a beautiful miracle is let's kill that guy who did that. Why in the world would the religious leaders want to kill Jesus for doing a beautiful miracle, for helping this guy, for giving this guy life to a hand that was dead? Why in the world would they want to kill Jesus for doing such a thing?

Five Conflicts

We'll have to back up a little bit and see that in Mark chapter 2, Mark is laying out five conflict stories because he wants to answer the question of

why the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus. He's going to answer. The reason is because the good news is bad news to good people.

1. Jesus forgives sins

Let's look back in Mark chapter 2, and as we saw last week, there was a paralytic who came into Jesus presence and Jesus said, son, your sins are forgiven. Jesus looked at the religious leaders and said I know what you're thinking in your hearts they don't even ask a question. Jesus looks at their hearts and says I know what you're thinking. I know what you're processing deep in your heart. Here's your question: How can this guy say that? How can He forgive sins, only God can forgive sins? Jesus says I know you're asking that in your heart, so let me just go ahead and answer this...yes, I can forgive sins. He makes a bold statement by raising this guy to walk again, saying yes, I am a sin forgiver; I am equal to God. It's a display of His deity, and of course, it makes the religious leaders angry. So this first conflict of how this guy can forgive sins, Jesus says because I'm God.

2. Jesus loves sinners

Then we go to this second conflict story in verses 13-17. It says, "He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." We have this moment of conflict. Jesus is walking by the sea, He's teaching, a lot of people are following, and all of a sudden, Jesus sees this guy named Levi sitting at a tax booth. You've got to know a little bit about the background of a guy sitting at a tax booth. This meant that Levi, (whose other name is Matthew, who wrote a gospel) he was a tax collector. Tax collectors in this

time were the worst of the worst. All Jews hated tax collectors because the tax collectors were Jews that sold them out to Rome. They would be the ones that would collect taxes from their fellow brothers and sisters, fishing tax, sales tax, eating tax, road tax, and whatever they wanted to tax, they would tax, because they would give this tax to the Roman authorities. They were hired by Rome to tax their own people, so they were seen as traitors. They were working for the enemy. They were working for the oppressor. We, the Jews, the people of God, Rome is the enemy, but the tax collectors were those Jewish men who decided, you know what; we're going to actually join the enemy because it is going to be for a profit. They were traitors. They sold themselves out. But not only were they traitors, they were also cheats because Rome would charge a certain amount for tax and they would charge sometimes double that to their Jewish brothers and sisters. They would charge more than was required and they would take the profits. They would benefit from the taxes that were being paid to Rome, so they became very rich. That's why Zacchaeus was a rich man because he was a tax collector. They had nice houses and nice things. They were better off than the other Jews because they were traitors in the eyes of their Jewish brothers and sisters. These were the worst of the worst types of people when it comes to the eyes of the Pharisees and scribes. You couldn't get any worse than a tax collector. In fact, there were two categories: sinners, and then there were tax collectors. Tax collectors were in a category above sinners. They were the worst of the worst. They were the problem with society. They were the problem of what's going on. If there was an enemy, it was them.

Now Jesus, the Holy One of Israel, sees Levi sitting at a tax booth taking up taxes. So the question is what is Jesus going to do? Is Jesus going to call him out? Is Jesus going to let him have it? What is Jesus going to do with this tax collector? Jesus walks up and says come follow Me. He invites this tax collector into the Kingdom. He invites this guy to be one of His disciples. Levi, upon hearing the news, is so overwhelmed that the only thing he knows to do is to leave everything and go follow after Jesus. We see that Jesus is not only the forgiver of sins, but He's a lover of sinners. That absolutely was against what the Pharisees and the scribes believed God should do. How could God love sinners? How could God love tax

collectors? That's exactly what Jesus is doing. He calls Levi, this tax collector, to come and follow Him. Not only that, He goes to Levi's house, dines with him, and eats with him. And there are more tax collectors, more sinners there, is what the scribes said. They look into the window saying hey, we know these people! We know their life. We see them out at night. We see them partying. We see them not living according to God's Word. They are those people who are doing all sorts of wicked things. How in the world can Jesus go eat with them? How in the world is Jesus at their house?

See, at this point in time, for you to share a meal with someone was a big thing. You were sharing life with them. You were saying I'm going to enter into a friendship with this person, that's what a meal signified. Here is Jesus, the Holy One of Israel, who's now fellowshiping with sinners and tax collectors, and it causes the Pharisees to ask the obvious question: Disciples, why does your Messiah, why does Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners? If He's holy, if He's a religious guy, if He's from God, He would be hanging out with good people, not bad people. Why in the world is He hanging out with bad people? Doesn't He know they're bad? It is this question of how in the world Jesus could associate with sinners and tax collectors; doesn't He know who they are? Jesus, hearing this, answers their questions. He says to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." So Jesus answers the question and says who needs a doctor? It is not well people. It's not people who aren't sick. It's not people who are healthy. No, people who need doctors are sick people. I don't go to the doctor just for the fun of it. I'm not driving in Murray like, "you know, I guess I might go to Sonic to eat, but I'll just go to the doctor. That sounds like a good deal, I'm just going to go to the doctor and hang out for a little bit." You don't just naturally go to the doctor. You go to the doctor because something is wrong. There is a need; that's why you go to the doctor. Jesus is trying to reveal to these Pharisees and scribes that He is the divine physician. He is the doctor who has come to heal our sickness, but if you want to get His healing, you have to first know you're sick, that there's a problem. Tax collectors and sinners when they hear the gospel, often, they realize they're sick. That's what Levi noticed right off the bat.

I'm way apart from God. Are you telling me there's hope? Yes, there's hope; come with Me. He was sick and he knew that Jesus could in some way heal him. In order to be healed by Jesus, you have to know you're sick.

Then Jesus made this explosive statement, "I came to call, not the righteous, but sinners." I didn't come to call those who have it figured out and have it altogether. That was the scribes and the Pharisees. They thought, we've got it all figured out, we're close to God, we're doing everything right, and when the Messiah comes, it's going to be awesome. It's going to be this add-on to what we're already doing. They believed they were righteous. They believed they were ok with God because they were trying to obey the Law. They were tithing, fasting, keeping Sabbath, and repenting of sins. They thought they were ok with God; they considered themselves righteous. Jesus comes and says if you think you're righteous then you don't need a Savior. Only sinners need a Savior. That's what Jesus is revealing to these scribes and Pharisees. The problem is that you don't know your need of salvation. One of the scariest things is that sometimes those who are closest to God are really those who are farthest away. That's the problem with the scribes and the Pharisees. They're so close to God, they read the Bible, they are tithing, going to synagogue, singing the psalms, fasting, raising their kids in the way of the Lord, they're so close to God, they couldn't imagine they were actually miles away. They had decided they were self-righteous. They were good in and of themselves, therefore, they saw bad people are those people; we are the good people. Why would Jesus go after bad people? Why wouldn't He come to us, the good people?

In the very beginning of this conflict, Jesus actually came to call sinners. For us, thought number one is have you come to the place in your life where you have seen yourself as a sinner, in deep need of Jesus? I remember one time we were in North Carolina on a mission trip doing some work. We were going to a place and helping some people who needed help. They were the least of these. We went out and got some supplies at a supermarket and we we're checking out and the guy asked what we were doing. We said we were going to do VBS and play some

ballgames and things like that. He said, "You know, I don't really think it's good what you are doing because the truth is God only helps those who help themselves." He got this sense you shouldn't be helping these people because they're not helping themselves. I thought how completely anti-gospel is that. God doesn't help those who help themselves; He helps those who are helpless. That's what the gospel is. See, the scribes were helping themselves. They had their own plan, so when Jesus comes, it's not good news; it's bad news. We've already got a way to get to God and we're doing just fine. So the good news of repentance and faith in Christ is bad news. It explodes their whole system. They didn't want anything to do with it because they had their system already. Some of us who are so close to God are actually really far away. What we believe is if we help ourselves, God will come and help us. The reality is the gospel is God only helps those who know they are helpless. They have no rights to come to God. They are broken sinners. That's what you have to know to come to Christ. You are the tax collector at the tax booth. You're completely separated from God.

The good news is there is a Savior who has come to save you. Have you seen yourself as a sinner in need of salvation? That's the first point you have to get to in receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior. You have to know that you need saving. Secondly, if you have been saved by the Savior, who are you eating with? We see Jesus in this text eating with tax collectors and sinners. Those people who say you don't need to hang out with those people, you can't be around them, you'll get dirty, you'll get messy; you need to separate. That's what we often do in religion. We separate from people who aren't like us, but Jesus enters into the world of sinners and tax collectors. I love what Rosaria Butterfield says, "Jesus ate with sinners, but He didn't sin with sinners." That's what we must do as followers of Jesus. We've got to eat with tax collectors and sinners. We've got to eat with those who we see are opposed to God's Word in their thinking, their lifestyle; we've got to enter into their world and befriend them, love them, eat with them, fellowship and share life with them. Why? Because the Pharisees saw that sinners need rejecting, but Jesus saw that sinners need redeeming. We've got to be those who don't see sinners in need of rejection. We've got to see sinners as in need of redemption, so we eat, dine, and have friendship because we love people as image bearers of God

just like Jesus did no matter where they find themselves, in a synagogue or at the tax booth, we love and engage with those who are outside of grace because we know God's grace is for them. We see in this explosive statement that Jesus came for sinners. To get Jesus, you have to know you're a sinner.

3. Jesus' disciples did not fast

Then he goes on and you have another conflict story. The third thing that happens is about fasting. It says in verses 18-22, "Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins." It is a question about fasting. John's disciples fast, the Pharisees fast twice a week. Everybody knew it and they actually put ashes on their face. They looked very gloomy, they walked around and told everybody they were fasting, and somehow that made them really holy because they were very somber and sad. Sad meant holiness to the Pharisees and the scribes. The question was why aren't your disciples fasting, Jesus? The scribes and the Pharisees look really sad, which means they must be really close to God. Why aren't your disciples really sad? Why aren't they fasting? Why don't they have ashes on their faces? What's going on? Why don't your disciples fast? Jesus says you can't fast at a wedding. You can't fast at a wedding reception.

I've been to some wedding receptions and I've never fasted at one. I love wedding receptions; it's one of the reasons I do weddings, to go to the wedding reception! I went to the wedding of Colby and Brittany. If you know who they are, they are just a very fit couple. They work out a lot, and when I counsel them, I feel subconscious about me because I don't

work out a whole lot and eat whatever I want. I look at them and think man, I've got to try and eat better and work out more. So I marriage counseled them and I thought about their reception and I wasn't really looking forward to it because I thought it would be like cliff bars, tuna, and fruit. It's going to be like something really crazy and I'm just not going to like this. Tofu is not my thing! I get to their wedding reception not knowing that Colby and Brittany love junk food and their entire wedding reception was donuts! Donut holes, donuts, donut cake, it was donuts everywhere! At that reception, there was no fasting going on for this guy; there was only feasting. It was more donut holes than I could put into my mouth. My kids ate donut holes like crazy. That's what you do at a wedding; you don't fast. You feast at a wedding.

Jesus said the reason my disciples aren't fasting is because the groom is here. The groom has shown up! The one that you've been waiting for is here. There's no somber, no fasting, there is feasting because I have come. You're fasting because you think it's getting you close to God. God is right here and you're looking sad. You should be feasting! You should be celebrating. You should be popping some donuts. This is a good time. Jesus says there is no fasting at a wedding, and He is the groom. Then He says something kind of strange. He starts talking about garments and wine. He says if you have a garment with a tear in it, you don't take a new patch and put on an old garment because you know what will happen. When you wash it, the new patch will shrink and it will pop and tear and it will be a worse tear that is made because of the shrinking process. It is the same thing with wine. If you have new wine, you have to put it in new wineskins because the goatskins have to expand during the fermentation process. If you put new wine in old skins that have already stretched and dried out, guess what's going to happen. Boom! It's going to burst and you will lose the new wine and the skin. What is Jesus talking about? I read this so many times as a kid thinking what is He talking about jeans and wine. I'm so confused! What is this about the old and the new? Maybe some of you read that this week and thought this is strange and you moved on. What is He talking about here? He is saying you can't mix new with old. Here were the Pharisees. They wanted to take Jesus as a teacher and prophet and fit Him into their system, their law, their way to get to

God. Jesus was a patch to them. How can we make You fit into our system of how we in our own power are getting back to God, and Jesus says I'm not a patch; I'm a new garment. I'm a whole new thing that's come. The gospel doesn't fit with trying to please God through the Law; the gospel says Jesus has fulfilled the Law. Come to Him and you will be a fulfiller of the Law. The new wine needs new wineskin. The gospel can't be mixed with your self-righteousness. It can't be mixed with your church attendance and your Bible studies. It can't be I'm really good with God, I guess I'll add Jesus on as a little bit of a protection plan. Jesus says you've got to abandon your own way to seek after God and you've got to turn and come to Me because I'm brand new. The Kingdom of God is here. The gospel doesn't fit with your way back to God; the gospel is you come to Me and you get God. The gospel is not take the new and mix it with the old. The gospel is the new has come. Come to Jesus and He will make you new. So how is your walk with Jesus? Does it feel more like fasting, or like feasting? Is it more about all the things you don't get to do because you really want to do them, or does it feel like you get the God of the universe, the most exciting relationship in the world? Because when you get Jesus, it should be more about feasting than about fasting. It should be more about what you get than what you have to give up. If your walk with Jesus is only gloom and doom for what you have to give up, then you probably have a self-righteous plan to get to God. That's what the Law is, and it leads to death. The Spirit gives life, joy, comfort, and excitement in Jesus. What is your spiritual walk with Jesus? Is it more about fasting or more about feasting? Yes, there are times of fast, but there are definitely times to feast. When Jesus is here, the feast is on.

4. Jesus claims lordship over Sabbath

Then he goes into questions about the Sabbath. Verses 23-28 says, "One Sabbath he was going through the grain fields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest,

and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." The disciples pluck some grain on the Sabbath and the Pharisees and scribes panic. They are breaking the Law, breaking the Sabbath, doing what they shouldn't. Jesus begins to expose their interpretation of the Law; here's how you interpret the Law...you believe the Law was made for man, and not man for the Law. You're taking the Sabbath and believe it was made for man; in other words, to lord over man, put man in a prison. You thought the Sabbath was about God not wanting you to enjoy life. It was about duty, about burden, but in reality, the Sabbath was actually made for man. It was God's blessing. He wanted you to work, but He also wanted you to rest and to enjoy Him. The Pharisees and scribes have the whole Law backwards. The Law was supposed to be the goodness of God reigning over His people. They took the Law as a way to get back to God and they made it about burden and duty, what you have to do, what you can't do, and so the Law became their burden not their blessing. They took the Law, put it on all the people, and said you've got to measure up. You've got to do all these commands. The commands were the only thing they had, and there wasn't life in them. There was only duty and have to and cannot. Their whole relationship with God was about not doing things, and Jesus said you're missing the point of the Law. The Law was given for your good. The Sabbath was given for you to have rest. You've take the Law and you're misusing it. You're trying to get to God through the Law rather than in response to God, following His good Word for your life.

Then Jesus makes an explosive statement. He says the Son of Man is Lord over the Sabbath. The Sabbath, that sacred day that the Israelites held up, the day given them to God, which represents their covenant, keep the Sabbath, you're in covenant with Me. Now Jesus is doing something that seemed to them unlawful, and He says I am Lord of the Sabbath. I rule over it; meaning what? I am equal to God. God gave you the Sabbath, and I'm Lord of the Sabbath. I'm the forgiver of sins because I'm God. I'm Lord of the Sabbath because I am God, and you're the ones who have totally missed what the law was intended to do. It was never intended to be

salvation. It was intended to be response to salvation, response to what God has done. They flipped it and used the Law to try to get back to God. Now you had the Pharisees who became very legalistic in all that they did. In their legalism, they were trying to get back to the Lord. I love what Danny Aiken says about legalism. He says, "Legalism is deceptive because it makes us think we are spiritually elite when actually we are spiritual slaves." See, legalism makes us think we're great; we're doing right, when actually we're slaves to the Law. We're slaves to how we're trying to get right with God through the Law. So He reveals to him, here's the Sabbath; I am actually Lord of the Sabbath.

5. Jesus heals on the Sabbath

Then we enter that last passage where Jesus comes into the synagogue. Here's this man with a withered hand. The Pharisees and scribes are just waiting. Let's just see what Jesus is going to do. Let's try to trip Him up. Let's try to get Him to break the Law so that we can indict Him, accuse Him. Jesus brings the guy on stage and says I want everybody to see this. Ok Pharisees and scribes, you've been asking all these questions to Me and My disciples, now I have a question for you. Is it lawful to do good or evil? It's a pretty basic question. Do you think God wants you to do good or bad? Most of us could answer that pretty quick...I think good; that's pretty basic, right. Here are the Pharisees and the scribes who probably had the Old Testament memorized and they couldn't answer a basic question of whether they should do good or bad. Does God want you to love people or not? Jesus gets angry at these scribes and Pharisees. He's angry. How could you have missed it? How could you have taken the Law and completely miss love God and love your neighbor as yourself? How could you miss that? He is angry with them, but not only angry; He is also grieved. He's angry, but He's grieved. That means to have sympathy, to have compassion. He's angry, frustrated at these people who are so close to God, yet so far away. He doesn't reject them; He goes after them. He wants to redeem them too. Jesus goes after a tax collector at a tax booth, but He's also going after scribe and Pharisees because He's trying to show them the Kingdom of God. He says, hey you with the withered hand, reach it out and I'll restore it. He reaches it out by faith and the hand is restored.

What is He trying to get the Pharisees to see? Just like this guy's hand, your heart is withered up. Your heart is hard. It started with a question in your heart, who is this guy, and now it's ended with your response to Me, which is you don't believe who I say I am. You don't believe I'm the Spirit-filled Messiah who has come to bring the new Kingdom. The reason why is because you have your kingdom all figured out. You've already got your plan. You've already got your ways back to God, now Jesus comes, and it doesn't fit. They wanted a patch, but Jesus brought a new garment. They wanted a few how-to steps, Jesus brought the news that you can't, but in Him, you can. They wanted Jesus to help them if they help themselves, but Jesus came to only help the helpless. Those who were sick, who knew they were sinners; that's who the Savior came for. If religious leaders believed they were ok with God apart from Jesus, then Jesus had no good news for them.

If you think you're good, if you think you've got it all figured out, then the gospel is bad news to good people. The gospel comes at us and says no matter how many laws you've kept, no matter how many you've broken, you're separated from God. You're a sinner and you need to repent and believe in the gospel. No matter where you are on social issues, no matter where you are in your political views, no matter where you are in your economic class, no matter what color you are, it does not matter. All people are separated from God in Adam. All people need to repent and believe in Jesus. That's where salvation is.

The tax collector at the tax booth and the Pharisee at the synagogue preaching a sermon both needed to repent and come to Jesus to get into the Kingdom. The problem is the Pharisees had a hard heart. They couldn't see their need their need for Jesus, so they walked out and tried to kill Him. That was their response to Jesus. I don't know what to do with Him, so let's just kill Him because we're good. We've got it all figured out. The scariest thing is those that are so close to God are often the farthest away. That might be you this morning. That might be you who have always been to church. Maybe you're going to teach Sunday school next hour and all of your life you've had it all figured out, all put together. At VBS you made the right committee, went to the right place, you did the right thing, and your

life is about your goodness and doing it all right. Because of that, you polarize people. You're the right group, here are all the wrong groups, and your life is about rejecting those who are wrong and congregating with those who are right. That's what the Pharisees and scribes did. That's why Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners and they couldn't even understand it. How could Jesus go with them? Doesn't He know we're the good ones? That's what self-righteousness does. It says reject people who are sinners, and Jesus says go after them because they need redemption just like you need redemption. The gospel comes to both tax collectors and Sunday school teachers with the same message: repent and believe in the gospel. No matter how close you are or how far you are away, you need Jesus, only His righteousness gets you into the Kingdom.

I don't know where you're at, but as we see this text unfold, I think we see that Jesus only came to save sinners. So, have you had a time in your life where you really believed you're a sinner and need a Savior? Secondly, we see that Jesus didn't bring a patch to our lives; He brought a whole new garment. He brought new wine that can only be with new wineskins. The gospel is something new. It can't mix with your life and your path to God; you've got to turn from your life and completely trust in Christ. He is new and He came to make you new. The last thing we see is that we, too, like Jesus must eat with tax collectors and sinners. We can't see people as those people and us. We all are image bearers of God. We all are loved by God, so we go after people who seem to be different than us because the gospel is not about rejection; the gospel is about redemption. We get to go be friends with sinners and tax collectors, loving them and impacting them, not sinning with sinners, but eating with sinners so that we can show them the glorious gospel of Jesus.

Little Evie Kate came to me this morning with a Bible in her hand and says I gotta preach. I think that was my message from the Lord saying here's what you need to do today; you need to go preach. That's what I had to do and that's been done, so now it's on you. I think God is saying to you, here's what you must do; you must respond.