

Mark 2:13-3:35

THEME SENTENCE:

Jesus came for sinners, but is rejected and calls into being the new people of God.

Jesus came for sinners

- 1:40-45 to cleanse uncleanness (1:41)
2:1-12 to forgive sin (2:5)
2:13-17 to call sinners (2:17)

This is the third story teaching that Jesus came for the religiously unacceptable. Where would you expect to find a doctor except with the sick; where would you expect to find Jesus except with sinners.

But the Pharisees would hear him saying in 2:17 that he hadn't come for them though they kept all the religious procedures: not good news at all! It's only those who *know* they are sinners and care about it, who will respond to what Jesus came to do. Because they don't recognise this about themselves, they won't.

Jesus is rejected

There is an intensification of complaint – to themselves (2:7), to the disciples (2:16), then to Jesus (2:18, 24), until he turns the tables to question them (3:4). This theme of opposition deliberately overlaps with the explanation of why Jesus came (since it is what Jesus came to do that is the challenge to their religion): the 'testimony to the priests' (1:44) is that the Temple is no longer needed for he has 'authority on earth to forgive sins'. Their religion is now like 'old wineskins' (2:22), useless for the new wine of who he is and what he came to do:

2:18-22 Jesus is the Bridegroom

Here is the Promised One (Isaiah 54:5-6; Hosea 2:16-20), so now is the time for feasting, not fasting. Now is the time not to patch up the old, but to start again with something entirely new.

2:23-28 Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

Jesus points to a story where great King David broke another OT law and was not condemned. His point seems to be that the law is given by God *for us*, it's not something to be done for God *by us*. But Jesus is doing more than just debating that point. Sabbath-keeping was at the heart of Israel's self-identity, and of her Law (Ex 20:8-11; Dt 5:12-15). So when Jesus claims authority to declare on something even as important as that, he is setting himself up as a challenge to that very heart.

3:1-6 Jesus is going to do good and save life

This story illustrates 2:23-28 – the Sabbath is not to be worshipped, but to be enjoyed for our benefit. The sting is that Jesus exposes their hard hearts and impotence to help in contrast to his mission to save.

Their religion is therefore exposed. They put their emphasis on *man*: we earn forgiveness by works of repentance, by keeping the law, by behaviour, by religion. Jesus is explaining that true religion is about *him*: we cannot ourselves be righteous, and religious observance does not deal with our sin problem. This exposure explains why their opposition is both so wildly illogical (3:22-30) and shockingly violent (3:6).

Jesus calls the new people of God

- 3:7-12 Jesus withdraws
3:13-19 Jesus withdraws still further

... but is swamped by the same populist pressure as 1:37, 45.

Just as God led the **twelve** tribes of Israel to **Mount** Sinai where he commissioned them as his special people in a special relationship **with him** (Exod 19:1-6), so Jesus calls **twelve** (and the fact that they are 'the twelve' is more important than who they were), to a **mountain**, to be **with him** (and sent out into the world with a special task).

3:20-35 The Old People of God are 'rejected'

Mark interleaves two stories: the official deputation from Jerusalem declare him 'bad' (22) (and in so doing are guilty of the sin with eternal consequences, forever unforgiven 28-30) ... and his family declare him 'mad' (21) and so are not recognised (33). It's those gathered 'around Jesus' doing God's will who are his new family (34-35), the new people of God.