

WEEK THREE

MARK 2:1-17

BIGGER THAN YOUR BIGGEST PROBLEM

Everyone's got their own take on the world. How are we going to make things better? Do I need to make my bed each morning and sort my own life out? Or should I be out protesting for the rights of the vulnerable?

Jesus doesn't directly comment on these, so we have to be careful extrapolating to ourselves. But this week, Jesus starts to stake his claim not only for what's wrong with the world, but also what will make it right again.



This week, Jesus returns 'home' to Capernaum. And word gets out. Jesus is getting popular. But with popularity comes controversy. Or at least, with Jesus it does.

READ MARK 2:1-12

1. What seems to motivate the paralytic man and his friends?

2. Imagine being the paralytic man when Jesus said, "Child, your sins are forgiven." How would you feel?

3. Look at what the law teachers say in verses 6-7. Do they have a point?

4. What reason does Jesus give for healing the paralytic man?

5. What does Jesus think is the man's greatest need? How do you know?

This passage reveals some very different beliefs to those of 2020 Australia. The people of Jesus' day had a sense that God, and only God, had authority to judge people based on their conduct. And that he would.

And they had developed their systems for dealing with this, for controlling their fate with God: the rules and traditions of the elders. So when Jesus claimed the authority on earth to forgive sins, he had completely stepped outside the way that they'd constructed to handle their world!

**TAX COLLECTORS
AND SINNERS**

When Israel was under Roman imperial rule, Rome demanded taxes, and certain Israelites volunteered to collect those taxes from their fellow Israelites. The perk was that they could collect more than Rome was asking, skim the excess and make themselves rich. The downside was that their fellow Israelites despised them for being national traitors and financial cheats. They were therefore counted in the class of “sinners”, people who openly lived a life of sin like e.g. prostitutes. Maybe a close-ish parallel to “tax collectors and sinners” for us would be “known criminals”, outcasts from decent society, people you really wouldn’t want to be seen with.

READ MARK 2:13-17

6. What’s controversial about Jesus’ choices in this section?

7. What’s the point of Jesus’ explanation in verse 17?

8. How does it seem the Pharisees chose their disciples?

- **How do people in our world choose their proteges?**

- **How do we choose who we hang out with?**

Jesus is upsetting the apple cart here in more ways than one...

9. Are there other things in your life that are more important to you than being forgiven by God?

- How do your choices reflect this?

10. Do you ever try to sort things out between you and God aside from trusting Jesus' authority to forgive your sins? Maybe bargaining with God? Trying to be a better person?

- When was the last time that you went to Jesus directly to confess specific sins and ask him for forgiveness?

So many other things can seem important in life: getting the kids to school, paying the bills, passing your exams... And some of them really ARE important! Yet here Jesus makes sure we don't miss what's MOST important: that we're right with God, that our sins are forgiven.

Spend some time appropriately (in threes, pairs or even on your own) confessing your sins to almighty God, asking for Jesus to forgive you and pray with great thanks and joy that he has the authority to wipe your slate completely clean.