

If You're Sick and You Know It Clap Your Hands

Mark 2:15-17

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Skit: Hospital For The Healthy – 8 Minutes

(GA) Can you imagine how foolish that would be in real life? To go to a doctor's office when you're in obvious pain... or sick... and pretend to be healthy?

A. Hospitals are there to help you. They're staffed with nurses, and physician assistants, doctors.

1. People trained to help. Did you know that medical doctors go to school for 6 years of graduate work, then 4 more years of post-graduate training? That's 10 years of education *beyond* college, so that they can treat your pain.

a. It would be foolish to be in pain, go to a hospital, and act as if nothing's wrong.

(SN) Yet, millions of people do something just like this every week.

A. Let me explain.

(S) I want you look at something with me in Scripture. Flip to Mark's gospel, chapter 2 – we'll be in verses 13-17.

A. It's early in Jesus' ministry, Mark's just introducing his readers to who Jesus is. And the passage we'll look at tells us what Jesus came to do.

1. Ok, we talk a lot about "vision" today. This is Jesus' vision. This is what He came to do. There are two scenes which fill out Jesus' vision here:

a. First, the calling of Levi, which is likely the person we know now as Matthew.

i. Jesus calls a tax collector to follow Him. That's the first scene.

b. Second scene, we find Jesus eating dinner with this tax collector and his friends – the only friends a tax collector could have: other taxmen and sinners.

B. **Q:** These are the two scenes that work together to show us what Jesus came to do. Tell us what Jesus' vision is. Let's look at these two scenes, beginning with the second one. Look at just *Mark 2:15 first. Read.*

1. Jesus is reclining with tax collectors and sinners. What does the word "reclining" communicate – it shows up twice, that's significant.

a. "Reclining" shows us that people were relaxed. People were enjoying each other. Jesus' shoes were at the door. He was lying on the floor, leaning on his left arm, fully-participating in fellowship with these sinners and tax collectors...

i. And you and I can't begin to appreciate how offensive this picture would have been to these scribes and Pharisees. "Reclining" with these people!!!

a) It doesn't come close, but imagine walking by a house in town here that everyone knows deals drugs... hires strippers... police cars out front all the time for domestic abuse... It's the slum house in town.

i) Now, imagine walking by it and happening to glance in and see me, your pastor, sitting on the couch laughing and watching TV with a handful of guys and girls.

a) What would your emotional response be?

b) You know, that doesn't even scratch it, though. It is so much worse. This culture was different. Religious leaders saw sinners differently. Especially rabbis. Rabbis didn't even to acknowledge

that sinners existed. Rabbis only associated the best of the best. And Jesus was a rabbi.

i) Which should have meant that these people were “OFF LIMITS!!!”. They were dirty, sinful, cultural lepers... especially the tax collectors.

a) Ben Witherington III writes, “[Tax collectors] were Jews, and were especially despised and considered traitors by their fellow Jews, because not merely were they associated with Gentiles but in fact often worked for them – helping collect funds for the Roman oppressors.”

2. These were OFF LIMITS people. And Jesus was giving them His presence at a meal. You’d better believe this was a shocking picture.

a. And these scribes and Pharisees had had enough. This statement doesn’t communicate the emotion, but a thoughtful reader can fill it in. You can imagine their teeth grinding when they say in *verse 16*: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

i. And Jesus tells them, and this is where we hear Jesus’ vision, or purpose for coming. Look at what He said: *Read Mark 2:17*.

a) “I came to call sinners.” Jesus said, “I’m like a doctor, which means I’m not looking for healthy people, but for those who are sick.”

i) “I came to call *sinners*.”

3. What a vision! Because this is Jesus’ vision, or purpose, I want us to fully understand it. If He came to call sinners... we need to know: “Who are ‘sinners’, or who are ‘the sick’ He came to call? And we need to understand what He means by “call” – what does it mean to be “called”?

a. And this is where the first part of this passage –verses 13-14 – fills out this idea. By the way, this is such an important study tool for when you’re reading the Gospels.

i. The Gospels do this all the time – There will be a teaching point, and then a story. Or, a story followed by a teaching point. And both passages go together to fill out one idea.

a) It’s like a pastor who makes a point... then illustrates it with a story. The story helps fill out, or add to, the point.

ii. This is what’s happening here – We have a story first – the story of Jesus calling Levi, or Matthew. Then we have a teaching point – Jesus came to call sinners.

a) We’ve grabbed the teaching point first – Now we’re going back into the story to of Jesus calling Matthew to answer our questions:

i) Who are the sick... or sinners...

ii) And what does it mean to “call” them?

4. First, who are the sick, or sinners? Let me read Mark 2:13-14 – *Read Mark 2:13-14*.

a. Ok, here’s what’s radical about this first story. Jesus is a Rabbi. Mark’s gospel has already established this in the first 1½ chapters. He’s called by God to speak and minister... He wanders around teaching truth... He heals, he preaches, he commands spirits. By the end of chapter 1, Mark’s established Jesus as a rabbi.

b. Well, what do Rabbis do? They walk around doing these things... but they also, very selectively, choose a few young men to follow them.

i. They “call people” to come and do what they do.

a) Rabbis are held in higher esteem than any people in Jewish culture – their opinions matter the most... their actions are what everyone watches and tries to emulate... They’re the cultural sages.

i) Today, if our nation goes through a crisis – financial, terrorist, you name it – we quickly grab and interview experts. We look to politicians or philosophers to answer the big existential questions.

a) This was the role the rabbis alone played in the first century. They were the most esteemed people.

ii) And because of this, they got to choose whoever they wanted to follow them.

a) It’s kind of like recruiting – if you were the winningest coach in the history of college football – winning the National Championship every year – you’d get your pick of the top athletes from around the nation every year.

i) (Don’t you miss how good we used to be as Huskers... I really was proud of our team yesterday, though.)

ii. Well, that’s what these rabbis did – they recruited people to follow. And they got to choose the crème de la crème.

a) And to be chosen by a Rabbi to follow him was the supreme honor of a young, exceptionally gifted Jewish student of the **Tanakh**, or as we say today, the OT.

i) Only the smartest of the smartest, the most well-behaved of the well-behaved, were called to follow a Rabbi. And it was an honor!!! To get to follow behind a rabbi... learning to be like him. Wow!!!

a) A blessing developed and is recorded in the Mishna, the book of Oral Traditions, which says, “May you be covered in the dust of your Rabbi” – this was the greatest blessing you could ask for, for a young man’s life.

5. And it only happened to the golden children, the best. Which makes this moment so shocking. Jesus, a rabbi – in fact, quickly becoming the hottest rabbi in the region – “calls” **who?** The smartest of the smartest? The most well-behaved of the well-behaved? A golden child? Hardly...

a. He calls Levi, or Matthew, a tax collector – a sell-out; a cultural leper. What does that tell us about who Jesus is looking for? What does that reveal about Jesus’ definition of sick... or sinner?

i. Jesus came to call:

a) People that society sees as immoral... the cultural lepers...

b) People with obvious shortcomings... or terrible pasts...

c) People who don’t hide their sins, or can’t...

F. While all other rabbis walked around Israel feeling pious and selecting the best of the best... Jesus walked around serving, looking for immoral, sinful, hurting people.

1. Jesus was looking for authentic disciples... And doing it, He began a movement. A movement of healing and restoration that's for everyone who is willing to admit their immorality and pain and take up the invitation to follow Jesus.

a. What an awesome work Jesus began when He was on earth.

(VR) **Q:** Now, let me ask this – in whose hands did Jesus leave this awesome work of calling sinners?

A. **A:** The church. That's right – you and me. Just as Jesus came seeking the sick, not the healthy – so today, the church is the place where sick people, not healthy, still go to find this Great Physician.

1. Heartland, as one of many churches, is to be a Hospital.

(A) I was doing a search online this past week for civic organizations & businesses in our area.

A. Good places... not bad places... but places to socialize. Places to go, put your best foot forward, represent yourself and family and work in the best light possible.

1. There are dozens of these places within a 20-mile radius of Central City you could visit – golf courses, fraternal clubs, social centers or coffee shops. You name it.

a. These are all wonderful places if you want to present yourself in the best possible light.

2. But if you want someplace to go and admit you're hurting... admit you have sin and need forgiveness... admit that you're lonely or empty inside... admit that you've got some problems that you can't get out of by yourself... admit that you're in physical pain and it's crushing you... then church **ought** to be the best place for you.

a. It ought to be – but for many around the world it's not. For some reason, somehow, many churches jump the tracks and go off-course. Churches often become simply one more option for the **phony display of bandaged up lives**.

B. I'm so thankful that Heartland hasn't derailed in this area. We have a lot of room to grow in this area – but authentic discipleship is happening in some pretty cool ways already.

1. First of all, we're aware we want to be this way. That's huge! One of our core values is to be “Authentic Disciples” – We're saying that we want to be genuine about our sin or pain in order for Jesus to change us.

a. We chose this value as a value two years ago because, in part, it's true of us already. There are many people... many pockets of community at Heartland... where people admit they have needs, that they're in pain, that they have sin... and they want to be healed and changed by Jesus.

i. Jamie came back and told me just a bit about the women's retreat. She said that some really truthful sharing happened at the women's retreat this weekend.

a) She also said she thinks this will lead to relationships forming... commitments to continue to meet... and future healing and growing into the image of Christ.

i) How wonderful. And all because women chose to be authentic with each other in an effort to follow Jesus.

2. That's just one example, but believe me, I see so much of this around me at Heartland, and I want to cheer it on.

- a. I meet with people every week – many of you – and you come in and you’re ready to be honest about it all... because you want changed. You want healed. You want forgiven and set free from some particular sin.
 - i. I see authenticity at Heartland... and I see more and more people accepting the call to follow and become like Jesus.
- C. But I’m not satisfied. I want more. Someone asked me about a month ago, what’s your vision for Heartland, Zeke. And I said: “I want Heartland to be known as the largest spiritual hospital in Central Nebraska.”
 - 1. I don’t want to play church... I don’t want a social club... I don’t want superficiality like the skit illustrated...
 - 2. I want our body to be the place where sick and hurting and immoral people meet Jesus.
- D. Do you want that too? It’ll take all of us wanting that together to get there. That’s what I want to send you out thinking about... asking yourself:
 - 1. Are you ready to be authentic... no posing, no denying that you have hurts, no pretending that your life is put together well...
 - a. I want everyone one of you to ask yourself the question, “Am I wanting to be one of those sinners, those sick people, who leave my old life behind to follow this rabbi, Jesus?”
 - i. If you answer “YES” to that question, man, what a contribution you’ll be making to our Hospital.
 - ii. If you answer “NO” to that question, go find another church. You won’t be comfortable here... just as a person who is healthy wouldn’t feel comfortable staying in a hospital.
- E. Go home this week and ask yourself if you’re ready to be a part of Heartland, the Hospital. We’ll keep discussing this over the next five weeks. And I think Jesus is going to do some pretty wonderful things...