

'On your Marks..'

A whistle-stop tour of Mark's account of the life and ministry of Jesus

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' He said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'" [Mark 1.14f]

Mark was a man on a mission, and he was writing for people in a hurry. His is the shortest of the four gospel accounts, and a sense of great urgency runs through it all. He puts the spotlight on Jesus, and he wants his readers to see from the start both *that*, and *why*, Jesus is good news: and *how* He becomes good news for each of us.

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".. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners .."

Mark 2.1-17

The first study saw Mark essentially summarising the thrust of his whole gospel account: he introduced us to Jesus as the One promised in the Scriptures and now bringing the reign of God into the experience of ordinary individuals.

In this present study it's the *call* of Jesus which is to the fore. Mark narrates Jesus addressing His call to two men - one paralysed, the other despised - and shows in each case what follows: remarkable change, growing hostility, and general amazement.

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1. **Read Mark 2.1-17.** Jesus proclaimed the good news of God. Here we read how He 'preached the word to them'. It's that which is the key to the whole passage: preaching is not an academic exercise, but the means by which Jesus calls people into life.

What are the points of similarity, and the points of difference, between the two narratives here - vv.1-12 and vv.13-17?

In what way(s) have you heard Jesus speaking very directly to you and calling you to do something?

2. **Read Mark 2.1-6.** Four men come to Jesus carrying their paralysed friend: but the crowd listening as Jesus preaches the word is so large they can't get near Him at all.

What characterizes the *faith* of the four men? What might you learn from them?

What lessons are there for us in the fact that Jesus' first words to the man are to tell him his sins are forgiven?

How come it's *their* faith which prompts Jesus to address *the man's* sins?

3. Read Mark 2.7-12. The great assurance pronounced by Jesus provokes an immediate reaction in the minds of the teachers of law, whereby they view Jesus as a 'blasphemer'.

Read Mark 1: what has Mark already narrated which helps his readers recognize that Jesus *is* no less than God?

Is the fact that Jesus *knows* what you are thinking as disconcerting for you as it clearly was for these teachers?

In what ways was the man's physical healing a picture of the reality of forgiveness in his experience?

4. Read Mark 2.13-17. In this 'all-action' gospel account, the call of Jesus [once more set against the backdrop of Jesus teaching (v.13)], is again addressed to an unlikely individual.

When and how did you hear this call of Jesus to 'follow Me'?

How does the response of Levi (aka Matthew), and the way it found expression, challenge you?

What lessons does Jesus' response to the question of the Pharisees have for His church today?