

- 1) I ran across a comment by MacArthur this week that, in view of some of our discussion last time I thought might be of interest.

Historically, the Jewish people viewed the messiah as nothing more than a man. They expected him to be an earthly ruler of unparalleled power and influence. He would conquer Israel's enemies and fulfill all the promises that were given to Abraham, repeated to his children, and reiterated and expanded in the promises given to David of a coming king and kingdom. The messiah would be a son (descendant) of David and, like him, defeat Israel's foes and usher in the glorious kingdom. The Jewish people viewed the messiah as the savior of the nation as a whole, but not of individual souls. They did not (and still do not) believe the messiah would be God in human flesh.

MacArthur, John. Mark 1-16 MacArthur New Testament Commentary Two Volume Set (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series) . Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- 2) Returning to our last reading chapter 1 vs. 40-45

Mark 1:40-45 (NIV)

- 1) The key to this passage is contained in vs. 38 and in the result of the lepers not obeying Jesus' command not to tell anyone.

"Let us go somewhere else — to the nearby villages — so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

- 2) Though Jesus had compassion on all those who were sick and demon possessed, his primary ministry was not to heal but to preach.
- 3) MacArthur calls Jesus' healings "...a massive unleashing of divine power with no parallel in history."
 - a) He cites 7 different passages in Matthew alone that point out Jesus healing of the masses. One of those passages is >>>>

Matt 4:23-25 (NIV)

- 4) What Matthew describes here is pretty much the entire area of Palestine – from the Dead Sea in the south, north to the Sea of Galilee, and points east and west.
- 5) Getting back to Mark, this passage breaks down into three distinct sections:
 - a) the leper's predicament
 - b) the Lord's handling of the situation
 - c) and the results due to the leper's not keeping quiet.
- 6) First, ***the leper's predicament*** – in Luke's account of this incident in Luke 5:12, he tells us "a man came along who was covered with leprosy".

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- a) This tells us that man's condition was obvious.
 - b) With that came certain requirements
 - i) They had to remain apart from people (basically banished from society).
 - ii) They had to cover their mouth and cry out "unclean, unclean" when approaching someone.
 - c) Then, instead of following any of this, he falls on his knees in front of Jesus and begs for healing.
 - d) In this case, the leper had approached Jesus and from the text, he had gotten within arm's length of the Lord.
- 7) The Lord then handles the situation in a totally unexpected and unacceptable way by Jewish standards.
- a) No one would normally touch a leprous person.
 - b) Jesus does the unthinkable – he reaches out and touches the man.
 - c) Immediately, the man is healed – he is clean.
 - d) To me, this means that the man "immediately had no sign of leprosy on him anywhere".
 - e) Take a second to let that picture – the before and after – sink in – Amazing!!
 - f) Then, the Lord tells the man to do what, to me seems almost impossible - "See that you don't tell this to anyone" – how could he not?
- 8) However, in verse 45, Mark again tells us why Jesus says things like this.
- 45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. ***As a result***, Jesus could no longer ***enter a town*** openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.
- 9) As we can see, Jesus had compassion for those in need of healing.
 - 10) Healings were also important to His work.
 - 11) However, they were a two edged sword – the process and time taken hindered his true purpose.
 - 12) That purpose was the preach and teach the good news of the fulfillment of God's plan and purpose for sending Him.

Mark 2:1-2 (NIV)

- 1) There are a couple of pieces of information we should gather from these two verses.
- 2) First, here we see a transition for Jesus – Mark calls Capernaum his home.
 - a) This possibly indicates that Jesus returned to Capernaum occasionally throughout his ministry.

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- b) Obviously, the exact number of times we do not know for sure but interesting none the less.
 - c) As you may recall, this is also Simon Peter's and Andrew's home – their families were there so these visits are opportunities for them to see their families.
 - d) We will see shortly that Matthew is likely from there or at least very close by.
 - e) Pure conjecture – but – other of the disciples may have either been from there or could have moved their families there as well – again pure conjecture on my part.
- 3) Second, the attitude of the people in Capernaum appears have changed from our first encounter there.
- a) In our first glimpse into Jesus' relationship with the people there was one of their needing healing and pressing in on him for that healing to the point that he was unable to teach.
 - b) This was the reason he left and went into other towns at the time He did.
 - c) Here, we see the people portrayed as hungry for his teaching – so much so that there was standing room only to hear Him speak.
- 4) All that is not to say that no one need healing. There were still those who were in need of his healing power as we see in this next passage.

Mark 2:3-12 (NIV)

- 1) Ok, it's Sunday morning, Micah is at the speaker's stand bringing the message when a few pieces of debris fall down in front of him.
- a) Everything stops, Micah moves back away from the spot where the debris hit and starts watching where the rest of the debris is coming from.
 - b) Everyone is watching and suddenly a lot of debris comes down and a larger and larger hole forms.
 - c) Finally, everyone sees the bottom of a mat appear in the opening and start to slowly descend to the ground.
 - d) Once low enough people realize there is a person on the mat.
 - e) Several rush to help lower him safely to the ground.
 - f) The person does not move but it is obvious he is alive.
 - g) Then, a super strange thing happens, Micah steps forward and says to the man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

What would your thoughts be?

What do you think the elders thoughts would be?

- 2) Obviously, that would not ever happen but, I think it helps us see perhaps what the folks who were there were thinking – not just the leaders but the individuals as well.

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- 3) I'm equally sure that Jesus knew the thoughts of the listeners as well as the teachers of the law.
- 4) Jesus zeros in on the teachers of the law and calls them out by asking "Why are you thinking these things?"

What should they have been thinking or, perhaps a better question might be what do the things they are thinking say about their attitude?

- 5) To be fair, we also should consider that the rest of the audience most likely does not realize that Jesus has zeroed in on the teachers of the law.

So, what response do you think his question evokes in the average person in the crowd?

- 6) I personally think that Jesus, being the master teacher that he was and being all knowing as he was probably handled these actions specifically the way he did to teach.
- 7) He knew the response of the teachers of the law, he knew the response of the crowd.
- 8) He could have healed the man first and all of those responses would have been different.
- 9) However, he made the seemingly odd statement forgiving the paralyzed man his sins first probably to evoke the very responses he got.
- 10) So, now the teaching moment.

Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" He said to the paralytic, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.

- 11) As good teachers often do, he begins with a question that causes the listeners to think about the very point he is getting ready to make.
- 12) There is a possibility that this is a really pivotal moment in Christ's ministry – at least in Capernaum.
- 13) To this point, my guess would be that, most if not all of those who were listening to Jesus teach and either being aware of his healing or actually experiencing them were thinking of him as a great teacher who could heal and not much beyond that.
- 14) Here, because of the thoughts of the Pharisees, the very thing he had been avoiding he now brings into focus.
- 15) All who were listening to him at this gathering most likely were aware of the issue the Pharisees were concerned about even if they did not have the same attitude.
 - a) They all knew that only God could forgive sins.
- 16) In that day and time however, there were many who could supposedly heal the sick – not as truly and spectacularly as Christ did, but heal none the less.

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- 17) Here is the ultimate connection – a healing that was way out of the ordinary – taking a man totally paralyzed from his mat completely healed and walking out of the assembly in front of them all.
 - a) This was not a man who was on crutches who tosses them aside and limps away.
 - b) This was a man who was totally paralyzed getting up and walking normally through the crowd.
- 18) Combine that with what he just said and there had to be a lot of lightbulbs coming on over the heads of many in the crowd – ah hah! This must be the Messiah! And, could it be, yes even the Son of God.

Mark 2:13-14 (NIV)

- 1) Mark very quickly gives us three different thoughts that at first seem to be disconnected here.
 - a) **First**, Jesus went out beside the lake.
 - b) **Second** people came to him and he began to teach.
- 2) If we think back to the event that Mark just related regarding the crowd and the men lowering their paralyzed friend thru a hole in the roof, we can see that Jesus drew large crowds.
- 3) As we generally look at Jesus' ministry, he taught outside a lot.
- 4) One can, and I think should, infer from this that it was his way of reaching more people than he could teaching in buildings or structures of any kind.
- 5) The **third** thought here is Jesus walking along.
 - a) I think, in context, we can assume he is walking along perhaps returning to Capernaum after teaching.
- 6) Then, comes a “gasper” event. TV show commercial for “Ghosts”.
- 7) Speaking to Levi and asking him to follow Jesus would have been a true gasper event!!
- 8) Let's take a deep dive into Levi (Matthew) and why this would have been so shocking to the people.
 - a) First, Levi was a Jew – the name and the “son of Alphaeus” description tells us this concretely.
- 9) Now, let's look at what he was as far as the people were concerned.
- 10) Due to the Roman occupation of Israel, the Jewish people were required to pay taxes to Rome.
- 11) In Galilee, the responsibility to collect those taxes fell to Herod Antipas, the tetrarch, who sold tax collection franchises to the highest bidder.
- 12) Those who purchased a franchise were required to meet a minimum quota for Rome
- 13) Anything they collected beyond that quota was theirs to keep.

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14) This was where the problem came in - tax collectors continually looked for ways to squeeze extra money out of people and were aided in their collection by thugs and low-life sorts.

15) You may recall the incident in Luke 3:12 where Jesus addresses this:

Luke 3:12-14 (NIV)

16) There were many different taxes that were collected.

- a) poll tax, income tax (about 1 percent)
- b) land tax (20% of all grain, wine, and fruit)
- c) taxes on the transport of goods and produce
- d) road use
- e) crossing of bridges
- f) many other miscellaneous activities.

17) When we bring this idea to our current society, we find that tax collectors were basically legalized extortionists.

18) They ran a legal protection and loan sharking operation.

19) They charged more than was necessary or reasonable and then, for those unable to pay, they loaned money at exorbitant interest rates.

20) As in collection and loan sharking activities today, were aided in their collection by thugs and low-life sorts.

21) They were also seen as traitors to their own people – they extorted money from their fellow Jews in order to support the corrupt infrastructure of foreign oppression as well as to line their own pockets.

22) One can see from this why society considered them as part of the worst of sinners

23) Beyond just opinion, they were considered unclean, barred from attending the synagogue, and prohibited from testifying in a Jewish court.

24) As one commentator explains:

The Mishnah and Talmud (although written later) register scathing judgments of tax collectors, lumping them together with thieves and murderers. A Jew who collected taxes was disqualified as a judge or witness in court, expelled from the synagogue, and a cause of disgrace to his family (b. Sanh. 25b). The touch of a tax collector rendered a house unclean (m. Teh. 7:6; m. Hag. 3:6). Jews were forbidden to receive money and even alms from tax collectors since revenue from taxes was deemed robbery. Jewish contempt of tax collectors is epitomized in the ruling that Jews could lie to tax collectors with impunity (m. Ned. 3:4).

(James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 83)

25) They were almost as contemptible as Gentiles to the Jews.

26) Further, according to the Talmud, there were two kinds of tax collectors – the gabbai and mokhes.

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- 27) Gabbai were responsible to collect the more general taxes, like the poll, land, and income tax.
- 28) Mokhes were responsible for more specialized taxes, like tolls for using roads and bridges, were collected by the mokhes.
- 29) A tax booth would be owned by a great mokhes who would employ a little mokhes to sit there and actually collect the taxes.
- 30) From Mark's description, it is clear that Matthew was a mokhes.
- 31) Because he was in constant contact with the people, daily charging them as they passed his toll booth, Matthew would have been one of the most familiar and hated men in Capernaum.
- 32) One commentator describes his occupation in these words:
- Levi is no tax baron but one who is stationed at an intersection of trade routes to collect tolls, tariffs, imposts and customs, probably for Herod Antipas. Toll collectors were renowned for their dishonesty and extortion. They habitually collected more than they were due, did not always post up the regulations, and made false valuations and accusations (see Luke 3:12–13). Tax officials were hardly choice candidates for discipleship since most Jews in Jesus' day would dismiss them as those who craved money more than respectability or righteousness.
- (David E. Garland, Mark, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 103)
- 33) Matthew's booth appears to have been located near the shore, meaning that he likely collected tolls and tariffs from those involved in the city's bustling fishing trade.
- 34) I guess that we can now see why this was an event that would cause those that were following him and any that observed the event to gasp.
- 35) It would be inconceivable that a Rabbi of any standing at all would speak to a tax collector.
- 36) And to ask him to become a member of his disciples would be even more unthinkable.
- 37) And, it gets even worse ...