

STUDY GUIDE:

Extraordinary Life Series in Mark:

An Extraordinarily Ordinary Person | Mark 2:13-17

Welcome to the adventure. We are on a journey to look deeply into what Jesus said, how he lived, and who he truly is through the Gospel of Mark. These guides are based off of our sermons which can always be found at www.rbcpc.org/media/sermons.

For Starters

Neal told about the orangutan and Rottweiler. The dog thought he was powerful... until he met the arm of the ape. Is there a time when you, or someone you know, didn't have as much power as you thought you did?

Parable of the Bethlehem Book

We found ourselves at a Christian School in Palestinian territory, and the pastor in charge brought out copies of his book. It was a book that told the story of Christians in Palestine, Palestinian Christians whose understanding of the role of Israel in their lives and in the world might be extremely different than our own. Holding the book in my hand, I was confronted by my "obviouslys". Obviously, I and my American Christian friends knew Israel was right in its dealings with this community. Obviously, Christians in Bethlehem must agree with Israeli interests and actions. Most obviously, I was likely incorrect.

Suddenly, I was worried about what it meant to accept this pastor's book. What did it mean to reject it? What would the implications be if copies were found in our luggage? What would they do if they found books in our carry-ons critical of Israel? How should we respect and support fellow Christians when we didn't know their political ideologies or what they said in their books? I was unprepared, uncomfortable, and unsure what to do.

Why was the book an issue?

What would you have done if you were me?

Jesus calls Levi and eats with sinners

Everyone was feeling discomfort in Mark 2:13-17. Well, maybe not Jesus. Jesus was fine with the discomfort, he was intentional about it. He was extraordinary, but I want us to see is that his loving, non-judgmental actions were extraordinarily ordinary. In fact, they were the kind of actions we can do ourselves. Read Mark 2:13-17

What other situations, or dividing issues today, are modern reflections of the story of Levi and the party guests judged by religious leaders? Imagine a scenario together, and discuss the sides and choices you would have.

Division is powerful. Division is what our world does: division between republicans, democrats, creeds, genders, races, and any other way you could swing to one way or another. The world says we have to have winners and losers. If I don't get my way, I lose, they win. It gets into the church when we feel if "they" win, Jesus or God loses. You might think it would take a miracle for Jesus to bring together such oppositional groups as Pharisees, tax collectors and sinners. But, in fact, he acted in quite an ordinary way.

Jesus is extraordinarily ordinary in this story. He does no miracles. In the stories before this one, Jesus heals, heals, heals. He heals Peter's mother in law, a man with leprosy and the man lowered down through the roof. It's hard to try to be like that Jesus. We don't have that kind of healing power. We wish we did but we don't. We would love to do what Jesus did in those stories but we can't. The irony is that, we can do what Jesus did in the story of Levi but often, we don't want to.

The Model and Challenge from Jesus

Jesus did three things.

1. He offered friendship to someone who was no one's friend.
2. He chose to engage irreligious, controversial people in a conversation around a dinner table
3. He refused to condemn the religious leaders.

Which of these would be the hardest for you to do?

Now, let's not talk of news or hypotheticals... (that's too easy, my friends)
Where in your life, with real people you actually know, are you being called to be as extraordinarily ordinary as Jesus? Where can you bring people together rather than divide them apart?

We pray that you are being amazed at who Jesus is. That as you are reading the Gospel of Mark you are being challenged by Jesus, perhaps perplexed by his ways, and hopefully seeing new things about this Savior that you haven't quite seen before. This whole series is very weak if we aren't in the bible on our own. Pick it up this week, even daily if you can, and search for who Jesus is as you read Mark along with all of us. Amen!

Close in Prayer for One Another.