

The Ethics of Jesus

Mark 10:1-16 (CGS#15)

INTRODUCTION: Jesus and the Pharisees, we are used to their interactions by now in the Gospel of Mark. The Pharisees come and confront Jesus. Jesus hears their question and offers a response that exposes the hardness of their hearts and the real purpose of their question. Then, we often find the disciples asking for clarification on Jesus' response because they didn't understand. These interactions point us to the reality that understanding and applying the wisdom and values of Jesus isn't as easy as we might assume. But we are also reminded in Jesus' faithful presence with the disciples that God is patient and helps us in our pursuit of following him in a life-defining way. **The key difference is that the disciples were teachable, and the Pharisees, by and large, were not.**

Let's make sure we understand the flow of Mark's Gospel and the importance of the setting to this conversation. "Up till now, in chapters 1–9, we have had the record of a basically Galilean ministry of Jesus. Now, from chapters 10 to 15, Mark records a Judean ministry, and the natural assumption would be that this followed immediately afterwards. But, against this view, in between the two, Luke has a great mass of material, covering roughly chapters 9–16 of his gospel, usually called the Lucan travel narrative, which Mark seems to omit altogether. Mark, however, never claims to record 'all that Jesus began to do and to teach', as Luke does (Acts 1:1), and even early Christian tradition recognized that Mark was only a selective account. Probably Mark's arrangement here is theological and abridged, rather than strictly chronological: he hurries on to show at once the resolute turning of Jesus towards Jerusalem that was to lead to the cross. Although Mark is 'historical', we must not think of his gospel as a chronicle in our modern sense: he had a different purpose in view."¹ And as we've said many times before in this series, Mark's purpose is that Jesus would be seen clearly and followed accordingly.

Moving now into the region of Judea, which is different in every way from the Galilean highlands in the north. Rugged Galilee, with its simple and strongly nationalistic peasantry, was very different from the sophisticated city dwellers of the south. Judea was dominated by Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was dominated by the temple, with its Sadducean aristocracy and Sanhedrin: vested religious interests and rigid religious orthodoxy were stronger there than in the north.² With this rigid religiosity, we are not surprised that Jesus is being tested by the Pharisees. And they test him with quite a question! One scholar notes, "Marriage and divorce were in Jesus' day, as they are in ours, matters of great interest and controversy. In ancient Judaism, marriage was not regarded as a union of equals for the mutual benefit of both husband and wife but rather as an institution whose chief purpose was the establishment and continuance of the family and whose chief enemy was childlessness. Jesus, however, teaches that marriage is not a male-dominated institution but a new creation of God, to which both husband and wife are equally responsible to practice discipleship in lifelong obedience."³

When Jesus is tested here, he doesn't give up on truth, instead he offers truth with grace. That is, he understands the Father's heart and invites all parties (including the Pharisees) to walk in the fullness of life in God. Giving up on God's commands doesn't lead to life, nor does legalism. Instead, Jesus shows us **that taking righteousness seriously means I need to think graciously and truthfully.**

¹ R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 230–231.

² R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 231.

³ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 298.

GETTING STARTED – As a group, take time to answer this question. Why is it so difficult for us at times to live out the principle of grace and truth? What fears, concerns, or worries contribute to that difficulty?

IN THE WORD – Let's dig back into the passage(s). It is important to strengthen our muscles in reading God's Word. On Sunday, we walked through the passage in the sermon. Hopefully, that helped you to see the landmarks of the passage with fresh eyes. Now, with your group, go back through it and see what God is saying to you specifically.

First, before you read the passage, take a moment to ask God's Spirit to quiet your mind and heart and to illuminate the text to you. Second, read the passage aloud to the group. Then, follow the simple method below. (O.P.A)

Observe: Make 8-10 observations from the passage. Pay close attention to observe and note repeated words and phrases, names, places, and themes.

Principles: From your list of observations, what patterns or big ideas do you see emerging? Can you distill it down into 2-4 big idea truths?

Apply: Moving from your list of principles, it is time to apply God's Word. Remember, we believe that God's Word is living and active and that it can change the way we live Monday- Friday. What is one tangible way to apply a truth from your list above?

Note: Another way to approach your time together is to talk through the following questions.

1. How have you seen Jesus give away grace and truth in the Gospel of Mark?
2. How do you see Jesus giving away grace and truth in this passage? How does he offer it to the disciples, the Pharisees, and to us as readers 2000 years later?
3. One of our values as a church is Intergenerational Discipleship. Who is an older and wiser believer who has extended grace and truth to you at a point in your walk? And how did they do that?
4. What is it about grace and truth together that can make us uncomfortable? How does it come into tension with the idea of "being right is the most important thing?"
5. What needs to change in my relationship with God to receive both truth and grace? What needs to change in my relationships with others to extend both truth and grace?