Series in Mark’s gospel

* Trying to move quickly – style.
* Most of Mark: J interaction w ppl.
	+ Some receive – some reject. Some love him – some want to kill.
* Today: 2 characters: paralysed man[[1]](#endnote-1) – tax collector. V different – 1 thing in common: sinners. J identifies them as sinners.
	+ /something heard before in Mark.
		- J authority over evil powers – sickness – repentance.
		- Today we see J as having authority to forgive sin.
	+ All clues – more: bright flashing lights – telling us who J is.
* Getting ahead of myself…meet first character.

**v1** A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. **v2** They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.

* Left it last time: J out in lonely places – mobbed by crowds – even there – crowds of ppl[[2]](#endnote-2). Comes back to town. Maybe a few weeks later.
* “Come home[[3]](#endnote-3)” – Capernaum – said a few times – J base early on. Prob house there.
	+ Maybe even his house[[4]](#endnote-4)! Would explain lack of complaints about roof being messed up!

You: Imagine there – in room. 1 character appears in both stories: who?

Imagine you: ToL. (Actually several – pretend one)

* Nice: 2x reasons:
	+ #1 Important person: – respectable – v religious – love God & B. Outwardly good life.
	+ #2 You get: chair. **v6** Some teachers of the law were sitting there – even tho standing room only – you got the chair b/c special.
* House rammed w hot bodies – spilling out into street – hot and stuffy but at least out of sun - /cares it’s uncomfortable – b/c of what is going on.
	+ All remember healings a while back – everyone in town who was sick got healed that night (1:34).
	+ Now everyone who can - turned up for J homecoming.
* J teaching abt Kingdom. God has come to you. Repent & believe (1:15). That’s why he’s come: to preach. (1:38) Good at it. You’re listening intently. Every eye is on J. Riveting stuff. /heard teaching like this before.
	+ You know OT: teacher of Law.
	+ Like he knows the characters personally. Like he knows God in a deep, personal way.
		- /like teaching about some stuff he’s heard – but abt s/o he knows.
		- Ur preacher – u know you /preach like this.
* Bit of a commotion outside – look over - some idiot - trying to push thr w stretcher – no chance - try to ignore it – want to listen.
	+ Sound of someone being half-carried – half-dragged up stone stairs outside. Roll eyes – think: just shut up. All been there – trying to listen – phone goes off!
	+ Few minutes later – scratching – messing w roof - seriously? Ceiling planks being removed.
		- Speaking in public 2 choices: power on through & ignore – or draw attention.
		- This time J stops talking – looks up - /ignore.
		- Wonder: cross? Smiles as they lower man down on his mat. Debris falling on heads – few annoyed people shaking dust off.
* Kinda wonder where this guy is from b/c he’s not local – /sick ppl in Capernaum anymore![[5]](#endnote-5)
	+ Think: Maybe they’d met man healed of leprosy – since he went around telling everyone what happened to him. (1:45)
	+ Reflect: These guys clearly believe J can heal their friend – really do believe that J can do it – admire faith in action! ToL: admire that!
* J smiles at all 5 of them – says specifically to paralysed man lying there on mat: “your sins are forgiven”.
	+ He said what?
* Sins forgiven? Two things rush though mind:
	+ #1 Undoubtedly this man is a terrible sinner: just look at him.
		- Remember J disciples met a blind man once: **John 9:2** who sinned, this man or his parents?
		- Jesus: neither. But culture: view of God: suffer – must be a terrible sinner – hiding s/t.
	+ #2 /go around forgiving sins. Only God can do that! Blasphemy! Should be stoned to death – law requires – Leviticus 24:16!
		- Say something? Do something? Drag him outside? /Do it on own. How will ppl react? Really like him!
* Jesus looks at you – stares straight in eyes – holds gaze for a moment longer than comfortable – look away as he says “why are you thinking these things?”
	+ Chest pounding – suddenly as if all the ppl: gone; men on roof: gone. Paralysed man: gone. Just you and J. How does he know?
* Which is easier: to say to this paralysed man, “Your sins are forgiven,” or to say, “Get up, take your mat and walk”?
	+ Well obv: easier to say “sins are forgiven” – anyone can say that – and I /prove it one way or other. But J /give you time to respond.
* I want you[[6]](#endnote-6) to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.’ So he said to the man, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’
	+ Man: eyes fixed on J whole time: sits up - stands up - rolls up his mat – and somehow crowd squashes together even tighter - let him leave.
	+ In an instant – tension breaks – clapping & cheering starts – ppl /still – what have we just witnessed! Who IS this? /Seen anything like this! Chatter - noise – celebration – goes on into night.
* All face same question today. Mark’s intention: put yourself there. Ask same question: who is J?
	+ If he can heal s/o like that: instantly – totally: power of God in him. If he can do that – then why not believe him when he says he has the authority to forgive sin too.
* And maybe to us in 2020: think: the man just came for a healing. Why does J start talking about sin?
	+ An opportunity to reveal his identity – show ToL: God. B/c only God can forgive sin. Beginning of battle w ToL.
	+ Also b/c sin is the biggest problem of every single human being. Even a man who is paralysed: greatest need is forgiveness and reconciliation w God.
		- True: all of us – need to get right w God – most urgent problem you have today – whatever else going on in life – get right w God.
		- Cuz: die tonight – face God’s judgement. What good is a fine set of legs then? Sin forgiven.

**Second character:**

**v13** Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. [Capernaum is a fishing town – on lake Galilee] A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. **v14** As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. ‘Follow me,’ Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

* Context: wonderful thing!
	+ Read that on own – think: idiot. Get up and follow just like that!
	+ But: Seen all this stuff going on: only a small town:
		- Knew ppl were demon-possessed – now /.
		- Seen healings – heard teaching – maybe met paralysed man – certainly knew Peter & Andrew.
	+ J says: follow me. /say that to many.
		- Me? Really? Seriously?
		- Know who I am? Everyone hates me[[7]](#endnote-7) – tax collector – traitor - /let me in synagogue – when I go into house of good Jewish family – “unclean” – call priest: do a cleansing ritual.
		- Like for a leper – but worse: I chose this life.
		- They see me as a corrupt, power-hungry, greedy, untrustworthy, bottom-feeding bureaucrat.
		- U want me? OK!
* You: ToL – you – thinking?
	+ This man claims to be God but these are the friends he chooses?
* Later that day – hear a rumour that Levi is holding a special dinner. J is the guest of honour. Kinda intrigued by J. Go have a bit of a nosey.
	+ J at Levis’ house - got a nice house – wealthy by over-charging.
	+ Open courtyard – see who is there. Reclining at table[[8]](#endnote-8) - w /just Levi – but a whole room full of Levi’s!
		- Many tax collectors! And a whole bunch of other “sinners” – the sort of ppl Levi hangs round with: notorious sinners – coz no-one respectable will hang out with him.
		- Ppl from the North Galilee criminal underworld. Prostitutes – pimps – drunks – thieves.
* Your blood begins to boil: how dare he!
	+ How dare he make a fool of me – “which is easier to say – sins forgiven or get up and walk” – make me look like the bad buy - and then share a table w ppl like this? How dare he!
	+ Surely Jesus ought to be preaching to them – from a distance – change yourself – clean yourself up – try harder – be better – get some new good habits – then God will accept you.
		- And then maybe we’d consider having you back in our synagogue.
	+ Emotion rising inside: self-righteousness!
		- These are BAD people. I am a GOOD person.
* So you beckon over one of disciples: what’s he doing? Eating w tax collectors & sinners?
	+ Disciples seem pretty clueless themselves about the reason why J hanging around w this lot. Disciples pretty rough fishermen themselves – these guys – whole new level.
	+ Hey Jesus – guy over there wants to know why you’re eating w these kinds of ppl. Awks!
* J answers w a riddle. It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.
	+ Imagine: go to doctor – big sign on door: Only 100% healthy people allowed beyond this point. Terrible doctor. Whole point of a doctor is to help those who are sick.
	+ Whole mission of Jesus is to help those who will admit they are sinners.
* That’s why he hangs out w these ppl - bc they need help.
	+ They know they are sinners – everyone can see it – everyone reminds them of the fact every time they spit on the floor in front of them.
* In fact, only kind of ppl he’s not interested in – those he can’t help: the “righteous” - /call them. Can’t do anything for ppl who think they’re OK.
	+ His mission to them is to show them they’re not righteous at all – as we shall see in future weeks.

**Close w summary. 2 stories.**

* Each w a “sinner” (paralysed man & Levi) and each w a “saint” (ToL)
	+ In both stories, “sinner” is accepted when they come to J in repentance & faith.
	+ In both stories, the “saint” is shown to be very wrong about J and is rejected.
* Which are you today?
	+ Admit your sin – so that he can help you?
	+ Or will you keep telling yourself you’re better than that – OK on own?
		- B/c if we reject J – friend of sinners now – he will reject us at the judgement. You’ll face the wrath of God against your sin on own. Terrifying prospect.
* But if come to J – whether 1st or 1000th time – admit your sin – own it – ask for his forgiveness & help – J the spiritual doctor who can heal sin – come and do that work of healing in you.
1. I know it’s not a nice way to identify someone – purely on the basis of their disability, but as far as the gospel writers are concerned, every story is about Jesus. The man’s family background, likes and dislikes, age and even his name are entirely irrelevant. The only things that matter are his disability that was healed – and the person who did it – Jesus. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. According to Matthew’s gospel, this seems to be where the Sermon on the Mount takes place. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Jesus had moved around a bit: born in Bethlehem; spent his childhood in Egypt; then moved to Nazareth for the most part of his life, such that he was known as “Jesus of Nazareth” – but now lived in Capernaum. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. See also Matthew 4:13 “he went and lived in Capernaum”. The objection might be raised that Jesus had “nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20) – and this just after the healing of the leper in Capernaum (Matthew 8:2,5). To me, Jesus’ comment is aimed at putting off the enquiring Teacher of the Law, showing him that “following you wherever you go” is literally a call to be a traveller. For whatever reason, Jesus knew this would put him off. The man needed to ‘count the cost’ of following Jesus. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Although it’s possible of course that he missed out first time round for some reason, or Jesus deliberately didn’t heal him first time round, or that his condition was the result of a recent accident. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. This is 2nd person plural, meaning Jesus is speaking to a group. In the context, this must surely be the group of ToL who were there (see v8). I’ve changed the plural to singular for dramatic effect but the meaning is identical. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Quoted from James Edwards, PNTC: Mark. p83-84 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Greek of “having dinner”! [↑](#endnote-ref-8)