

High Five: Teach to Transform

Sept. 23, 2012: We Teach to Transform: Mark 2:1-12

We continue today with the third core value of our church staff and church family. These are values and beliefs that are nonnegotiable for us. Our hope and prayer is that as we seek to determine the best way to reach those in our church and in our city that we will use these core competencies to help us make decisions. We hope to filter all of our ideas and decisions through these five pithy statements. We do not want to preach on these for the next few Sundays, and then forget them. We want them to permeate through our church body and radically affect the way we do ministry. You can see over my left shoulder the two competencies that we have already addressed, and on my right is the verse that ties together all of these statements. I want you to think for a moment about the best teacher you ever had? What set them apart? Sometimes what makes them great is not the way they communicate the material, but the manner in which they conducted themselves that stands out. Other times it's their ability to use an illustration or analogy that helps you grasp difficult concepts. Today we examine the mastermind teacher, Jesus. Who always had a way of taking simple truths, but using them to revolutionize the way people lived their lives and thought about God. We teach to transform believing that...

(Read Mark 2:1-12)

I. PEOPLE ARE DESPERATE FOR TRUTH: *And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.* (Mark 2:2)

A. This verse tells us that there were so many gathered that they could no longer be received. It was a sold out crowd. In the previous verse it tells us that "the report" was that Jesus had returned home. Word had gotten out. The townspeople were updating their statuses on Facebook, and tweeting the news that Jesus was in town. They were anxiously awaiting the words that he had to say.

B. We HAVE to believe that the teachings of Jesus can genuinely change people's lives. It is not enough to tell people that Jesus has good things to say about a certain topic or situation. We do not want people to turn to Jesus strictly for advice in times of trouble, or for wise sayings that will help them in decision making, but we want his teachings to transform the core of their being.

C. The truth that teaches to transform is best found in the teachings of Scripture. The logos that Mark tells us that Jesus is teaching in this particular passage is the good news. The best teachers in the world with the best communication skills might be able to alter your way of thinking for a moment or for a season of life, but they cannot transform your life from the inside out like Jesus can. His teaching had the ability to get common fishermen who knew no other life to drop everything and follow after him. They didn't just follow him for a few days either; they quit their jobs, left their families, left their paychecks, and abandoned all that they were comfortable with in order to follow Jesus. This is the truth that we believe in, and this is the truth that can only be found in the Bible.

D. Why are you here this morning? It is a waste of our time to be here today if we do not believe that the teachings of Jesus have the power to transform lives. There is golf to be played, football to be watched, grocery shopping to be done, bills to be paid, and clothes to wash. A lot of people actually get two full weekend days to accomplish these tasks. Many people use Saturday as their day of relaxation and fun, and reserve Sunday for the chores, getting ready for the school week, and preparing for a new workweek. We sacrifice our Sundays because we believe that showing up here actually changes us. I hope we believe that with all of our hearts. I also hope we believe that we come here on Sunday so that we can be fired up to go in the power of the Holy Spirit and assist Him in transforming other people's lives.

***According to the Mayan calendar, we have until December 21st, 2012 to live. If one were to believe this yet again fallacious attempt to declare the end of the world then we better get to work. Not that I actually believe that the end will come at this time because Jesus clearly teaches that no one will know the time or the place, I do desire to live my life with a sense of urgency knowing that people are desperate to hear the Gospel.

II. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SCRIBES IN OUR LIVES: *Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:6-7)*

A. The anger of the scribes isn't just about the fact that someone besides God is trying to forgive sins, but also stems from the fact that Jesus was a direct threat to their power and control. They were the ones that knew the Torah, and had been trained in religious education. They should have been the ones that the paralyzed man was desperate to hear from. They apparently had all the answers, and yet the paralyzed man was willing to be dropped down from a roof in order to see Jesus. Who was this man from Galilee brought up with modest roots? A man brought up in a small and not very well-to-do village. How did he have the power to forgive sins?

B. The scribes resorted to the cowardly method of judging Jesus internally instead of openly communicating their concerns with them. The text does not tell us that they discussing with one another Jesus' unorthodox teaching, but based on other readings in the Gospels we can deduce that they were scheming ways to bring Jesus down even at this point in his ministry.

C. The claims that Jesus made in this particular passage and throughout the NT often caused concern for those around him. As followers of Christ, who memorize and verbalize the sayings of Jesus we will encounter our fair share of scribes. There will be those in our lives who find our beliefs comical. They will find our practices and habits out of date with modern-day society, but we stay the course because we know his teaching has changed us.

D. I encourage you this morning to keep on teaching and practicing the truths taught in Scripture. Do not let people convince you that you are out of date with society, or that what you believe no longer is relevant. Remember the moments that Jesus has transformed your life, and cling to those in time of persecution or ridicule.

III. JESUS IS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL AND RADICAL TEACHER THAT EVER LIVED: *9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven, or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed 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 say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” (Mark 2:9-11)*

A. A link between a person's sin and physical illness is found not only throughout the Bible but in the ancient world as well. In many OT texts healing and forgiveness are so related that it is difficult to tell whether the language of healing is to be understood in terms of physical health or spiritual health. This man was clearly seeking healing for his paralysis, but there is no doubt he had heard about Jesus' spiritual healing as well.

B. The scribes had challenged Jesus' honor by questioning in their hearts his ability to forgive sins. In ancient society when a person's honor was challenged it had to be addressed or it could affect that person's standing in the community. Jesus accepted the challenge head on, and defeated the scribes in their attempt to shame him.

C. Jesus makes the scribes look foolish in the way he responds to their challenge. Where one would expect Jesus to have said “your sins are forgiven” in response to his claim that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins instead Jesus tells the man to rise, pick up his bed, and go home. Why does Jesus not simply say your sins are forgiven? Remember Jesus has been challenged, and how can his opponents measure whether or not the man's sins have been forgiven? Jesus uses his ability to heal the man as proof that he also has the power to forgive sins, which is actually the greater miracle in this passage. A visible healing is hard evidence, but a verbal claim of forgiveness of sins invites skepticism. By Jesus healing the paralytic, he has actually shown his authority as one who can forgive sins without ever actually having to verbalize those words to the scribes. If the more difficult act can be achieved this guarantees the validity of the easier act.

D. Although Jesus might have been less educated than these men he was actually much more intelligent than they were. Jesus used a rhetorical move that the scribes were not expecting. He had taken their attempt to shame him, and turned upside down on them. Ultimately, the ones in this story that are shamed are the scribes for their foolish attempt to think that they could outfox the best teacher who ever walked the planet.

E. For the scribes it was extremely embarrassing and frustrating to get outmatched by a person with less education, less money, and less status. In spite of the odds being stacked against Jesus in terms of his social standing, he still won the duel with the scribes.

***Bill Gates was a Harvard drop out and has an estimated worth of 61 billion dollars. He is one of the most innovative and influential technological leaders the world has ever seen and he was not formally educated. Mark Zuckerberg, the inventor of Facebook also dropped out of Harvard to develop the most influential social networking website that the world has seen to date. He is worth an estimated 10 billion dollars and he is 28 years old. He was voted the TIME Person of the Year in 2010. Some people have the ability to transform culture with ideas that even the most formally educated people could never come up with.

IV. THERE WILL NEVER BE ANYTHING LIKE THIS: *And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" (Mark 2:12)*

A. This is the true impact of Jesus' teaching. It will NEVER be duplicated. The people went away after this event astonished at what they had just seen. Their jaws were dropped and they were speechless.

B. I am convinced that they were speechless for two reasons. Of course, the healing of the paralytic is an incredible story of Jesus' power to heal those who have disabilities, but even more incredible was Jesus' power to forgive sins. The most important miracle in this story is Jesus' willingness to forgive the man's sins.

C. The most important act of healing Jesus can do in our lives is not heal a person with an illness or disease, but the power he has to forgive us of our sins. There is no other way that we can be forgiven of our sins without the blood of Jesus. We might have illnesses on this earth that will never be taken away from us, but the forgiveness of sins can be. And we will never see anything like this ever again.

*** I sat and listened to some of the best leaders in the world speak at a leadership conference about a month and a half ago. These were some of the most well-respected and recognized leaders in their respective fields. Men like Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, and Patrick Lencioni, a world-renowned business consultant. I sat and listened to these men and I was amazed at their ability to communicate clearly. I left excited and eager to be a better leader, but as I compare their teaching to the teachings of Jesus I am reminded that their abilities to impact culture and change lives pales in comparison to the influence that Jesus Christ can have on a person's life and on their soul.