

A Video Supplement for *Come, Follow Me* Lesson 10: “Thy Faith Hath Made Thee Whole”

Transcript

In this lesson (including Mark 2 and Matthew 9), Jesus employs an interesting pattern of teaching which I think is worth highlighting. He acts, exercising a divine prerogative. This then elicits a question from his critics. He then takes the opportunity to teach them the principle that underlies the action. This is a provocative teaching method, involving as it does contradicting the sensibilities of his audience. This both primes them to pay attention to the lesson that comes afterward and compels them to reevaluate their expectations.

In Mark 2 (also Matthew 9), Jesus is teaching at a gathering and follows the pattern I have outlined. Considering verses 3-12:

- 3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.
4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.
5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

So here Jesus has exercised a divine prerogative, forgiving sins. As he says elsewhere (Doctrine and Covenants 64:10) “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.” This naturally leads to a question from his critics:

- 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,
7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

This is additionally effective because he has set up a proof in the logic of the scribes that Jesus has God’s authority and can speak for God, because if he then shows that he is in favor with God by healing the man after making a statement that would be blasphemous coming from one without authority he shows that he had authority to forgive the man’s sins. Jesus notices and takes this opportunity to teach as well as to heal the man.

- 8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?
9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?
10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he

saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

So he exercises a divine prerogative, he provokes a question, he uses it as an opportunity to teach.

A short distance later in the same chapter (Mark 2), he sees Levi sitting at the receipt of custom or, in other words, collecting taxes.

14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

Tax collectors were even more culturally reviled in Jesus's day than in our own in part because they were seen as sell-outs who worked for Rome, but the Lord can call whoever he wants to do his work regardless of their job history or politics. He will also associate freely with these groups of people who have been marginalized by the wider society. These cultural transgressions will, of course, provoke a question from his critics:

15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

So the question is: how can you eat with these terrible people?

17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

As I read it, this actually contains two important points. The first is that the scribes and Pharisees, if they saw themselves as the spiritual leaders of the people should have been taking care of the spiritual welfare of and seeking to reclaim those whom they were instead electing to despise. So this actually points out the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. Beyond that, however, it seems to me that Jesus is subtly pointing out that the scribes and Pharisees haven't fully received him because they haven't recognized their own serious need for repentance. They had supposed that they had no need of him and because of this were on course to miss the mark. This then also shows Jesus mercy and effort to help all of God's children because he is engaging with and using these teaching devices to try and reach even his critics in the hope that some of them might yet come to repentance.