

# Jesus' Character, Mission, and Method

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[ 0 : 00 ] The message that we will share today brings us face to face with the one who is central to why we are here.

! Yes, in the passage we come to today, Jesus answers three big questions. Who am I? Why did I come? And what is my method?

Character, mission, method. Character, mission, method. Those are the three things we will consider.

And in the end, we will conclude with a few applications. We will see, though, as we consider these three things, his character, his mission, and his method, we will see that they are linked.

[ 1 : 26 ] Who Jesus is, is linked to why he came, which is linked to the method that he employed.

And I am mindful today that our children are with us.

And I am going to ask our children to do me a favor. And I am going to do you a favor. Children, I need you not to go on your Playstations or whatever it is.

Not Playstations, I guess that would be your phones. And play games or to check WhatsApp or whatever. Sometimes might distract you. If you cannot do that because it's distracting to me. It would be distracting to me. I promise you that I would be as clear and as simple as possible.

[ 2 : 32 ] The title for today's message differs from what is actually in the bulletin. The title for today's message is this. Jesus' Character, Mission, and Method.

That's it. Jesus' Character, Mission, and Method. Let's provide a bit of a context, if you will.

Mark presents, the Gospel of Mark presents Jesus to his readers as the one who fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

And who was concerned about the heart. Jesus was concerned and is concerned about the heart rather than the external toppings of religion.

So Mark presents them. Hence, in the Gospel of Mark, we often see Jesus sharply addressing persons of rules-based religious sats.

[ 3 : 47 ] Last week, we considered the account in Mark where, prior to healing a paralytic man, Jesus told the man that his sins were forgiven.

And those of you who were present, remember how the Pharisees responded and how Jesus, how we were reminded that we are sick both physically and spiritually.

We now come to Mark chapter 2, verses 13 through 22. I'm going to ask you to turn in your Bible to Mark chapter 2, verse 13 through 22.

He ran out again beside the sea.

Mark writes in verse 13. He said, verse 15.

[ 5 : 53 ] And then Jesus said to them, Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting.

And people came and said to him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples and your disciples do not fast?

And Jesus said to them, Can the wedding guest, The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

And then Jesus said to him, And no one puts new wine into old wine skins.

And no one puts new wine skins. And the wine is destroyed.

[ 7 : 25 ] And so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wine skins. It will be useful for fresh wine.

It will be useful for fresh wine. It will be useful for us to develop and to set the context before proceeding further. In the verses that we just read. Jesus is teaching to a crowd. Jesus is teaching to a crowd of people on the outside.

And the scriptures tell us that he is walking. And as he does, he encounters Levi. A Jewish tax collector.

To whom Jesus says, Follow me. And Levi did. Furthermore, we see Levi inviting Jesus to his home for a meal.

Not to be shared with Levi alone. Not to be shared with this tax collector alone. But with some of his friends, other tax collectors.

[ 8 : 32 ] And sinners. Then we observe the indignation. The shock of the scribes and the Pharisees.

As they observe Jesus. They questioned him. But having a meal with sinners. Jesus said who you are.

Yet you are having a meal with sinners. And then later in the passage that we've read. You see Jesus was asked another question by the people to which he responded.

I want to take a couple moments. A couple minutes. Just to talk about the key actors in this account that we have read. I think that it will help us considerably.

The first key actor I want to talk about is Levi the tax collector. Levi the tax collector.

[ 9 : 42 ] Jews who collected taxes were not highly regarded. At all.

And I think you will agree with me for good reason. Here's why they were not highly regarded. In fact let me tell you a little bit more about them. They occupy these Jewish tax collectors.

They occupy the lowest wrong if you will. In Jewish society. They could not testify in court.

Their testimonies were not even considered. They were thrown out of the synagogue. They were regarded as a disgrace.

They could not serve as judges. In short they were total and a complete outcast in society.

[ 10 : 42 ] Now to understand why that is the case. Why they were so despised. One is to understand that whom the state, the Jewish state, was occupied by the Romans.

And these tax collectors were collecting taxes on behalf of the Romans. I want you to get this. This is real important.

So here it is. The Jewish people were paying taxes to an occupying force. Have you ever heard about taxation without representation?

Well this was it. They were being taxed but they were not enjoying the benefits of their taxes. But even more than that. Even more than that.

These tax collectors weren't scrupulous. These tax collectors. They did their own things.

[ 11 : 45 ] And it's quite interesting. I read. Preparing for this message. I read. I read that. The tax collectors were required.

Often. To remit a certain sum. To Rome. They had to do it. No matter. It didn't matter what the circumstances were.

They had a specific sum to remit. And so you. And the only way the tax collectors themselves. Earned money. Was through their own efforts.

So here it was. If the. If the society. Was able to withstand. A taxation burden. Of the amount required by the Roman government.

It did not matter. They had to get that certain sum. And no doubt the people didn't know. What that sum was. It was not told to them.

[ 12 : 43 ] And so these tax collectors. Not only collected what was required. But they collected enough. To take care of themselves. Take care of themselves.

And all the while. They were. Not. Taking care of the needs. Of the occupying society.

They were corrupt. They were greedy. They were greedy. And they were looked down upon.

These people. Were looked down upon. Levi. Was looked down. Upon. But Jesus. Upon seeing him. Jesus.

Upon seeing him. Called him. And went to his home. The other characters.

[ 13 : 44 ] That I wish you to see. In this account. These characters. Would be. The Pharisees.

These were members. Of a very religious group. That originated.

Hundreds. Of years. Before this account. Was written. These Pharisees. They followed. Moses.

His written laws. They knew. Moses. His written laws. In fact. They knew. Even more than that.

They knew. The written law. And they knew. The unwritten. Law.

Of laws. Of Moses. And they followed them. To a team. They were concerned. About. Rituals.

Washing hands. They were concerned. About. Interacting. With people. Who were not. Like them. They believed.

[ 14 : 38 ] In ritual. Purity. And they opposed. The Greek. And certainly. Roman. Influences. And then. We come to the main character.

In this account. Jesus. That leads me. To my very. First point. Who is he? What is his character? From cover. To cover. The pages. Of scripture. Reveal. Jesus Christ. From the beginning. To the end.

Jesus Christ. Is revealed. Throughout the Bible. He has been called. Many things. I want to give you.

Just a sampling. Of some of the things. That he's been called. In this scripture. He's been called. The word. Counselor. Seed of the woman.

[ 15 : 36 ] Sacrificial lamb. Lion of the tribe. Of Judah. Advocate. Author. And finisher. Of our faith. Beloved son. Bread of life.

Chief shepherd. Cornerstone. The door. Heir of salvation. Father. And like you. I can go on and on. There are many. Many. Many. Many. More names. Of course. Perhaps you're asking. Well does this mean. That Jesus had. Multiple personalities. Absolutely not.

Not at all. Jesus. Jesus. He's just so many things. Jesus. A metaphor.

A metaphor. Serve. The purpose. Of making clear. What he meant. To someone. At a particular time. Young people.

[ 16 : 36 ] In particular. I want you to consider. What I'm talking about here. Consider. You might have a friend. Who could be a schoolmate. A teammate.

Somebody who goes to school with you. Somebody who's on your basketball team with you. So he's a teammate. Someone who counsels you. And so he's your counselor.

Someone in whom you confide. And so he's your confidant. Someone perhaps. Who helps you with your homework. And so he's your tutor. And many other things.

And so in Jesus Christ. We have one. Who is so much to us. And the Bible. From cover to cover. Helps us.

To see who he is. To us. One man. Not with multiple personalities. But man man. Who means the world.

[ 17 : 33 ] To us. And while all the names that we have named. Are accurate descriptions. Of Jesus. We see in the section.

That was just read. Jesus telling. And showing. Us. Who he is. Tells it to us.

Very clearly. And he shows it to us. Through demonstration. So who is he. By his own account. As we examine.

These verses. As we examine. Mark chapter 2. Beginning at verse 13. The first thing we see here. Is that Jesus indeed. Is a friend of sinners. Jesus. Jesus did not shy away. From the sinners. He did not shy away.

[ 18 : 32 ] From Levi. Though he was. A corrupt. Tax. Collector. The description. Of the Pharisees. Pharisees.

Was accurate. They got it right. They got it right. But Jesus. Jesus.

Went into his home. And reclined. And ate with him. And ate with Levi. And not only with Levi alone. But with many other.

Tax collectors. Jesus. A friend. Of sinners. Who is. This man. And then in verse 17.

Of Mark chapter 2. Yes. we see that Jesus is a physician. Not a physician.

[ 19 : 28 ] He is the physician. Jesus says, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

And with these words, Jesus makes clear that he is the physician. Jesus is not using the word physician to mean someone who operates or that treats the body.

He tells those who are listening as recorded in Matthew. This account is found in Matthew chapter 9 and verse 12.

And listen to what Jesus says to the Pharisees in response to their question, to the people in response to their question. Jesus says to them, those who are well have no need for a physician, but those who are sick.

And then Jesus says something else to them that he also says to us by extension. He says, go and learn what this means. Jesus calls himself a physician and he tells us to learn what this means.

[ 20 : 52 ] And as we study the pages of scripture, we get a sense of what Jesus means. Jesus says, I, Jesus speaks here of a physician.

They hearken back to Jeremiah. Jeremiah chapter 9 and verse 22. But Jeremiah having witnessed the sin of his people, he asked two questions.

Jeremiah asked, is there a bomb in Gilead? Is there a physician there?

And Jesus represents himself in Matthew 9, 12 and Mark 2, 17 as the physician and the bomb in Gilead spoken of in Jeremiah.

But what does this bomb in Gilead mean? The bomb in Gilead. Bomb is oil that comes from particular trees used to heal or soothe the skin.

[ 22 : 16 ] And Gilead was a place known to produce bomb that worked. So when we put those two words together, bomb of Gilead, bomb in Gilead, means oil from the place of Gilead.

That's what it means. It's as simple as that. Oil from a place called Gilead used for healing. And Jeremiah laments the sinfulness of Israel and compares their state to sickness that persists because there is no bomb in Gilead and there is no physician.

Jesus fervors the analogy and makes clear that he is the physician. Who is he? Who is he?

He is our bomb in Gilead. He is the physician of our soul. But there is more. There is more.

In verse 18, Jesus, who was asked by his disciples, was asked why his disciples did not fast as did the disciples of John and the Pharisees.

[ 23 : 33 ] You see that? In verse 18, he was asked that question. Listen, Jesus, why is it that your disciples do not fast as the disciples of John and the Pharisees?

Now notice, Jesus did not say that fasting was wrong. Instead, Jesus did something that you need to see here. He distinguished himself from others.

that's the first point. He made clear that he was different from John and he was different from the Pharisees.

He distinguished himself. He made clear that he was unique and he assigned another name to himself. Bridegroom. With this distinction, Jesus makes clear that he is not ordinary and is not like the other leaders present.

Moreover, his description of himself as bridegroom helps us to see the love he has for us. You don't become a bridegroom unless you're in love.

[ 24 : 44 ] Our relationship with God is not a one-way street. It's not only we who love him, but he loves us with an everlasting love.

Who is he? Unique in human history and bridegroom to the righteous. Finally, we see in verses 21 and 22 what Jesus says about unshrunk cloth and new wine.

Take a look at what he says. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it. And no one puts new wine into old wine skins.

If he does, the wine will burst the skin. About these analogies, James Edwards in his commentary, the Gospel of Mark writes, quote, Jesus is the new patch and the new wine.

He's not an attachment, addition, or appendage to the status quo. I want you to hear this. It says he's not an attachment. He's not an addition or appendage to the status quo.

[ 26 : 11 ] He cannot be integrated. He's making the point. He cannot be integrated into or contained by pre-existing structures. Even Judaism or the Torah and the synagogue, end quote.

The Pharisees were about continuation of their traditions. People expected Jesus' disciples to be like them or even John's disciples.

disciples. But Jesus makes clear that he was rewriting not the chapter but the book. It's not an appendage.

Jesus, friend of sinners, physician, bridegroom, new cloth, new wine. But he had a mission.

He came for a reason. What was his mission? Leads me to point number two. What was his mission?

[ 27 : 24 ] Jesus' mission is found in Mark 17b. Listen to what Jesus said.

I came not to call the righteous but sinners. Couldn't get any plainer than that.

I came to call sinners, Jesus says. I came to call sinners. Jesus' mission was simple and clear.

If you're like me and I hope that you are in this regard, you consider that verse. Among the first things that come to your mind is this, praise God, he came to call me because I'm a sinner.

He came to call me because I'm a sinner. Who is a sinner? Someone who disobeys God's law by his actions of failure to out.

[ 28 : 31 ] Frankly, that's all of us, whether we know it or not. all of us are sinners. All have sinned. The Bible tells us I'm fallen short of the glory of God.

And in case you say that you have no sin, there's a word for you in scripture as well. The Bible says if you say you have no sin, the truth is not in you.

So Jesus came to call us sinners. The word call has a sense of urgency, importance, and weight to it.

He came to call us. Call sinners. To call us to do what? To call us to have faith in him.

To hold on to his coattail in order to enjoy right standing with God. That is what he called us for. He called us to abide in him.

[ 29 : 34 ] to repent and to be his disciples. Jesus came to call sinners. Why? Because the soul is born sick.

And there is only one physician who can heal it. Jesus came to call sinners. All of us were born with this condition, this sickened condition.

and there is only one physician. So the physician came to call us. Let's contrast Jesus' mission with that of the Pharisees.

Now, James Edwards again in his commentary on Mark, writes so effectively, he says that they, the Pharisees, came to enlighten.

The Pharisees came to give information, came to enlighten. But Jesus came to redeem. It's as simple as that.

[ 30 : 33 ] He came to redeem. And contrary to what many preach today, Jesus did not come to give us fancy cars or big homes and huge bank accounts.

He came to call us to have faith in him for our eternal salvation. Yes, give me Jesus.

As Francis Cross writes, take the world, but give me Jesus. In his cross, my trust shall be.

Till with Clara by the vision, face to face, my Lord, I see. What is his mission? To call sinners.

as we examine the verses we read, gives us a sense of how he read about calling sinners.

[ 31 : 34 ] That leads me to my final point. What was his method? How did he do it? The first thing that we see in this account that we read is that Jesus chose outcasts.

Jesus chose the worst of the worst. And you got to hear this today. He chose the worst of the worst. And care where we are, you got to hear this today.

He chose the tax collector. He chose to select one of his, as one of his closest disciples, as one of his closest disciples, and someone with whom he would die.

The worst. The worst of the worst. No doubt, others who were more highly regarded would have loved to treat Jesus.

I'm sure Jesus could have found someone with a good education, someone who was highly respected, a moral person.

[ 32 : 53 ] But Jesus chose someone who everyone knew was a sinner. Everyone knew that he was greedy, and wicked, and selfish, and self-centered.

But Jesus chose him. And by doing this, Jesus gave hope, as he gives hope to all of us, to all of us, no matter where we are, no matter what our condition, Jesus gives us all hope.

By doing this, Jesus says to you and to me, I don't mind how low you have sunk. It doesn't matter where you have been, there is hope for you.

You can come and dine with you today. Indeed, Jesus showed, as he still shows, we said before that he is a friend of sinners.

He befriended sinners. That was his method. He befriended sinners. He despises sin, absolutely, but he loves the sinner.

[ 34 : 07 ] the song that we sing very often here, here's forever, summarizes this love that Jesus has for sinners.

Listen to the words. Jesus, friend of sinners, loves me ere I knew him.

Drew me with his cords of love. and tightly bound me to him. Sinners, those who would give him the least, Jesus loved them as he loves us.

Paul, in his writing to the church at Corinth, makes what Jesus did even clearer to us.

God in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 26 through 31, I'll read it in part.

[ 35 : 19 ] Paul says, consider your calling, brothers. God chose what is in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world.

To bring to nothing things that are. And this is the reason, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

And because of him, you are in Christ. Christ. Then he writes in verse 31, so that as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

Levi could not boast in himself. He did not do anything at all to justify Jesus' calling.

[ 36 : 35 ] His friends who were sinners, they did nothing at all to justify him. What was his method? The second thing that we see here in this passage, Mark chapter 2, is that Jesus condemned self-righteousness.

Condemned self-righteousness. Notice how Jesus responded to the Pharisees. Pharisees shocked that Jesus would eat with sinners.

They were shocked that Jesus would eat with sinners. And Jesus said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

And perhaps you hear that, perhaps you read that, and think that Jesus meant that the Pharisees were not in need of him because they were not sick.

Maybe you read it that way, but trust me, that's not what he's saying. not so at all. Jesus was saying to them, since you think you are righteous, since you are self-righteous, why do you need me to hang with you?

[ 38 : 07 ] Jesus was condemning them for being self-righteous. He avoided the self-righteous, arrogant Pharisees.

Word to us, Jesus eschewed, he avoided the Pharisees, the self-righteous Pharisees, those who thought that they could walk their way, and learn their way to heaven.

What else do we see here in this account? See, that Jesus offered grace to the sinner.

He offered grace to the sinner in declaring himself physician. Jesus made clear that the human soul is sick. Indeed, we know from Scripture that the diagnosis of every human soul from the day of birth is fatally sick.

That's it. And the prognosis of every fatally sick person is death, physical and spiritual. By using the term physician as he did, Jesus made clear that healing for the sinner's soul is in him.

[ 39 : 36 ] Only he is the balm in Gilead. One songwriter writes, no doubt in response to Jeremiah's question, is there a balm in Gilead?

Is there a physician there? The songwriter writes, there is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole.

There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin sick soul. Thank God today that there is a balm in Gilead. There is a physician there. Matthew 9 verse 12 makes it plain that the only prescription for the second condition of man's soul is grace.

Jesus said, when this question, when this point was put to him, Jesus said to them, I desire mercy rather than sacrifice.

[ 40 : 39 ] Jesus desires to be merciful to us, to extend his grace to us. But what else do we see about his method in this account?

we see love. Love, the bridegroom loves us. Jesus, Jesus was motivated by love. Love was Jesus' motivation.

And he demonstrated that with the use of the metaphor bridegroom. Love explains grace. Love explains sacrifice. Love explains mercy.

And everything Jesus has ever done is explained by love. He loves us. Jesus enjoys us. Psalm 147, verse 11, tells us, the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

We see in various parts of scripture, the church being referred to as Jesus' bride. He loves us, I tell you. the other thing that we see in this account is we see a new message, which as we stated, was not rules or works based.

[ 41 : 54 ] Nothing could be added to this message that Jesus was presenting to the world as he presents to us. The message of grace. Therefore, the disciples were being instructed that rules based Judaism was not being improved upon.

Jesus was saying, I'm not here to improve Judaism. You've got to fulfill it. As I considered Jesus' method, the strategy, if you will, I thought to myself, if I were Jesus and I wanted to win over the crowd, I would not eat with a minority of our cast.

Come on. Why would you eat with them? You don't want to get in favor with the majority, not with the people who are stealing from you. I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't eat with a minority of our cast. I wouldn't openly criticize a group that is respected for their knowledge of and adherence to scripture. I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't criticize the bishops and the preachers of the day. But Jesus was radical. He came to speak truth because he was and is the truth.

[ 43 : 22 ] Uncompromising yet merciful. Expectant yet understanding. No, he does not seek to win over the crowd by befriending the crowd's enemy.

that just seems like a bad strategy. It just seems peculiar that he would do it that way.

But it was Jesus. Jesus knew the soul and the heart of every man. sin. And even those who seemed to be upright and to be moral, he knew that they were sinners too, that they were all condemned to die.

Those who are without Christ, who are moral, are no different. What ounce of sin is enough to separate us from God?

the distinction that we see Jesus didn't see. Let's conclude now.

[ 44 : 42 ] It is true that it has been more than 2,000 years that Jesus said he is friend, physician, mom and gilead, bridegroom, new cloth and new wine, more than 2,000 years ago.

Yet, he can be, he can be and for many of us, he is all of those. Perhaps you're here today and he's healed your soul.

Perhaps he's been your physician. Perhaps he's been your balm in gilead. sometimes you're not so sure.

Sometimes you're not sure. Sometimes you consider the frequency and the enormity of your sins and therefore you lose heart.

That happens. To you, I remind you that the physician never loses a patient.

[ 45 : 58 ] Never loses a patient. Romans 8, 39 tells itself. Remember your spiritual healing is based on the qualification of another.

Perfect work of Jesus Christ. Aren't you glad today that your healing is in Jesus Christ? That you were healed not because of what you did, but rather because of what he did, what he has done for us.

So your confidence and your faith is not in you, but it is in the great physician. song that we quoted earlier reminds us that we are his and he is mine forever and forever.

He took my place, my soul to stay. Now I am his forever. Oh love that will not let us go. Yes, I am his forever, forever.

forever. And if your soul, what if your soul is still diseased by sin? What if you've never been healed?

[ 47 : 24 ] Here today, your soul is still diseased by sin, never been healed. Then I pray for you, I pray that the Lord of grace will be pleased to open your heart to see your selfish, your helpless condition.

Run to him. Give you the grace to run to him and to receive balm to heal your sin-sick soul. help. As we go about our daily lives this week, I want us to consider this account of Jesus.

Let's emulate Christ. Let us seek the outcasts and those who can give us nothing in return and let us show them Christ.

children when you go to school this week look for the children the others who are teased all the time who are bullied all the time befriend and love them because of the love that Christ gives to us those who are outcast in our community the beggars steep those who are steeped in sin whatever their sins might be let's look for them let's see how we can show them Christ let's see how we can show them Christ let's use Jesus' road map we have a savior today who is the physician of our soul he's our balm in Gilead he's the lover of our soul our grandparents used to sum it up real nicely not sure how many of you remember this but our grandparents used to say about this Jesus they would say he is our all faithful in all let us pray so

[ 49 : 57 ] Thank you.

Father, thank you for Jesus. Thank you for standing in, Lord.

Lord, our prayer today is that we will bring him glory in all that we do. Those of us, Lord, who've been beneficiaries, Lord, of his grace, who've been touched by the balm of Gilead.

Father, we pray that you would convict us so that we might be salt and light in this dying world.

Use us, Lord, for your glory and for your honor. Lord, those who are sick, Father, we pray that you would heal their hearts.

[ 51 : 29 ] Lord, like only you can. Lord, thank you for the permanent work that you do in our hearts.

Thank you for the complete work that you do in our hearts. Lord, we thank you, Lord, that you will cause us to grow. So, having heard your word today, we pray, O Lord, that there will be abundant fruit in the days, in the months, and the years to come.

In the name of Jesus, we pray. And all God's people say, Amen. Amen. Amen.