

## JESUS FORGIVES & HEALS

*Mark 2; Mark 3; 1 Samuel 21:1–6; Hebrews 2:11–12*

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Do you remember middle school lunch, when the table you sat at said so much about who you were? Like a predictable scene from a tween television series, popular kids sat at one table and theatre kids sat at another. Everyone sought “coolness” and thought “geekiness” could be caught like a cold. But in those shows, there’s always one heroic character who breaks the status quo, mixes up the social groups, and earns the respect and praise of their peers. In reality, though, failing to stick to the status quo doesn’t always get applause. And for Jesus, it was downright dangerous.

During Jesus’s ministry, a religious group known as the Pharisees were considered the “cool kids,” so to speak. They were devoted to the Mosaic law, so much so that they added more restrictions and limits in an attempt to get people to follow their interpretation of

how to pursue holiness. As respected keepers of these laws, the Pharisees created a holiness hierarchy where they sat supreme. So, you can imagine their frustration and confusion when Jesus entered the scene and associated with known sinners, forgiving them of their sins.

On one occasion, the Pharisees caught Jesus dining at a table with tax collectors and sinners and asked why He would align Himself with this group of people—as if being a tax collector or a sinner might somehow rub off on Jesus. The Pharisees could not understand why Jesus spent time with those people instead of “holy” people. They completely missed the grace of true forgiveness He came to offer.

It’s so easy to think like a Pharisee. I can get caught up in my own self-righteousness, deciding who is most worthy of forgiveness based on my standards. Thankfully, Jesus sees what we cannot: the heart. He said, “I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17). And anyone who receives Jesus also receives “the right to be children of God” (John 1:12).

Unlike a school hierarchy of popularity, or a Pharisaical hierarchy of holiness, Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brother or sister (Hebrews 2:12). He doesn’t need our attempts to appear righteous. His righteousness extended to us is enough. Despite knowing all the ways we fail Him, He forgives.

What matters is that Christ is proclaimed for who He is and what He has done. He is the Savior who came to forgive and heal and make us more like Him. It is His work that makes us worthy of His presence. Now, we are defined by an invitation to sit at His table, where all are welcome.