

# Jesus Talking Big

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, for a little while this morning, we're going to look back at really the first section of Luke, Mark chapter 2 that we read together.

We read through to verse 17, but we're really going to focus on the story that we have at the beginning through to verse 12. And I've entitled this sermon, Jesus Talks Big, because that's exactly what He does in this passage.

It's a great story. It's an amazing story of Jesus preaching to a really packed house, people outside. The doorway was rammed with people they couldn't know and could get in.

This bunch of friends came with their own friend who was sick, who was paralysed, who was in a mat, and they couldn't get anywhere near Jesus, but they'd heard about Jesus and knew what was going on. So they climbed up on the roof, wasn't like a Scottish house.

They didn't have weather like Scotland. It wasn't the same kind of design, so it was quite easy for them to pull open the roof and they lowered the guy down right in front of Jesus as he was preaching.

[ 1 : 05 ] And there's the remarkable interaction between Jesus and the crowd and the man who was paralysed. It's a great story, and it has all the ingredients of a blockbuster, sharp.

There's all the things you need in a modern-day blockbuster, it's got criminal damage, it's got loyal determination, there's a hero, there's villains, there's conflict, there's resolution, there's suspense. So all these kind of, all these elements that make up a great story and packed into these few verses that we have in front of us, but there's a huge difference.

It's not just a novel, it's not just a drama, it's not just a film. It's not just a story for our entertainment because it's revealing truth that is very, very significant and very important.

Just wish church was as exciting every week. Be great, wouldn't it? You know, we're flocking in week after week if there was the potential of people ripping out the roof and ruining our grade 2 protected building status by coming in the roof.

[ 2 : 18 ] But it's a great story, isn't it? And it's really important because Jesus, as we'll see as we've gone through Mark, is talking really big in this story. And we've seen already in Mark, even in the, just in the first chapter that we've looked at, that Mark is all about, is all about quickly and without a great deal of detail telling us about who Jesus is immediately, urgently.

All the time we have this emphasis of He's wanting us to learn more and more about Jesus and He intersperses it with how understanding about Jesus enables us to be authentic disciples and to follow the Jesus, the authentic Jesus as is revealed by Him and knowing Him so that we can be better followers of Him.

It's a short book, really, but that's the emphasis of Mark. And of course, that means for Mark and it also means for us. It means getting Jesus right.

It means understanding who Jesus is. And therefore, the truth that we're looking at explodes far beyond first century Galilee and explodes straight into 21st century Edinburgh for us because of what Mark says is so significant and important about Jesus.

Because what he's saying in this story is, and what he's revealing about Jesus is that He is the one who claims the authority to forgive your sins and to heal the human condition and your condition.

[ 3 : 57 ] That's why it's so important. That's why we, each Sunday when we come back, we will come back to Jesus Christ and the importance of Christ and understanding Him so we can become disciples of Him, followers of Him and those who come under His Lordship.

So it's not insignificant things that we deal with when we look at the gospel of Mark. And I think there's two huge challenges for us, maybe sometimes in our own minds and certainly in today's society here that we live in.

The claim really that underpins everything to do with this story that Jesus says that sin and the rejection of God is at the very heart of the human condition.

Not only the human condition but indeed the world in which we live with all its brokenness, even the natural world. And the second claim that true healing needs more than medicine, that true healing is not only physical healing.

I'm not, it's not less than that. But true healing needs more than medicine. It's not only physical. The claim that is underpinning everything Jesus says here that sin is at the heart of the human condition and that true healing needs more than medicine.

[ 5 : 26 ] So Jesus here in this story, he kind of speaks paradoxically and uses terminology that is quite interesting, a little bit mysterious in some ways, some of what he says and definitely quite paradoxical because when he talks in this story of the healing of the man who's paralyzed, he talks like God.

He talks like God. And he says, son or child, your sins are forgiven in verse 5 when the paralyzed man comes down in front of him.

It's the first thing he says. He sees this guideline, physically unable to walk. He says, son, your sins are forgiven. Now this is not simply a repetition of John's message where John preached repentance for the forgiveness of sin or my message or Corey's message or any preacher's message who invite people to come to Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins and invite Christ into their lives.

Jesus here is making a categorical statement. He's not even saying, I forgive you for the wrongs you've done against me, which we can all see. We've all got that ability, haven't we?

Someone's done his wrong. We've got the ability to go up to him and say, I forgive you for what you've done. It's not of that quality. He's not saying that either. What he's claiming is he's declaring the right to forgive this person.

[ 6 : 59 ] He never met the guy before, the guy had never done anything wrong in front of him to forgive him personally for his sins. He never met him. But he's claiming divinity.

He's claiming to be God. That's exactly why this whole section, in fact, right through to chapter 3, is a section that Mark is wanting to highlight, the opposition that Jesus is coming under because he's claiming to be God because we see the scribes immediately say, you know, why does he speak like this?

He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? They were right. They were right. The second half of that statement was right. Who can forgive sins but God alone? There's an implicit statement there that God is God.

He alone can forgive sins and the weaves sinned against him and he's our judge as well as being our Creator and Lord the one who gives us life. So he's saying, Jesus is saying, I alone am able to forgive you your sins because I alone are the one that you're ultimately accountable to.

It's mad, isn't it? It's a mad statement and it's a statement any of us could make. Anyone could make that claim today because it's an invisible statement.

[ 8 : 15 ] It couldn't be verified, could it? He says to this guy, you know, his sins are unseen, aren't they? His condition before God is unseen, at least in some ways to some people.

Other people held them gilly but he says to them, your sins are forgiven. Now that nothing changed. He didn't stand up. He wasn't healed.

He remained lying there. It was an invisible claim that Jesus made but the scribes, the religious leaders recognized that it was a claim to divinity, claim to madness or divinity and blasphemy.

So he talks like God but then he calls himself unusually in verse 10, the Son of Man. But you may know that the Son of Man has authority and authority to forgive sins, he says to the Palatinate, I say to you, get up.

Now this statement, this name of Jesus is uniquely used by Jesus. Nobody else uses this name that he gives himself, the Son of Man.

[ 9 : 22 ] And there's a lot of scholarly debate about what it means that we're not going into. But there's a uniqueness about this, the Son of Man, that Jesus loves this name that he gives himself.

He's reminding himself by using this name, I think, of his humanity, of his being on the earth. He's the Son of Man. He's here on earth and he sees himself right from his baptism into this representative role born into humanity of the dust with a divine and a human nature.

And I think it was a name that constantly reminded himself of why he'd come and the reason for his being.

Reverently, I hope, it's kind of like a nickname in a sense. In the way you would call an electrician a sparky, and might be known as a sparky.

Because God, Jesus, calling himself almost by his nickname, the Son of Man, because it reminded him of who he was and why he had come. And he often used it, most often used it in reference to his, what he had come to do on the cross.

[10:44] If you see, if you move forward just quickly to Mark chapter 8 and verse 31, it reminds us of that. He says, and he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.

It was, so he often used it in this thinking forward phase of his life. And he used it a lot in this section which we began with and it ends in chapter 3 and verse 6 where it's been growing and growing and growing the opposition and that chapters 3, verse 6, the Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him how to destroy him.

So from the passage we read with right through to 3, verse 6, Mark is highlighting the opposition and that there was a religious cabal that made the decision that they needed to get rid of him, the Son of Man.

And so this section introduced the skeptics and the opposition. Who does he think he is, this mere man? And Mark wants us to see that and to see that he's building the reality of the opposition.

But what we do see is not only that he talks like God but he claims this unique authority in verses 8 to 12 to forgive sins and he claims the unique authority when he heals the man and that's tremendously important.

[12:22] The claiming of forgiving sins was invisible, wasn't it? It was invisible. It was unverifiable. So I could say to someone, you know, I have the power to forgive you your sins, your forgiven sins and nobody could verify that claim.

They would all think I was mad, rightly so. But Jesus wants to back up this invisible claim to have forgiven this man's sins by backing it up with the revelation of his power and his authority.

His claim was not bogus and it wasn't empty. So what he does here, he's dovetailing his claim to authority, to forgive sins, with the power to heal the man that reveals his power to forgive sins.

Now, can I say it's not about this man's paralysis as judgment for personal sin. That is not what this passage is about. It's not about saying he's paralyzed because he's a sinner, God's forgiven him of sins so he can walk again.

That's not what's on show here. Just when he makes that claim to forgiveness, the man is still lying on his mat. It's not until later that he gets up and has to respond to Jesus.

[13:42] And we see that from John 9 verse 2 where the disciples ask, whose sin first was that this man or his parents and Jesus is neither of them. It's not about the individual being punished for specific and individual sins.

It's a different message, a wider message. There is this reality that rejecting God has broken everything, including health and healing, wholeness.

And this man, just like every one of us was indeed a sinner. But the deeper healing that he needed, the deeper healing we need is always spiritual because humanity and the material universe is living under the sentence of death.

It's the cost of rejecting the author of life and of light. And it's pointing towards his redemptive act. It's always pointing towards his redemptive act where Christ takes the weight of our sin so that he can forgive and say, your sins are forgiven.

[14:58] And he dies and takes our paralysis in death and hell and that darkness on the cross in order to offer us life and healing.

The paralysis of this man is real, but it's also, I think, symbolic of our spiritual condition. That we need Jesus to heal us.

We need Jesus to forgive us. We need Jesus to make us whole. And there is a real clarity in that message, an unpopular message in many ways, but there's real clarity in it for us today that this is who Jesus claims to be.

Not only the one who will heal, ultimately will heal, because remember this guy, he grew old again, although he could walk, and he died because the ultimate healing was not in this life.

The temporary healing he enjoyed only pointed to something greater that would happen for him. It was that all of us will enjoy as we walk in the light. And yet the forgiveness was what was tremendously important.

[16:04] And he wanted to back up his claim to forgiveness by empowering this guy to walk, having been paralyzed all his life. So people could see that he had power, that the claim that he made was backed up by the power of healing, physical healing in this man's case, to back up what he said.

We know that the people understood that. They were amazed and glorified God. So we've never seen anything like this. Someone who not only claimed to be God, but had the power to back it up in this man's life.

So let's briefly, as we close, consider the responses to what Jesus did in that amazing historical little moment that we've shared.

For some there was a growing discomfort with who Jesus claimed to be and what Jesus involved himself in, particularly among the scribes and the religious leaders, which multiplies in the passages following.

So in verse 7 we see, why does this man speak like this? He's blaspheming who can forgive sins but God alone. In verse 18 we're told, they question Jesus as disciples.

[17:28] Why they don't fast like the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast. Why do your disciples not fast? Lots of questions, lots of unhappiness. And then of course that leads up to what he says about the Sabbath at the end of the chapter.

And then in chapter 3 it comes to culmination with them vowing to nail Jesus, literally, to bring him down.

Because Jesus is challenging very deeply their understanding of truth and their own fixed conclusion about God. You know they were right at one level because they say, well who can forgive sins but God alone?

That was the one moment they were right. But they didn't take the influence of that and then apply it obviously to Jesus. They didn't think Jesus was God. They didn't think Jesus was a Messiah. They didn't need a Jesus kind of Messiah. They didn't want someone telling them they needed their sins forgiven. They could be morally right as they followed their understanding of the Old Testament law of God.

[18:33] And they certainly didn't need a carpenter son from Joseph who was uneducated in the Old Testament as they were telling them how they should see and know and understand God.

Now the question remains for us today and it may be among some people you know or it may be in your own life today. If you're not a Christian here today, it's always fantastic to see people in church who are not Christians who are maybe seeking or searching out or here for many different reasons. The more we know about Jesus, there can be a growing discomfort. And many of our friends, the more that we share with them about Jesus, the deeper their discomfort becomes.

You know it's like that in the gospels that when He did these kind of things, it was great. Lots of people followed Him and they thought it was great. And then we're told later on in the gospels, when Jesus started maybe explaining more about the cross and more about their need of a Savior, we're told that from that moment on many people stopped following Him.

It turned away from the hard saying, we're told the hard sayings of Jesus. Once in a series on the hard sayings of Jesus, might do that again. But if He is who He says He is, you know very often isn't it your whole understanding of who you are, our whole understanding of who we are, our life and our future and our future plans maybe needs to change.

[20:01] But sometimes we find the cost of that, the cost of facing the truth of Jesus Christ and His claims just too great. Because we've got our own fixed ideas of who God is and what God will do and how, why God will accept me for the kind of things that I've done.

And we would rather just shut Jesus down. We'd just quench Him all together. I think that's incredibly common among people, especially those who simply cannot accept who God reveals Himself to be and the cost of being accepted or rejected by God or the fact that God has ultimate authority over our lives to whom we will give account.

And it will often be a groundless objection to the living God, but simply a recognition that we don't want Him in our lives.

After this, many of His disciples turn back and no longer walked with Him. In 6 verse 66, the cost of relational faithfulness, dealing with our idols, dealing with selfishness, dealing with our own agendas, dealing with our love of everything that God hates will often cause us, maybe as Christians too, to drift and to move away and think it's too hard because we lose sight of the reality that He calls us into a battle, that there is a cost, but He has paid the cost for us and the cost of our discipleship is the cost of healing.

It's the cost of trusting Him in the battle, knowing that the battle is temporary and victory has been won by Jesus. Now there is a battle and it is a struggle, but we recognize who Jesus is.

[ 22 : 05 ] We recognize the great gift of salvation that He's given us and the cost that He's paid, the Son of Man, and we entrust ourselves to Him. So our response is very important and as we grow older as Christians, let's be aware that we don't have a growing discomfort towards Jesus because He absolutely does put us on a trajectory that is very different from the world in which we're living in, the thinking pattern and everything in which this world maybe regards as significant or important.

So growing discomfort can be one response, but a fledgling faith is a second response that is highlighted here and I think that it's great.

It's very simple, it's very obvious, but it's important to remind ourselves of. I think we see it in the friends, for example, not in the program, but in the friends who carry their paralyzed friends to Jesus.

They're accepting great risk, accepting potential reputational damage because they are very publicly announcing that they believe Jesus could do something great and important here and it was worth making a fool of themselves in order so to do and it was worth them disrupting Jesus and disrupting the meeting and being opposed by those who thought they were being ludicrous because they valued an audience for their friend with Jesus.

So there's risk in their fledgling faith and there is risk for us in our fledgling faith, but are we willing to take that risk to stand by Jesus and to share Jesus with others?

[ 23 : 58 ] For the paralyzed man, I think there's risk too because Jesus says he forgives the sin and he's still lying paralyzed on the mat and then Jesus says, I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.

So there was a risk of obedience and not being able to rise and walk. There was the risk of just, well, I'm going to just, I'm just going to obey Jesus here.

Nothing's happened so far, he says, I forgive my sin, but I haven't been, I can't walk yet. And yet in response to the command of Jesus and the risk that may be involved in seeking to obey that command, he does rise up and follow Jesus and goes home.

And therein is a challenge to us, I think, also to take the risk of faith because ultimately it's not real risk at all to our own sinful paralysis in life.

And very often we spend our lives, I think of myself as an older Christian, probably been a Christian for, I don't know, 40, 45 years.

[ 25 : 13 ] The older a Christian, the more paralyzed you can become for many different reasons. And so there's a recalling to us all, old or young in faith, to remember that it's not really a risk to follow Jesus and to obey Him and to serve Him.

We're called to love Jesus Christ and serve Him in such a way that will at different points be a challenge to the reputation we want. It'll be a challenge to putting others before ourselves, serving God and serving others with a great loving heart.

There will be a challenge to what other people think about us. However foolish it may seem to follow Christ. What a clown. Look at these clowns, they're ripping the roof apart in order to do something crazy here.

And it may be that many people think that following Jesus is a foolish thing to do, washing other people's feet symbolically, mainly hopefully, helping the vulnerable, ripping over open roof spaces, whatever that looks like in our 21st society.

Working our faith today is His calling to us. We're called to love Christ in a committed way. Each of us are called to love Christ and love one another in a hugely committed way.

[ 26 : 31 ] And we are called also to walk in the light, to get up and walk in the light and follow Him even when it seems like an impossibility. And the more we go on, the further society moves away from the fundamental truths of the gospel and of Jesus Christ and of God as Lord in Christ, then the more it seems to be an impossibility for us.

And maybe especially for the younger generation. And I'm calling you to follow Jesus Christ and the impossibility of faith because our condition hasn't changed, our humanity hasn't changed, and ultimately our relationship with God hasn't changed.

We need Him to do what nobody else can do. Nobody has risen from the dead on the third day backing up everything He has said up to that point.

It's good and it's right to follow Him. And to do so will bring testimony to His healing and His saving grace to those around us.

Follow me is the invitation that He goes on to give to Levi. It's not a lifestyle choice. It is response to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords that you will one day meet.

[ 27 : 50 ] And the only qualification is seeing your need of Him. Why does this guy eat with the dregs of society?

Jesus says, I came not to call the righteous but sinners. Those who recognize their need and that's the only qualification to fall in our knees and seek Him in our lives.

And it's one we never grow out of as believers. It's one we need every day to recognize our need and His beauty and His healing and His forgiveness.

Let's pray. Father, God, help us to see these things more clearly. May your spirit work in our hearts and in the hearts of us all today, convicting us of our needs.

Forgive us, Lord, when we jump out of bed in the morning without a thought for you and when we boldly proclaim that we don't need you.

[ 28 : 50 ] And we know that at a human level we can survive for a little while doing that. But we know it's empty and we know that we are turning our backs on the author of life, the author of hope and healing and forgiveness and that that ultimate reality of guilt being removed from us will be evidenced by a healing and a fruitfulness that is transformational and ongoing and that has a real future element onto which we cling onto with hope.

So may we be reminded of faith in Jesus Christ today, the hope of the gospel and the future fulfillment that has yet to come for us and of love.

The greatest of these is love that will stick with us in this life, will grow in this life, love for God and for others, but will find its true fulfillment as the greatest of all of these characteristics because it will remain where hope and faith will no longer be needed.

Love will be the currency of the new creation. So help us to grasp that more clearly today we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.