

Jesus as Lord

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[0 : 00] You turn back with me to Mark's Gospel chapter 2, and I'm going to ask you a question that we begin and say, how well do we think we know Jesus? Maybe some of you have been coming to church and been Christians for many, many years, and we think, ah, there's nothing new that we can learn about Jesus from a passage like this.

I hope that that isn't the case, and I hope that we realise that that is very much at the core of what Mark is doing. He's wanting us to learn about Jesus and not take Him for granted and also not have our own preconceptions.

So everyone here today, including myself, we will all have our own preconceptions about Jesus. And Mark, to the audience he first wrote to and through the Spirit to us, wants to break down sometimes these preconceptions.

For example, if you look at the verse 44 of chapter 1, which we didn't really look at last week, but we did read, after the miracles that Jesus had performed, he said, see that you don't tell this to anyone. Is that unexpected? Jesus said, don't let anyone know. Keep it quiet. Don't pass on this great news about the miracles that I'm performing.

[1 : 17] So that's unexpected, isn't it? And there's reasons for that. But here, I think also there's unexpected elements to this passage.

We're not going to deal with the whole chapter here. We're going to deal with particularly the two healings, healing of the paralysed man and, no, sorry, not the two healings, the one healing, healing of the paralysed man and the calling of Levi.

So I want to look at them briefly and I hope they will also relate to us participating also as Christians in the Lord's Supper. He's in the paralysed man in that first section of chapter 2.

It's a dramatic story, one we know very well, the story of a man who's paralysed. There's nothing remarkable in knowing that. But he's got friends and he's got friends that care about him.

And they've obviously heard that Jesus heals people. So they take him to where Jesus is and already, even though Jesus says, don't tell anyone, everyone knows. People are disobeying him and they're telling everyone, here come and listen to Jesus.

[2 : 22] He's an amazing preacher and he heals people. So there's a big crowd, there's such a big crowd that they can't get the man who's on a mat and it's kind of awkward and he's lying down, can't get him near Jesus.

So we know the story, don't we, that they take him and they open up the roof. It's not like this kind of roof. It would be fairly easy to get on top of and open up and to lord him down.

And Jesus does this great miracle in front of them. So interestingly, Jesus commends faith, but not in the man, the paralysed man.

He commends faith in his friends. When you saw their faith, he spoke to the paralysed man. Now, it's this fantastic statement from Jesus.

There's a paralysed man in the room, his presenting need is very obvious. He's been lowered down by his four friends because he couldn't go there himself.

[3 : 26] He's in front of Jesus and the people have heard that Jesus does miracles and heals people with leprosy and heals many people and there's this guy who's paralysed before him and Jesus does what we don't expect, do we?

What does he say to the man? You're healed, brother. Get up and walk. No, he doesn't. He says something completely unexpected.

He says to the guy, son, your sins are forgiven. And does he get up and walk? No.

He still lies on the mat. He's not healed physically. He's lying there, but Jesus says to him, son, your sins are forgiven.

And that's because Mark is wanting us to understand Jesus and Jesus wants the paralysed man and the crowd to understand Jesus and his message because Jesus recognizes as God in the flesh that the greatest need there is for humanity is forgiveness.

[4 : 34] It's not physical healing. It's forgiveness. He does the invisible. And that's Jesus' priority for this man. It's the most significant thing he needs.

It might not be what the most significant thing he thinks he needs. It might not be what his friend thinks he needs. It might not be what the crowd are looking for, but Jesus says, listen, whatever else is going to happen today, your sins are forgiven because that is Mark wanting to describe and expose who Jesus is and our need before him as human beings.

And it's the greatest statement, isn't it, that you can ever hear in your life, whatever your circumstances are, whatever your needs are, that Jesus will come to you and he says, son or daughter, your sins are forgiven.

That's the, these are the greatest words of grace that have ever been uttered, your sins are forgiven. It's a beautiful, beautifully strong statement.

And Mark wants us to recognize and the Holy Spirit wants us to recognize and God wants us to recognize that that is Jesus' priority for you and me.

[5 : 52] That's why we participate in the Lord's Supper. Because as Christians we have come to Jesus Christ and we've recognized that he alone has both the authority and the power to make us right with him.

He is the one who can say, I forgive you. That's his priority for your life. So you may have come today with all kinds of priority. I'm not sure what your priorities might have been today in church and what you're asking of God, what you're wanting from God, what you expect from God.

I don't know what the theme of your prayers are, but our greatest priority, Jesus says, is not for our happiness or for even our physical healing, however significant and important that might be, but his spiritual healing is that we become right with Jesus Christ, right with God, before whom we will all stand one day.

And that comes, that's because Jesus immediately, you know, he's right at the early part of his ministry, but he can see, he's already beginning to see the cross and see that the cross is there so that he can offer forgiveness and he knows already that he will be victorious then so he can offer forgiveness on the basis of what he's going to do because he will pay the price.

Now if you don't see that, don't sit at the Lord's table. You can participate in this broken bread or this bread and this wine which speak of his sacrifice on our behalf so that we can be forgiven and made right.

[7 : 27] That's the core reality for us. And what's interesting too, isn't it, that Jesus by making that statement is immediately saying that the core message of the gospel is relational, is about relationships, is about a relationship between us and God, isn't it?

Because what happens when we need forgiveness? Who do we need forgiveness for in everyday life? It's from people that we've hurt or offended or we need to forgive others who have hurt and it's us and there's a sense of guilt until we put that right.

And that's exactly what God is saying too, that Christian living is not primarily about knowledge and about doctrine and about truth merely, scribbled in our heads.

It's not just about these things, although it encapsulates and involves all these things. It is truth that is expressed in relationship with Jesus Christ or not.

And that our problem is a breaking of trust with God and a guilt before God and that before Him we are outside, without Christ we are outside, we are spiritually in paralysis.

[8 : 47] That's why we need the cross and that's why we celebrate the cross of Jesus Christ today because with the cross there is genuine, genuine forgiveness.

It's a really interesting study to think about forgiving one another and how that relates to forgiving from God because someone slaps me in the face.

I can say to them, oh well, you know, I forgive you. And that's my own choice but if they go and slap me in the face again and I say, well, you know, I forgive you again, then what value is it really?

If they keep slapping me in the face, what value is it? I'm forgiving them but it's not genuine forgiveness, is it? There needs to be action. Something needs to change for there to be genuine forgiveness.

That person needs to stop slapping me in the face because they might find my grace is not that great and they might undit with a smack themselves, which of course would be wrong also.

[9 : 53] But there needs to be change for there to be genuine forgiveness. So you know, when people say, well, you know, why doesn't Jesus just forgive us anyway? And he can just forgive us and why does he need to go to the cross?

Because that's justice, isn't it? There needs to be genuine change. Something needs to happen in order for genuine forgiveness to be effective.

And in this case, we can't put it right ourselves. We can't make things right with God. But He goes to the cross and does it for us. So there's something tangible has been put right.

And our response to that is to thank God for what He's done and turn towards God and trust Him and love Him in our lives because forgiveness is so important. When was it last that we thought about forgiveness and our need forgiveness for forgiveness in our lives?

So we have Jesus' priority here in this story, but we also have Jesus' authority, which is also very significant. Because what does he go on to do? He goes on to heal the guy.

[11 : 00] He goes on to make him better so that he could walk. Because he hears the grumbles of the religious people who say, you know, and they were right and they were wrong, weren't they?

They were right saying only God can forgive sins, but they were wrong in saying that He was blaspheming because of who He is. They were wrong because they didn't recognize that He was indeed God.

But in order to answer or to give authority to what He was doing, because, you know, anyone could say your sins are forgiven and if the guy is still lying there, no one would know the difference. But in order to give His word authority, He then goes on to say to the man, I tell you, take up your man, go home.

So I heal you. And the healing is to give authority to what I am saying and what I've already done. But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth what to heal? No, to forgive sins. He heals them. The healing is kind of incidental, but it's there to prove that Jesus is strong enough and powerful enough and has authority to forgive sins.

[12 : 07] And that's great. That's important. That's important for us today because are you living paralyzed because of sin, because of past behavior, because of present behavior?

And you think, well, I don't know if I'm forgiven. I don't know if God forgives me. Well, you have this evidence that He is authority to forgive you, but not only that, not do we have this healing.

We have a greater authority, a greater evidence of His power. What is it? What's the greater evidence of God's power for us today? Sunday morning is a hint. Sunday morning.

Resurrection. We meet on the Lord's Day this Sunday morning because it's the resurrection morning. And that is the ultimate evidence that Jesus has the authority and the ability to forgive our sins and to break the chains of death that keep us down.

And that's hugely significant for us in our lives. So we have this relationship with Jesus Christ.

[13 : 15] We're the first thing He says to us in faith is, as we recognize it in faith is, my friend, your sins are forgiven. And nothing else is more significant because it immediately puts us on a platform where we can speak with God.

It's going back to our Genesis studies, isn't it? There was brokenness. There was judgment. There was relationship failed.

And because of what Jesus has done, He can say your sins are forgiven and we enter into relationship with Jesus Christ. And that's very much what the table is about. It's a recognition of that.

That what Jesus has done for us enables us to be right with God. And that's what Mark wants to get across here. But then we move on quickly to Levi, the calling of Levi or Matthew.

And this is equally dramatic. I'm not going to spend time on this at all. This is when Jesus goes and asks Matthew to follow him. And again, this is the Holy Spirit wanting us to learn about Jesus' authority.

[14 : 24] He goes to the least likely of people, a tax collector, someone who was ostracized from his own people and who was greedy and corrupt very often in the way he did his work.

And he calls him, you know, again there's this grumbling among the people, he eats with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus calls him and says, follow me.

Follow me. Isn't that unashamedly Jesus centred, Christ centred? He doesn't say, head off to the shops and buy some books about me and learn about me that way.

He doesn't say, go to church where you will be with other people who are interested in me or who will tell you about me. Again, all of these things are significant.

But he says, follow me. He doesn't say, I will tell you about the way. I will explain to you the truth and I will point you towards the life. He says, I am the way, the truth in the life.

[15 : 27] I am. It's in relationship with me. He says, absolutely unashamedly. Follow me. Be a disciple of me. Come to God through me.

It's more than even following. It's coming through Jesus Christ. And maybe this morning you've heard that call a million times. Maybe not literally.

But you've heard that call, follow me. Jesus says to Levi, follow me. He heals with authority. He also speaks with authority.

Follow me. And today he's still saying that, follow me. And if you're on the edges of commitment but you've not made that choice and made that taking that step of faith impossible though it is in our own strength, but we still do it, we're asked to follow Jesus to be His disciple.

And I want you to understand how crucial that is that when you sit at the Lord's table, you sit there because you have obeyed this command to follow Jesus. And Jesus is your Lord, He's your Master, He's your King.

[16 : 42] And this book, this Gospel is very much about the Kingdom of God and following Him. So you will go from here. Are you a follower of Jesus?

You're hearing as Christians each day that voice, follow me. Come in behind me. Okay, that's very brief, very quick.

I just want to finish with looking at some of the challenges that are in both of these stories and maybe you'll be able to discuss some of them in your city groups.

Because there's parallels in both these stories. We're not going to look at anything else from the chapter this morning. It's interesting some of the parallels and the apply I think to ourselves as well. First of both, both are outsiders.

Okay? The paralyzed man's an outsider because he was ill and he lived in a society where people thought illness was a direct result of sin in that individual's life.

[17 : 38] Sometimes it would have been, sometimes it wasn't. Jesus made that clear. But he was an outsider. And Levi was an outsider because of the choice of work that he had. He was in league with the Romans in other words.

People didn't like him. He was anti-nationalistic. They were outsiders. But in a sense, Jesus took that and says, what you know and experience in life is a picture of where you are spiritually until you come to Jesus Christ, until you follow me, until you're forgiven.

And the same is absolutely true today. Until we recognize that we are outsiders, outside of God's love and God's grace, until we're forgiven and until we follow Jesus, we will never come to Him.

You'll have a wrong understanding of the gospel. And it's a hugely significant and terrible thing to be outside of His grace, to be outside.

And you know the bizarre thing is, we'll always be outside, one way or another. We're either outside of God and His grace and His love and forgiveness because we'll not follow Him.

[18 : 46] But if we do come to Jesus Christ and we're adopted into His family, then we kind of become outside of the world's acceptance. So we move, we're always going to be outsiders till Jesus returns.

But we're either an outside of God or we're outside of the world that doesn't believe in God. What's it going to be for us? Who's our Lord?

Who's more important to us? Do we just want to stay where we are and be friends of the world? Or do we want to be friends of God by coming to Christ, both outsiders?

Both of them, interestingly, very physically, they got up and walked, didn't they? The paralysed man when he was healed, he got up and walked because Jesus commanded him to do what he couldn't do.

And so did Levi. He also, he walked as well. Levi got up and followed him. And both stories were told that the response to faith was that they actually went and followed Jesus.

[19 : 48] And that reminds us, I think that reminds us of faith being a life changing action. Faith in Jesus Christ, following Jesus Christ is not just an intellectual pursuit, it's not frumpy belief, whatever

frumpy belief might be, but it's not frumpy belief.

It's something that we actually engage in in our lives to be a follower of Jesus. I think we can become experts in the pew.

We can become experts in our own homes about Jesus Christ. We love to buy new books about Jesus. Oh, there's wonderful books about Jesus. And you can buy fantastic books about grace that give us wonderful insights about grace and the hue and the colour and the, oh, isn't that, isn't Jesus wonderful?

But faith isn't so much about learning and reading new things about grace and storing them in our brain.

It's then about going and living grace. We can read all day about beautiful grace and then go and be mean to our neighbour when we finish the book.

[20 : 58] But faith gets up and walks. It's taking that grace that we're learning about and walking it and living it in our life, in our ordinary life, in our everyday life.

It's living it, shining grace in our lives. It's an active truth for us. It's a transforming truth. You know, we're not to follow Jesus on a map or to walk with Him.

And that means taking His light into all the dark little recesses of our lives that we choose to keep to ourselves. That we choose not to allow Jesus to come with us.

That we don't follow as it were Jesus into these places. So I'm sitting at the Lord's table as a great privilege and a great blessing. It's great responsibility as we rise from the table to walk faith.

Walk faith when I don't see it, when you don't see me, when we don't see each other, to walk faith in these places, to live faith, to follow Christ.

[22 : 03] They got up and walked. They also both obeyed when it seemed impossible, didn't they? The man was paralyzed. Jesus says get up and walk. He hadn't done it all through his life.

But Jesus asked him to do it. Levi was to just leave his job. His job, they'd probably spent ages getting to where he could earn lots of money and he could be rich.

And Jesus asked him to do the impossible. And again the reminder of faith, a picture of faith is that God keeps on asking us in terms of obedience to do the impossible.

We can all obey him. We can all obey Jesus when we find it easy. And the kind of things that we find easy, well, I'm saying well Jesus wants to be doing that.

Of course he does, but that's because it's easy for you anyway and it's easy for me. But he asks us to do the things that are also impossible. The things that are, obedience will often be difficult for us.

[23 : 03] We will be faced with mountains that he asks us to throw into the sea. And that is where faith comes into its own. That's what trust is.

It is obeying him when it's impossible to do so. When we think we can't, when we think it's unreasonable, when our feelings are telling us not to do that. And it's every sinew of our body says we can't obey him here.

He says faith says follow me and do what I command. As we follow him from his word, then we will find every day many things that are a great challenge to us.

Is Jesus our Lord or is he just a kind of a companion that we can take or leave it, leave in the easy times? This is a great, these are great passages about his authority, about his lordship.

But we also see briefly that both of these people were treated as individuals in a crowd. Now if you look through the early chapters of Mark, it's amazing. I haven't counted it, but I will hopefully for next week, didn't have time.

[24 : 10] But for next week, how many times Mark mentions the crowd, a crowd, a crowd of people. And in both these sentences, there's crowds and both cases, Jesus hones in beyond the crowd to the individual.

One of them, in one case, the paralyzed man comes to Jesus with the aid of his friends through the crowd. In the other situation, Jesus comes to Levi through the crowd.

And we recognize that Jesus, it's not that he doesn't care about the crowd, but that the message is that it's not the crowd, it's the individual that I'm after.

And the reminder is again that we need to move beyond being part of the crowd. Levi was focused on, Jesus embarrassed him. Hope I didn't embarrass the Brunswick City group by making them stand up.

But when you're individualized, you're pointed out, aren't you? And the paralyzed man was kind of, it must have been slightly trying and embarrassing for him to be the focus of attention the way he

was.

[25 : 20] He couldn't remain part of the crowd if he was going to be healed. And Jesus would say, Levi, you'll not be healed unless I speak to you. And so it's not enough for us just to be part of the Christian crowd.

It's not enough just to belong to a church, just to have nice feelings about the people or even to want to come along and to listen to Jesus. Jesus wants you.

And he deals with us individually because there will be a day where we will stand before him individually. We will not stand before him as part of a crowd in the sense of his eye and his watch and his gaze on us.

And it's an individual love that he has for us, and it's a personal love. It's not a generic love. It's not just, well, I love Cynedd, people generally, or the church. I love you.

I want you to come to faith. I want your forgiveness. I want your life. I want your service. He treats us as individuals, and he comes to you today as an individual.

[26 : 25] He challenges you in the Word as an individual. Don't listen to the sermon for the person beside you or for the mass of the congregation. Listen to it for you because Christ says, follow me.

He says, sons, your sins are forgiven. He deals with us as people, as individuals. Both conversions spark opposition.

Both when God works in both of these guys' lives, there's people who are not happy about it. Particularly the religious leaders of the day who are unhappy that Jesus claims forgiveness and are unhappy that Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners.

What are they actually doing that for? Don't need for him to do that. Sparks opposition. Sadly, among those who claim themselves to be religious and believers.

But you know that in your life and in my life, when we follow Jesus, when we are wholehearted for Jesus, it's not good news for everyone. Please remember that.

[27 : 31] You follow Jesus, it's not good news for everyone. There might be people who are very unhappy that you make that decision. There might be people that oppose you for making that decision.

But even if there aren't, there is a spiritual enemy who is very unhappy that when you give your life to Christ, that he is enraged.

So please remember our need for protection and our need for knowing that there is opposition.

Don't be naive. Jesus says, count the cost. But having counted the cost, then come.

He doesn't say count the cost to say, well, there's going to be opposition. I'm going to stay away. He doesn't say that, thankfully. Please come. But don't be naive and depend on the Lord God.

The last parallel in these verses is that both, interestingly, end up going home. One is commanded to go home and the other just does it.

[28 : 33] The paralysed man, Jesus says to him, take up your mat and go home. And Levi, although he's told to follow Jesus, the next thing we're told is that he's at his own house, he's at home and he's inviting all his friends to his house.

I think that's very interesting that even in the call to follow Jesus, it's not a calling to abandon what we have had before. But it's a call to return to that with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

He said it to many people, didn't it? You know, the women of Samaria and to Legion and to others, he said, go home. Go home and tell them what I've done. Go home.

Why go home? Why did you say go home? Because they're the people that know you best. They're the people that will see the change. And he says, go home with me and introduce them to me.

The most powerful evangelists for Jesus Christ are the ones who have just become Christians often because they're excited and they go and tell their friends and they go and tell their family.

[29 : 41] And their family can see that there's a great change in their lives. Go home. Share the good news. And he's saying to this paralyzed man who probably had no responsibility and no sense of calling or sense of significance.

And he also says to Levi who was hated by nearly everyone, he says, you've got work to do. You're my ambassadors. You're my colleagues. You're my friends. I've got work for you. And that's great about here.

It's not really about our structures in any way or about our strategy. Just when we all begin to realize we've got a calling and we've got a calling to go home and to share Jesus with those nearest and dearest, those around us, those that we influence and are influenced by us every day.

Maybe that's the case and maybe that we take strength from the Lord's Supper together as we celebrate that. So let's bear our heads briefly in prayer.

For preachers, we ask for being your people, for following you, for knowing the importance of forgiveness. And we participate today in the Lord's Supper as those who recognize that.

[30 : 55] And we ask in prayer that we would have the power of God with us and the spirit of God among us as we reach out with the gospel and as you share it with our friends and with our family and those closest to us.

We thank you for the comfort and joy of worshiping together, but may that not be an exclusive thing that keeps us from reaching out and to eating with, maybe sometimes even the church might think as unsavory characters like the Pharisees thought Jesus was eating and drinking with unsavory characters.

He did it with grace and He did it with love and He did it because He wanted them also to know that as outsiders they could belong. And may we know also what it is to belong and to know Jesus Christ with us until the end of the age.

Amen.