

Jesus Cleanses

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[0 : 00] So we've been going through Mark's Gospel, and one of the questions that we're sort of asking through the whole series is, who is Jesus? And we've been looking at who is Jesus, and one of the things I think that's come really clearly from the beginning, obviously, is that he's the king.

He's the king, he's the Christ, the anointed king. And I suppose each week we've sort of learned of what that means, that he is the king. And we've learned he's the compassionate king, he's the battling king, the appointed king, the king that can heal.

And it begs the question, doesn't it, as we've looked at these different things each week, what kind of king do we want? What kind of king do we want? It's probably perhaps topical. As I mentioned last week, we had the coronation last Saturday, and people have been thinking, what kind of king is Charles going to be?

Is he going to be anything like his mother? Or is he going to do things a little bit differently? And that's kind of the question that we have for us as we think of King Jesus.

What kind of king do we want? Or is it more, what kind of king do we want? But also the question, what kind of king do we need? That is the more important question.

[1 : 18] Not necessarily, what do we want? But what do we need? At the heart of religious belief, that is the surrounding question of why anyone would come to trust or believe in a philosophy or religion.

One of the questions that people ask is, they often ask, what's in it for me? And that is connected to, what kind of king do you want?

Rather than, what kind of king do you need? Because if the question that you're asking is, what's in it for me? Then that really links to, the kind of king that you want will be connected to that.

What can I get out of it? It's entirely understandable that people ask that question because that is often the way that people approach modern life.

When there's a new proposition, a new idea, the question we often ask ourselves, the reason we decide to do anything is, what's in it for me? Is it worth my time and effort? What will I get out of it?

[2 : 22] Will it do what I want it to do for me? Will this king, this idea, will he do what I want? What will I get out of it? And maybe that is the way that people are the appealer of following a deity or a god.

Maybe God will give me what I want. I've tried everything else. So why not give these different religions a shot? Maybe that is perhaps what Christians, some people have come to Christianity thinking.

Or maybe that's what people think Christians are about. It's about being good and doing what God says so that he does what we want. There's been a very popular, I don't think you'll have noticed this, sort of twist on this in recent years.

It's, you know, the whole idea of the law of attraction, where people believe and repeat to themselves what they want to have or achieve and are convinced that the harder they believe something will happen, they will attract it to themselves and they'll receive something. the more likely they go through that, the more likely it is to happen. That somehow the universe can be manipulated to bend to our desires and give us success and possessions as we see fit.

[3 : 38] And the universe, as they often say, people who believe that kind of stuff, the universe becomes a bit like a vending machine. I just bend it to my will and I'll get what I want.

And maybe that's what we'd like God to be like for us. Maybe we would. In this passage today, what we see is that Jesus, the living God, is not like that.

He's not like that. He didn't come to give you what you want, but he came to give you what you need. He offers more than you could possibly want or imagine.

Everyone wants something, but Jesus comes to give us life and give us a place in his kingdom with himself as the king. So we're going to be thinking that through, thinking three points that we're going to see, that everyone is seeking something, that Jesus came to preach, and that Jesus cleanses. Everyone is seeking something, that Jesus came to preach, and Jesus cleanses. Now just a reminder, where we're at in the series, just to get everyone up to speed. We're reminded that the very first week, we looked at the first verse, it's kind of the summary, heading for the whole of Mark, the beginning of the good news about Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God.

[4 : 57] That's a kind of summary for, this is what Mark is about. It's about the good news of Jesus and who he is. And the whole, it's the beginning. It means there's more to come that we don't read here.

The whole of the Mark's Gospel fits under that tagline. Beginning of the good news. This is good news that we're reading. Last week we saw, the good news that we saw, is that Jesus is the king with authority.

He's authority over sickness, or he's authority over evil. And he has authority over each of us when he calls you to follow him. And so the question that comes at us, really is, that kind of follows on a little bit from last week, is surely, if he has authority, he can do anything.

Why doesn't he give us what we want? Why doesn't he give us what we want? First point, what we're looking at is, everyone is seeking. Everyone is seeking. Now, I don't know if you noticed how we see in the text that we've got today, that the same thing happens at the beginning and the end of our reading.

You look at just sort of the first few verses, you've got, you can see in verse 36 and 37, you see that Simon and his companions go to look for Jesus. And you see what Simon says when he finds him.

[6 : 19] He says, everyone is looking for you. He's saying, where on earth have you been? What are you doing all the way out here? You see, Jesus has got up early in the morning to go in a solitary place.

They've seen what, the people there, they've seen what Jesus has been doing. Remember, he's in Capernaum. And just in the passage before, he's been healing everyone that came to his door.

They want in on the action the next day.

They want to see it all again. They come to find him. Where are you, Jesus? Where have you been? But also, do you notice, we see, what I said is, we see this pattern repeated.

Look at the very end of our reading, following the cleansing of the leper, who goes and spreads the news of his healing. Verse 45, we see that Jesus, the crowds come to him again.

They still came to him from everywhere. They're still looking for him. They're looking for him at the beginning, they're looking for him at the end. And in fact, that word for looking, verse 37, has the connotation of, it's not just looking, it's a pursuit or seeking.

[7 : 27] There is an urgency for the people to find Jesus. The question is, what do they want from him? What do they want from him? The presumption, I think, which is reasonable, is that they want what they've seen him to do already.

They want him to do what they've seen him do the day before. In Capernaum, he was healing, driving out demons, and as we go through Galilee, we read of the cleansing of the leper.

This is what they're after. And I suppose the question really comes, do they want the king for who he is? Or do they want what he can give them? Is there a difference?

Is Jesus a means to an end? We understand that phrase, you know, means to an end. It's the idea that people have a goal of what they want and they will go to certain lengths to get what they want. In extreme cases, they'll use anyone or anything to achieve that end. Is Jesus the means to get what you want? We could be tempted to think of Jesus that way.

[8 : 36] It's a very challenging question to think through. And perhaps, why would anyone seek Jesus? Are we seeking Jesus today?

And why? Is it because of what he can give you? Now, on one level, don't get me wrong, of course, there is an element of truth to that. Let's not think that seeking after eternal life and heaven is a bad thing because the benefits that Jesus offers, they're incalculable, immeasurable.

They're vast. But it is a searching question, are you seeking Jesus today? I've noticed sometimes that at the beginning of the service, the kids love to play hide and seek.

The kids love playing it and let's, if we're honest, the adults would probably like to join in too. But you know, there's always a seeker finding the ones hiding.

But the thing is, when we're talking about seeking, we aren't playing hide and seek with Jesus because Jesus isn't hiding from us.

[9 : 43] You can actually go to him whenever you want and he is there to be found. He's near to you. The problem is that we're seeking something else other than him. That's the reason we can't find him.

He is near to you. He says, the kingdom of God is near. And so the real question is, what are we seeking instead of Jesus?

Are we? For some of us, we might be seeking a more comfortable lifestyle. For others, it might be perhaps respite from personal struggles. Some of us, it might be more meaningful relationships. It could be anything. Now there's no right answer here actually because Jesus, the real truth to it is Jesus knows your heart. He knows what you seek and he knows why. Just a personal example of what I'm trying to touch on here.

I've got a friend who not so long ago had a daughter who, she became very ill and said to me, I'm going to start praying and if God heals my daughter, I'll definitely start going to church.

[10 : 54] Definitely. It's brilliant. Wonderful. God can heal. He's a great God. You know, you should pray for that. I'll pray for you. The daughter recovered but my friend stopped praying and never came to church.

No thanks. I've got to ask what's going on there. Now, is it wrong? You know, we can still give God thanks for what Jesus did but what a wonderful thing through the marvels of modern medicine that, you know, a wonderful, you know, healing happened through modern medicine and we give God thanks for that.

We've got to ask what's going on. Was that a genuine seeking Jesus? He is able to, he is able to grant you and to give you what you need more than what you need.

and not only that, he knows what you need more than you do and he'll give it to you if you seek him. Not seek him for what he can give you but if you seek him, the person of Jesus, a relationship with him, if you seek him with all your heart.

that is what he's really after. The thing that you want is that sort of blessing that comes from knowing and seeking him that he will bless you as a secondary benefit.

[12 : 14] The main thing is that we come to him and seek him and know him and have a good sacrifice. Okay, secondly then, why does Jesus come?

Jesus comes to preach, we read. After Simon finds Jesus, the answer Jesus gives is surprising. You look with me from verse 38. He's come and found Jesus and what you might expect if you hadn't read ahead, you might expect Jesus to say to come straight away and start healing people again because that is what he's been doing so far.

But just look with me from verse 38. What does he say to Simon? Let us go somewhere else to the nearby villages so I can preach there also. That is why I have them.

There are lots of people in Capernaum looking for Jesus to continue what he's been doing. But Jesus' response is to leave that area and presumably knowing that some people will be left with their physical ailments.

They will hear of the kingdom of God because of what happened the day before. So it's not like they have no understanding of the kingdom of God because it has come to Capernaum already.

[13 : 33] There are people there who can witness and testify to the goodness of God and how they've seen the kingdom of God in action in Capernaum. So he hasn't left them without the knowledge of who he is or without the knowledge of the kingdom.

But he does move on. Does that mean that Jesus doesn't care about them? Of course that's not true. He cares passionately about every person.

About each one of us. But there is a greater healing that Jesus offers. He offers the healing that really comes through hearing his preaching. Hearing him explain who he is, why he came and what the kingdom of heaven is like, the greater healing is to receive forgiveness of sins by acknowledging that Jesus is the king who can take them away.

Jesus is telling Simon and his pals, this is why I'm here. The primary reason why I've come is to offer life in my kingdom, not temporary solutions or temporary relief.

His point, don't you see Simon? If I stay, the message of who I am and what I can offer will not spread. It will not go to the places and the people who need to hear it.

[14:50] It won't go to the people I want to call to myself. The people that he wants to hear his authoritative voice saying, come, follow me, will not hear it. He wants to give everyone the opportunity to put their trust in him and receive forgiveness and gain acceptance into his kingdom.

It's like that parable that comes a little bit later. The farmer that spreads seed when he's growing crop. You think today, we have lots of farms around about this area.

If a farmer doesn't take 10,000 seeds or whatever they have and drop them in a square meter, he doesn't take 10,000 seeds and drop them but they put them in the, attach the tractor to the cedar and they spread them liberally over 100 acres or whatever it is that they have.

The perfect ray is set up so that every seed has the chance to hit good soil, take deep root and grow. Jesus says in that parable the gospel when he talks about the farmer spreading the seed he said the gospel is the seed and Jesus liberally takes it to all the soil of Israel so that they can hear the good news.

He came so that everyone would get an encounter with himself, the king of the kingdom. Jesus can still heal today and we believe that but just like Jesus we must keep our focus in line with his.

[16:32] Our main priority as a church is explaining the good news of the gospel. Let's make no mistakes. That doesn't mean that physical healing is relegated.

It just means our primary focus is on thinking of being healed spiritually, of spreading the seed of the gospel to as many people in Winchborough and West Lothian as possible. And don't get me wrong, we would love to see amazing miracles happen.

They point and remind us that Jesus is powerful and convince us of his power but Jesus comes to offer spiritual healing and forgiveness of sins which he secured when he paid the penalty reserved for us by dying a brutal death in our place.

That kind of healing lasts for us. Being forgiven is an eternal labor that will never be taken away. Thirdly, what do we see?

We see this encounter. We know that Jesus was going throughout Galilee meeting with different people preaching. We see this encounter where Jesus cleanses. What we see here is Jesus is demonstrating that he does actually cleanse spiritually by cleansing someone physically.

[17:54] Because spiritual cleansing really there's nothing on the outside that you could see that would explain that it had happened. So he demonstrates that he can actually do the hard harder work by doing by cleansing someone physically.

We just need to before we go into this circumstance where we meet this man we just need to pause and think of the significance of a man with leprosy in those days.

And in order to fully appreciate that there's a little bit of digging into the Old Testament law. In the Old Testament people had to approach God as spiritually clean. If they were defiled in any way then it inhibited them from coming to the temple coming to God and they were spiritually unclean by things made them spiritually unclean by conditions that they had or what they'd been doing and there was a whole process of purification that they had to do to be clean again.

But one of the things that kept someone unclean was leprosy. Leprosy. It had a terrible impact on the life of the leper. They were isolated from their family and separated from the religious life of the community.

They often lived in colonies in certain locations and if people passed them they would literally shout at the person unclean unclean to warn others who didn't know that they shouldn't be touched or gone near.

[19:25] They were ostracised by the effects of the disease. And this poor man with leprosy comes to Jesus and he's begging. He's begging.

He's on his knees in a place of desperation because life for him could not get any lower. He says to Jesus if you are willing you can make me clean.

Now the phrase I think are you willing sounds quite formal way to speak doesn't it? It's not something we might say today if we were asking somebody to do something but the word translated as willing for ladies it means a want which is or a desire which is probably a more helpful way for us to read it.

So it could read it could be translated if you desire you can make me clean. If you desire to do this Jesus you can do it. The leper here is asking a searching question to Jesus.

He's asking a question of Jesus' own heart of Jesus' own desires. If you desire you can make me clean. you see there's faith there that is showing to Jesus.

[20 : 43] If you desire Jesus you can make me clean. I know you can. You see how the question reveals the heart of the leper. He doesn't demand Jesus to do anything but he points out his own belief that Jesus can do this if he wants to.

In a very subtle manner he's saying I know who you are King Jesus. I know you have authority over my leprosy. I know that if you want, if you desire to, you can make me clean.

And we see two responses from Jesus. Firstly Jesus is angry. He says we read he's indignant. He's angry at the effects that living in a world plagued by sin has had on this world.

On the effects of being ostracized. The effects of the disease. And this is really encouraging point for us to think through.

That Jesus still feels that way about the way that sin affects and destabilizes and haunts us. That when we suffer and the effects of sin plague us he is angry at the suffering that we endure.

[22 : 00] he's angry that sin has had that effect on our life. When he sees you weep because you're in chronic pain or because you're in the depths of mental ill health paralyzed by anxiety and depression Jesus is angry.

Not with you but because of the sinful effects of the world the spiritual evil we face has caused in your life. He's angry on your behalf. He's indignant at what you have to go through.

But in the same breath as being angry at seeing you have to face suffering he is filled with compassion. Just like with Peter's mother-in-law which we saw last week you see he reaches out his hand and touches the man.

I am willing verse 41 I do desire I want to do this be clean. The ramifications of what Jesus does are amazing because Jesus could have healed him with a word but he touches the untouchable and no one would go near him.

Perhaps Jesus might have been the first person to touch him maybe even talk to him since he developed this condition he reaches out his hand and what we see is a direct reversal of what would normally happen.

[23 : 34] Normally the impurity the uncleanness would be transferred touching a leper would make the clean person unclean but here we see a direct reversal and we know that that's what normally happens.

If you think if you're doing the washing up and you have a dirty plate and a clean plate if you put one plate on top of the other the dirty plate doesn't become clean the clean plate becomes filthy underneath and that's normally the way that things would happen is that the clean would become dirty but here we've got a direct reversal of what would normally happen the flow of purity is reversed Jesus doesn't become unclean but the leper becomes clean becomes pure he is healed and he is cleansed he is cleansed from his defilement and restored restored restored to his family restored to his community and he did Jesus has done that because what it the spiritual cleansing has already been done the physical cleansing demonstrates that the leper is actually already spiritually cleansed because the leper demonstrated faith in

Jesus the king to begin with when he asked the question if you desire I know you can do this his faith demonstrated he was spiritually clean and physical cleansing just proved that Jesus can do the work do the greater work that he had already done the natural instinct of people is to move away from that which they don't understand or fear the natural impulse of everyone else was to move away from this leper but Jesus moves towards him with his hand to be cheap let's not make mistakes about ourselves we might not be lepers but in a spiritual sense we're all defiled and unclean every one of us can look back and see where we've messed up been a daft day in those moments when we mess up you think of the scenario where you've had an argument with your spouse and you're at loggerheads with one another in those moments when the ugliness of impatience and self righteousness and wanting to win rear their head when the sin and the defiling characteristics of our heart come out the natural instinct is to move away from you but Jesus deepest impulse his deepest impulse his heart's desire who he is in himself is just the same as he has towards the leper his most natural instinct in your sin is not to move away from you because of your defilement but towards you he wants to give you back your true humanity when we see miracles we tend to think that this is an interruption in the natural order of things because we're used to a fallen world of sickness disease and pain but actually it's the sickness and disease and the pain that's the interruption in the way that God wanted his world to be miracles are the most natural thing because they're restoring things to how they were meant to be sin and death is the interruption and Jesus is close to you today than he was to the leper that's the amazing thing he's

closer to you today than to the sinners and sufferers he spoke with and touched in his earthly life he's close to you right now and he reaches out his hand in your sin in your suffering with compassion he comes to you today and offers his hand out to you and says
I will cleanse you I will set you free from all the mess the mistakes the sin the brokenness in your life I will cleanse you spiritually and one day for all who put their trust in him you will be cleansed physically as well on the last day what do you want from Jesus what do you want from Jesus the real answer is that we need him we need the person of Jesus Christ the benefits of salvation coming from having a personal trusting relationship with him he came to heal spiritually and one day we'll all have resurrection bodies he will cleanse you he will bring spiritual restoration renewal and peace and he offers his hand out to you today and you do realize we can we can say the same thing that Jesus says to the leper if you are willing if you desire King Jesus you can make me clean I know you can take away my sin my pain and Jesus replies exactly the same to you
[28 : 40] I am I do desire be be clean receive forgiveness let's pray almighty God we do thank you for who you are we just want to praise you for the kind of king that you are that you're not a tyrant that you're not you don't lord it over anyone but you come in mercy and compassion and weakness and forgiveness and you offer us yourself you offer us your hand of compassion you touch the untouchable when we would when we would when our natural impact instinct would be to move away from that that we fear or don't want to get involved with you move towards us in the middle of our sin when we believe ourselves that you wouldn't want to come near to us because we feel condemned in the middle of our sin you move towards us you actually you're with it you're closer and near to us in the depths of our sin and you you know the pain and the sorrow of when we feel desperate for you you're near to us you desire to clean us so we say to you today Lord if you desire if you're willing
King Jesus we have faith you can make us clean you can give us forgiveness for our sins and you're near to us you're not far so we ask that you do that knowing that you say to each one of us I do desire I am willing to be clean bless as we pray ask for all this in Jesus name Amen