

The Forgiving King

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[0 : 00] Well, we've been thinking through Mark's Gospel, and one of the things that we're, the big idea that we're thinking through, I suppose through the whole of Mark's Gospel, is who is Jesus?

Who is Jesus? And routinely one of the things that's come out is what kind of king is he? He's the king. We learned that in the very first week. And what does it mean if he's the king?

And as we see the king interact with different people, we see something different about the king and how they respond to him, how do we respond to him? The question that, the big question that comes out this week is, for us, it's connected to what we think our biggest problem is in life, what we think our biggest problem is in life.

And we know, don't we, that one of the biggest issues that we face routinely is we all, one of the things we all find difficult is change.

We all find change difficult, we're creatures of habit and we get used to the status quo as we get, and I don't know about you, but it seems that as I get older, change seems to get harder.

[1 : 09] But the reality is that change will always happen. In many ways, our lives are really about handling change, how we handle the good, the bad, the obstacles, the things that we have to sort out.

One of the reasons, I think, the reasons, we find bad circumstances difficult is, it's not just because of the difficulty in of itself, it's not just because of that, but it's because often we have no warning that it's coming.

It's a surprise, we're not prepared for difficult news, and then we have to spend time working out a solution to come to terms with what new normal is. Life happens and you have to make your best and deal with it in some sort of way.

We might remember that during COVID, we had to get used to what new normal was. Nobody was prepared for that, of how it would affect everyone in the way it did. And it affected people in different ways, but nobody was prepared.

Now in this passage we have from Mark's Gospel, we read of a man who is paralyzed. He's paralyzed from the neck down, unable to move. We don't know the back story as to how he ended up like that, whether he'd always been that way or what happened to him, whether at some point he was able or at some point in his life, how that happened.

[2 : 33] But however that happened, that moment in his life when he became paralyzed, how did he deal with that? And the difficulty that came.

Now the reality is for us that we don't ever know what's around the corner. What that means for us is that what is our biggest problem today, it could change by the end of next week.

That is the reality. What is our biggest problem today, we think with the way that we look at life, is that our biggest problem today could be different by the end of next week because we don't know what lies ahead. But this is the thing that really challenges us, is if we don't know that, what our biggest problem is because it changes.

Are we actually in a good position to evaluate what our biggest problem will be in life is? It's going to change. The real answer comes from this passage.

The real answer. Humanity's biggest problem, the biggest concern, the biggest concern we actually have in life, we think it's changed, but actually the biggest problem doesn't ever change.

[3 : 42] Because the biggest problem in life is the same for every single person. It's the spiritual condition of our hearts that we're born with that means a sinful condition that means we don't have a natural relationship with the living God who made us.

That is our biggest problem. Physical problems will change day by day, but this one does not. It is universal for the whole of humanity. It's not one thing for one person and something different for

someone else.

Our biggest problem is our sinful condition. That's hard to hear. That is hard to hear that that is your biggest problem. We're going to think about what this means this morning and as we look together, we're going to see that Jesus comes to fix it.

Jesus comes to fix it. He comes to fix our sinful condition. So just a reminder of where we've come from so far. You might remember first week, I mention this verse every week, Mark 1 verse 1, it's what Mark is all about.

The beginning of the gospel, the beginning of the good news or the gospel about Jesus and Messiah, the Son of God. That is what Mark's about. This is all about what, when we read anything in Mark's gospel, it fits under that tagline title.

[5 : 00] This is what it is about. And we saw last, we've seen many things about who this king is. We've seen the compassionate king, the king who cleanses, the king who's angry about the way the sin has affected us and the suffering in our world.

We've seen that. Now as we come to chapter 2, there's a slight change in the way that some of the gospel starts to progress.

And then from chapter 2, just to the end of, just to the beginning of chapter 3, there's five controversies. Five controversies. If you think about it, in the first chapter, everything's great.

There's no real complaints about what Jesus is doing. It's just been great. But from here on in, Jesus starts to meet with those who he's upsetting.

And he does controversial things in the time. And here we get the first one. We're going to think, what is that? Why is it controversial what he says? So we're going to think about that together.

[6 : 05] The first thing that I want to touch on is, before we get there, is the radical faith that we see for these men to encounter Jesus. Jesus has returned home.

We read, and perhaps, it might be, as we read that in verse 1, people had heard that he had come home. And perhaps it might be the house he was in, when everyone showed up, wanting to be healed before.

Because the same thing seems to happen. Doesn't everyone show up at his door? Verse 2, they gathered in such large numbers, we read, that there was no room left. Not even outside the door. And he preaches the word to them. This time, this is Jesus, primarily, this is not a healing ministry. He was preaching to them.

We know what that would have been about, about the kingdom of God. Doing what, doing what, Jesus told Peter before, that that is the reason he had come. And what we see, in this instance, is the radical, persistent faith, of four men, who bring this paralyzed man, to Jesus.

[7 : 17] The first difficulty, is they must carry him themselves. And then when they get to Jesus' house, it is packed out. It must have been, you know, it was the hot ticket of the day.

You must have had to get there early, to get a seat at the front. But it doesn't put Jesus off. In Israel, in the day, the majority of homes at the time, they would have had a flat roof, they would have had an external staircase, and the roof would have been used for, drying through, storage, sometimes in very hot weather, they would have slept, on the roof.

There were sturdy structures, structures, the roof was constructed, out of wooden cross beams, covered with thatch, and then there was a layer, of compacted dirt, that would have been above. So to make the opening, in the roof, it wasn't like they, you know, they just sort of, knocked on it, and it fell through.

This would have taken time, to dig down. And you couldn't, you can only imagine, the commotion underneath, aren't you? Jesus teaching, surrounded by a crowd.

Perhaps at first, they heard the banging, on top, what's going on upstairs? And then, a bit of the thatch, and dirt, hit the floor, perhaps land on someone, perhaps hit the scribes, or maybe somebody, who snuck his way in.

[8 : 37] And the crowd look up, and they see the, the opening getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger, to reveal four men, and the, and the paralytic, peering down. Jesus perhaps, looking up at them, and then lowering their friend, through the opening, onto the floor.

It is radical, persistent faith, that whatever opposition, comes in their way, of whatever obstacle, they know, these four men know, that the only answer, the only solution, is to get this man to Jesus. That is the only thing, that will work. I don't know if you've been following, on the news, for a while there's, this is my sport, from Yorkshire, I'm a rugby league fan, I don't know if you might expect

that, but there's a, there's a guy, who used to play for the Leeds Rhinos, called Rob Burrow, and he got, motor neurone disease, and he's, slowly, sort of, got worse, with his illness.

One of his teammates, Kevin Sinfield, who's retired now, has decided, to raise money, with the MND community, the motor neurone disease community, by running, like, loads and loads, and loads of marathons.

And nothing, has stopped him, from running, these marathons. Nothing. He, and the reason that, the reason, that it keeps him going, the persistence, is that, he actually has, faith, that the money he raises, is, is the thing, that the, motor neurone disease community, need, to, to, to heal this man, of his disease, or to, rid, the world through, scientific advancement, of motor neurone disease, for everyone else, who will suffer.

[10:18] Now, don't get me wrong, isn't that amazing, that he would do this, for his friend? Let's not, let's not say, you know, it's amazing, that he will, that he will do that, and we should, celebrate the fact, that he, he wants to do this, for his friend.

It's amazing. And here, here we see, these four men, it's, it's very similar, but they know, but, but these four men, knowing that, knowing that Jesus, is actually the only one, who can save their friend.

Christian faith, is putting trust, in Jesus, that he will save. Christian faith, is putting trust, in Jesus, that he will save. They are persistent, I mean, they break through, someone else's roof.

There's no consideration, is there, as to, whether they should do that, or not. What the need is, is much more important, than someone else's property. They have to get close, to Jesus, at all costs, because he's the only one, who can help.

That is true, still for each one of us. It is true. He's still the only one, that we can go, to help, for, spiritually. Spiritually, we all start off, spiritually, paralyzed.

[11:39] Do, do we believe, and trust, in Jesus, as the only one, who can make us, walk spiritually, upright today, who can give us, new life, he's the only one. And we need to make, a beeline there.

But there's a huge difference. There's a huge difference, because we don't have to go, through the roof, of building, to get to him. You know, he's, he's present with us today.

He's present with us, in this room, by his spirit, he's near, brother. He's nearer. He's closer, to you today, than he was, to anyone else, in that room, at that moment.

which makes, what Jesus say next, to be the, jaw dropping moment, of the passage.

It is jaw dropping. As we look at that, second, the second thing, we're going to look at, is the priority, of forgiveness. The priority, of forgiveness. What Jesus says, next, is jaw dropping, because it would, leave the room, in stunned, silence.

[12:52] Just remember, this is in Capernaum, the house, we presume, where Jesus had, physically, been healing people, who'd come to his door. And the man, is down, he's, he's right in, right in front, of Jesus, and the crowd, is a man, who can't walk.

He's, he's on the bed. Everyone, everyone, is expecting Jesus, to do what he's been doing. They had anticipation. It's, you can imagine, the people, in the crowd, maybe the people, in the back of the room, nudging, one another, just watch this, we know what he's going to do, he's going to heal. Every person, in that room, is glued, to what Jesus, is going to do next. It is clear to everyone, what this biggest, this man's biggest problem, what he needs. He needs to walk.

What does Jesus say? Verse five, And Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, Son, your sins are forgiven.

You can, there would have been silence, in the room. Perhaps questions, with some of those watching. Wasn't he supposed, to make him walk again?

[14:08] Isn't that, what we're supposed to see? It is purposefully done by Jesus, because the man, has two problems. One we can see, and one we can't.

The one we can see, is his paralyzed body. And the one we can't, the sin is out. Jesus chooses, there's an issue, of priority here.

That Jesus is choosing, to deal with the biggest, problem first. Which means, this is the shocking thing. His sinful condition, is worse, than his paralyzed body.

It's worse. That is shocking, because as physical ailments go, being paralyzed, from the neck down, is up there, with as bad as they can. Sin, this man's sin, must be really bad.

Sin as a, as general, must be really bad, if it's worse, than this. And the question, we must ask, we must ask this, is, why is that the case?

[15 : 18] Why is sin, our biggest problem? The answer comes, the answer has to come, to knowing what sin is. Now, on one level, we could say, as a very blanket statement, that sin is any time, when we try to live, our own way, instead of the way, the good way, that God tells us.

I don't know if you've heard this, one of the, the acronyms that I use, with the kids is, S-I-N, sin. I say sin is when we say, shove off God, I'm in charge, no to your rules.

Very basic, you could say, and leave it there. Now we decide, we know better, than the one who made us. But what we actually realize, it's much deeper than that. It's much deeper than that. Instead of thinking about, the things that we do, a more consistent view, would be, that it's actually part of who we are. We are sinners.

It's more like a condition, like a genetic disease, and actually, the sins that we do, where we do our own thing, it's like the disease, that we have on the inside, showing itself on the outside.

[16 : 26] It's like the, the sin is like a symptom, of being a sinner. It's like saying that, think of a condition, say like, someone who has asthma.

Coughing, is the symptom. But the bigger problem, is much deeper down. It is a universal condition, and for as long as we have it, the symptom, is that we keep, the condition, is that we keep, our creator at arm's length.

We live with hostility to him. And it comes out, in the way that we live, which is sins. The effect of it, if not resolved, is that we live eternally, separated from God, in this life, and to the next.

It's most of the process. If this man is healed physically, his spiritual problems, his spiritual problems, is the only one, who can deal, with it.

He knows it. And, Jesus sees, their faith, to get to him. They trust, that he is the king. And he, deals with his biggest problem.

[17 : 48] The biggest problem, this man has, whatever will, be our major concern, in life, next week, as compared to this week, our biggest problem, is still sin.

It is still the anger, the lust, and the pride, the impatience, the symptoms, that come out. A little bit, of behavior modification, doesn't, just, doesn't sort out, the problem, that's in our hearts.

It is like, thinking, of sticking a plaster, on a chronic disease. You need to be changed, from the inside, and have your condition, removed. And Jesus, is the only, answer.

For your faith, in Jesus, to forgive you, your sinful condition, will be, removed, and you're looking forward, to an eternal future, with the one who made you. And he offers it, to everyone.

He offers it, to everyone. It's not an exclusive deal. It's not a members only club. Everyone can come to Jesus, and have their, sinful condition removed, and have, a relationship with him.

[19 : 05] What Jesus says, it causes a stink, in the eyes of the, religious elite scribes. It causes an absolute stink, because what this means, what Jesus says here, reveals, more than we think.

What Jesus says, reveals, more than we think. Because what it reveals, is when he, when he announces forgiveness, it reveals, that Jesus is, saying, to the, to the crowd, that he, has the same authority, as them.

That is what Jesus is saying. He's saying, I'm divine. Just look with me. And we know that, because of how, the religious elite, the scribes, the teachers of the law, respond.

Just look with me, in verse 6. Now some teachers of the law, were sitting there, thinking to themselves, why does this fellow, talk like that? Blast people. Who can forgive sins, but God?

The only one, who can forgive sins, is God. People did, priests of the day, would tell people, they were forgiven, but that was only, following, the people making, an offering at the temple.

[20 : 13] Jesus doesn't, do that here, but he pronounces, announces forgiveness, for this man, and his friends, on his own authority. He is putting, his own authority, on a par with the, with the Lord God.

The implication being, that he himself, has the same authority, as Yahweh, as the God of the Old Testament. And you see the irony, that happens at that moment.

They're questioning, what he said, and the truth of it, questioned it in their hearts, thinking to themselves, we read. And as they question, he does something, else, that only God can do.

He knows immediately, what they're thinking. Verse 8, immediately Jesus knew, in his spirit, that this was what they were thinking, in their hearts. And he said to them, why are you thinking, these things?

Just as an aside, it just reminds us, that Jesus knows, exactly what's going on, in our hearts, all of the time. That is either terrifying, or very liberating. Knowing that the living God, knows you

completely.

[21 : 14] He knows you completely, whether you turn to him, or you don't, he knows exactly, what's going on in your heart. To prove, that his sins, this man's sins, are actually forgiven, he gives them, an either or question.

An either or question. Verse 9, which is easier, to say to this paralyzed man, your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up, take your mat, and walk? The point of this question, is to contrast, something which, cannot be externally proven, against something which can.

Okay? It is, it is easier to say, your sins are forgiven, out of your mouth. It is easier to say that, because there is no way, it can be, there's no external, empirical evidence, to demonstrate, that it hasn't happened.

Yet saying, get up, take your mat, and walk, it's harder, because it requires, external, empirical evidence. Jesus sets up, the whole question, to prove, that the thing that, that doesn't, that you can't have evidence for, he can actually do, because he does the harder thing.

Verse 10, we see that, but I want you to know, that the son of man, has an authority, on earth, to forgive sins. He calls himself, the son of man, a direct link, to Daniel's prophecy, that the son of man, would come, who had authority, glory and power.

[22 : 44] Verse 11, I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home. He got up, took his mat, took his mat, and walked out, in full view, of them all. And everyone is amazed, praise the Lord.

We see that line, repeated, that the crowd said, when the demon, was cast out, in the synagogue, we've never seen, anything like this. The real point, the real point, in doing this, who is Jesus? He's the living God. Jesus, is the living God. That is the reason, he can, forgive sins, because he's God, in the flesh. The God who made you, the God who parted the seas, for Moses, the God who numbered, and named the stars, comes down, in the person, of Jesus Christ, and he stood, before them all.

The God, who is, immortal, took on a mortal frame, submitting himself, to all human experience, pain, emotional turmoil, tiredness, being hungry, and thirsty, never ceased, but yet, never ceasing, in all of those moments, to be completely, able to forgive sins, and bring, restoration.

You see, here we see, actually, actually, there is a connection, between forgiveness of sins, and the restoration, of fallen creation. The spiritual, and the physical, are both restored, in this man.

[24 : 10] In the miracle, the miracle, he's actually pointing, to what he came to do, over the whole of history. In this one miracle, he's forgiving sins, he's restoring, the spiritual condition, of this man, but in restoring, his physical health, and able to walk, he's actually saying, this is what I'm actually, going to do, to the whole of creation.

I'm going to make, creation, creation itself, is going to be restored, in the same way, that I've restored this man, and made him walk. Herein lies, Jesus, mission to me.

He does something, which is, humanly, impossible. And at the end, of his life, he will do something, that is again, not humanly, possible, because he will give his life, as a ransom, to pay for, the forgiveness of sins.

And in his resurrection, restore for the creation. A hostility, and separation, you have, from God, the Father, because of your sinful nature.

God, in the person of Jesus, will become sin, and become separated, from his Father, so that those, who put their trust in him, will have that gap, of separation, removed.

[25 : 33] And you'll be reconciled, with the God who made you. Because your sinful condition, your biggest problem, is fixed. I don't know, if you've ever seen, this illustration.

See, imagine this, is you. Imagine this book. It's your sin. God is up here. You see, your sin is blocking you, from getting to God the Father.

You see, Jesus, he comes, God, he comes down, in the person of Jesus. And he takes your sin, on himself, on the cross, then he dies. Amen.

They're both free. The scribes are livid, because they're scared, of what this means.

If this crowd, if this crowd, can go to this man, for forgiveness, and don't need to take, an offering to the temple. What does this mean for them? Their whole system, of power and control, is under threat.

[26 : 46] And one of the implications here, that if Jesus is Lord, if Jesus is God, it means they are not. It scares them. It scares people today, that Christians listen, first and foremost, to God's ways.

The ways of Jesus, are not their own. The whole power system, is to be. Because Jesus is Lord. He's the living God.

He's the one God, who reigns, and who rules, and comes, as the forgiving king, to take away your sins. To heal you, to heal you spiritually, and at the end of time, to heal you physically.

To live, in a healed, restored, renewed, world. So as we come in, landing, we've seen, the radical faith, of these four men, to get to Jesus, knowing that only, he could be able to do, that he was the only person, that could do, what they needed.

We've seen the priority, of forgiveness, that our spiritual condition, is worse, than any physical change, or circumstance, that we'll go through.

[27 : 57] And then we'll see, that Jesus is, he's divine. He's the living God. He's the one who came down, to take away our sins, to take on himself, the sins that we've done, the sinful condition, that we have, so that we can be reconciled, with God, with the Father.

So that the God, the Father, will say to us, once you were dead, now you're alive. Once you were lost, but now, you've been found in the sin. That's it.

Almighty God, we do praise you, Jesus Christ. We thank you, for all that you have done for us. We thank you, that we know forgiveness, through your Son.

We thank you, you came, to take away our sinful condition, to reconcile us, to yourself. We thank you, that you became sin, so that, we were separated, from your own Father, so that we could, so that we would never know, that separation.

Thank you, that you're near to us, and that we can come to you, and that you've given us, in the spirit. We pray, that you bless us. We just thank you, that our biggest problem, has been taken away, has been fixed, and we look forward to the day, spiritually, and physically, we'll be totally renewed.

[29 : 21] We praise you, and we ask for your blessing, in Jesus name. Amen.