

Walking with Longsuffering

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[0 : 0 0] Okay. Is that better? Is that better? Okay. Mark chapter 2. We've talked about the boy with five loaves and two fishes, but we don't know his name.

! We talked about the little girl with Naaman, but we don't know her name. We talked last week about the Pharisee and the publican the last couple weeks, but we don't know their names. Today, four men. We don't know their names. But look at these four men in Mark chapter 2, beginning at verse 1. Mark 2, beginning at verse 1.

Mark 2, beginning at verse 1.

Mark 3, beginning at verse 1.

Mark 3, beginning at verse 1.

[2 : 5 5] has a part in our life. Having faith that you can do whatever you say you will do. Having faith that you will answer our prayers and you will meet needs.

Lord, that we'd have faith, faith to remove sin, cleanse us, make us whole, put us on the path to heaven. Lord, that we would have faith that you can do anything you want to do.

Lord, help us to have faith in you. Lord, help us to have our faith grounded so that we know that when we come to you in prayer, you're going to answer. Lord, just help us today as we look at these men, learn some things about them, and with the situation here, Lord, it would help increase our faith so that we might walk with you as these men did.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So, we want to live for Christ. The Bible wants us to be Christ-like in the things we do. We want to live for Christ.

The key to all that? Dying to self. When we die to ourself, that's the key to living for Christ. In John chapter 12, verse 24, it says this, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.

[4 : 1 5] But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He says, you die to yourself. You put yourself in my hands, and watch what can happen.

Watch what we can do. Watch what I can do through you. He says, you've got to die to yourself, though. Here in Mark chapter 2, he gives an account of these four men. They're determined to get their friend, who's paralyzed.

That's what it means to be sick of the ball. They're paralyzed. And they're going to get him to Jesus, so Jesus can heal them. You start to think. We don't know the name of these four men. Each of them had a story of his own.

Each of them had a, you know, maybe had a thought that day of going to see Jesus, and get Jesus to heal something that was wrong with them. Maybe they had a thought about going to see Jesus, hear the preaching that he had, and get something taken care of in their life that they needed help with.

But right now, they're concerned about their friend. Right now, they're concerned about another man, and they're trying to find a way to get him to Jesus. You know, you stop and think about it.

[5 : 21] It says here that they couldn't even get by the door because it was so crowded there. There was no way they were going to get him through that doorway. Even them as individuals would have had trouble getting to Jesus that day.

But they might have been able to sneak their way through, push their way through and everything. But four of them with a man on a stretcher, that wasn't going to happen. So they had to figure out something else to do. They saw the need of their friend, and they were trying to find a way to get him to Jesus.

You know, sometimes when we work together as a group, we can accomplish a whole lot more than we can individually. Why do we have churches?

So that we can share the gifts that God has given to us and help one another, and thereby hopefully reaching more with the gospel of Christ.

You know, there are places on the earth where there are locusts. Locusts tend to generally just be there eating along and doing their own thing until there starts to be a bunch of them.

[6 : 34] And then when it gets to be a bunch of them, all of a sudden, they change from individual to a group mentality. And it's interesting, you know how in Exodus, when the plagues were taking place in Egypt.

One of the plagues was a locust. And they hadn't had a lot of problems with locusts at that time, you know, during the different plagues and stuff. Then all of a sudden, God says, it's going to be a plague of locusts.

And they wake up the next morning, and everything green is gone. And it's like, how do they do that so quickly? Well, the desert locusts has been called the world's most devastating pest.

They can swarm together. Normally, they're just out there doing their thing, eating away. But when there gets to be a bunch of them, they can all of a sudden swarm. And you get them together and start growing, within a three-month period, they can increase by 20-fold.

They can get to densities where there's 80 million per kilometer, square kilometer. Square kilometer is only 0.6 miles.

[7 : 48] And you have 80 million of them in there. And it says, when you, in fact, people who have studied these things, said, when those 80 million get going, in a day, they can eat as much as 35,000 people.

They usually eat like two grams. That's not a lot. But together, they can eat as much as 35,000 people. So, the devastation brought on by them working together as a group.

And the only times you usually hear about them doing that is when God's using them for something. But, in Proverbs 30, verse 27, it says this, the locusts have no king, yet go they forth, all of them, by bands.

You know, locusts have no hierarchy, there's no organization, there's no king or queen in the group or anything like that. The only thing they get together for is a cause. Something that has to be done, something that they are going to work together as a group.

We as a church, that's why we get together, to work together for the cause of Christ. Not so that each of us can get individual recognition of things, but so the cause of Christ can go forward.

[9 : 03] And here's these four men here in Mark, chapter 2, who definitely had a cause. Their friend was sick, he was paralyzed, and they wanted to see, you know, they forgot about who they were as individuals, their personalities, their causes, their opportunities, their, everything was pointed on, how do we get this friend to Jesus?

You know, and that's going to be the church's goal. How do we get people to Jesus? What were the things that these men had in common that helped them get there? First of all, they had an unselfish compassion.

Unselfish compassion. You know, when we have a love for God that we should have, it's going to help us to realize that we need to get people to Jesus.

we need to help them get to where he is and see him for who he is. First Peter 4.8. First Peter 4.8 says this, And above all things, have fervent charity, love, among yourselves.

For charity, love, shall cover the multitude of sins. He says, have fervent charity, have fervent love among yourselves.

[10 : 26] Why did Jesus come to this world? Save that which is lost.

What did you say, Margaret? God so loved the world that he gave his son to save it. Because of love, God sent Jesus.

Because of love, Jesus came. He says, look, above all things, have fervent love among yourselves. Are we concerned about the people around us?

Jesus was concerned enough that he came to give his life for him. See, love can overcome a whole lot of things in our life.

It's strange because I've noticed we're growing more and more in the Lord that I see somebody on TV doing something.

[11 : 23] I say, that's awful, that's awful. He should go to jail or whatever. But then if a family member said it, he'd say, dear God, please don't let him get caught.

You know? Yep. That's an exaggeration, but we can forgive as family and friends is hard to forgive for strangers.

Okay. That's a good point. You know, think of everybody as part of the family. Yep. Yep. Good point. See, the love of Christ constrains us, the Bible tells us.

It holds us back. It's much easier to take our eyes off ourselves when we have it focused on others and what God wants for them. 2 Corinthians 5, 14 and 15.

2 Corinthians 5, 14 and 15. For the love of Christ constraineth us, holds us back, brings us in, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead.

[12 : 25] And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.

He said, the love of Christ constrains us. The love of Christ brings us in together. The love of Christ as a church, we all understand the love of Christ. It brings us together to do what Christ has called us to do.

And then he says, he died for all. So then we should have a concern for all, not just ourselves, but for those outside. As Margaret said, you know, those that are on the outside, those that are not part of the family, do we have a concern for them?

Are we looking for them to get saved? So how do we do that? Excuse me. First of all, selfishness denied. We have to deny ourselves.

These four men were denying themselves. They were like, again, they might have had their own issues, their own wants, their own things they needed Jesus for, but right now they're denying themselves in order to get their friend to Jesus.

[13 : 33] We live in a selfish time right now, don't we? Now, you guys are not like this. I know you guys are not like this, but if you were to go out and pick out the average person outside here today, how many selfies do you think they have on their phone?

Ah, look at me. Oh, look at me. Oh, I did this. You know, they're always taking pictures of themselves. Used to be we went out and took pictures of nature and we took pictures of, you know, these things happening over here.

So, you like my portrayal of myself? Okay. Anyway. Oh, this side was better? Okay. See, the Bible actually predicted all this, didn't it?

It said that in 2 Timothy 3, 1 and the first part of verse 2, it says this, 2 Timothy 3, 1 and 2a.

This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves.

[14 : 43] That's the first part of verse 2. And then even the elitist of other things. But it's interesting. He says, look, in the last days, it's going to be perilous times. In the last days, there's going to be a lot of trouble.

Where does it start? Men shall be lovers of their own selves. We care more about ourselves than others. Here's these men who are taking their friend, they care more about him than themselves.

But today, the general attitude is, we care more about ourselves. Now, we didn't see that yesterday. There were 15 of you here yesterday.

That was a good day, seeing everybody work together and do things together. Sometimes we have to make a decision about ourselves, what we're going to be.

In Philippians chapter 1, verse 21, and Philippians chapter 2, verse 21, there's a distinction.

[15 : 43] What are we going to be? Philippians 1, 21 says this. We just sang it. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. For me to live is Christ.

It's all about him. Philippians chapter 2, verse 21, says this. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Which one are you? Which one am I? Which one are we as a church? For me to live is Christ and to die is gain? Or for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ.

What is the most important thing in our life? What is the thing we're looking for? Are we going to be a living for Christ type of Christian? Or are we going to be a seeking their own type of Christian?

You know, a lot of Christians today, not just people in general, but a lot of Christians today are looking for their own. who are? How? When you said that, I don't know how to go into the past that people do to claim to call their lives.

[16 : 57] But their main goal is to back to succeed. So then, to have everything that they wanted and to care whether or not they're going to have fuel for them to bury or even for a while or anything.

and then there's others that I've known that would give you the shirt off their back and please protect themselves and have very little.

You know, but they would still do that so I understand the concept. The contrast between the two. The contrast between the whole thing. Yeah. Yeah, that was, when I was tired, that's when I noticed it's a moment.

There were some people who were very well-off and I was in the first and they never, there never was the evidence that they helped anybody.

And, as I grew up and I went back on it, that's really amazing. The whole community looked up to those people because of their goodness, I could say.

[18 : 08] not that they could do, but just, you know, just being, that would do this, that would do that. Yeah. So, there's a lot of things that they said because they didn't do it.

Yeah. You see people who have the means to do all of those different things and they don't and then you see people who are struggling but those people sitting in a band together to help out.

Right. The one person that had so much related. Yeah. So. Yeah. Did you ask me? Okay. Margaret? It's very sad when you see many famous ministers doing the same thing.

They have that new boat, that new car, that mansion and they're screaming at the church, you don't tithe enough, you don't donate enough. But they can't open that purse to help the congregation.

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Fred? I think a lot of this boils down to the fact of knowingly to do that. Mm-hmm. If you don't know it, you should be trying to seek it.

[19 : 12] But if you don't know it, if you don't know it, you can't do anything about it. Right. I agree. A lot of people will get upset. Well, I was in the hospital, I was here, I was visiting, the pastor never came to visit me.

Did anybody tell the pastor you were there? Did anybody tell the pastor you were going to go through this or do this and stuff? You know, I'm speaking from experience here, you know.

You know, so, you know, let him know. I will be there. But, you got to let him know. Good point. So, if we're going to live that kind of life where we're trying to live for Christ, we got to be like Christ, which means we have to die to self.

One of the most familiar verses in the Bible that most Christians know, Romans 12, 1. He says, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, did you present yourself, present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Presenting yourself a living sacrifice. sacrifice. We talked about this a little while ago downstairs, I think, on Wednesday night. And what's the problem with a living sacrifice, Dana? They tend to slither off the altar.

[20 : 35] Yep. A living sacrifice tends to like, you know, it's getting hot here. I think I'll go over there. And that's what we do a lot of times. You know, God, I'm willing to serve you.

I'm willing to do whatever you want. I'm just here to, you know, whatever. And then God starts doing things and he says, wait a minute. It's getting a little tougher than I thought.

It's getting a little harder than I thought. And we tend to take ourselves off the altar. Paul found a remedy for that. 1 Corinthians 15, the very last three words of verse 31 say, I die daily.

Paul says, I'm putting myself out there daily to surrender to Christ. I'm putting myself on that altar daily to be used of him. Every morning when you wake up, maybe the first thing we need to do is have a funeral.

I wake up, hey, I'm alive today still. Okay, God, now it's time for me to die to self today. Use me in the way you want to use me. Galatians, we've been through Galatians here, and it says, Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ.

[21 : 51] Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Christ showed us selflessness. He, how did I have that word? Selfishness denied. He denied himself, took himself to the cross, gave of himself so that we might have eternal life.

it seems like the one thing in our lives that fights every day is a flesh. It doesn't want to die.

It's not like we do it once and forget it. Paul said, for good that I would, I do not. That that I do not, I do. And what a wretched man of mine, he also made it very clear that it's a daily death.

A daily death and resurrection hopefully of the spirit and not to bless. It's not to bless. That's right. Quickly. Oh, Jared. Okay.

[22 : 57] I was talking with another brother in Christ about that very same thing with being a living sacrifice. It really is so often, especially as a believer, you get in one situation where we don't want to sacrifice our feelings or, you know, our comfort zone, I guess, if you will.

God certainly does and I see him doing in my life especially, but putting me in situations like I don't feel comfortable, I don't want to do those things. I think, you know, that really is part of being that living sacrifice and willing to be in the center of God's and what we want to do.

So, the other thing too is, you said, 1 Corinthians, 1531. Yep. Last part of that.

Second thing, very quickly, we deny that selfishness and then service delivered. We deny ourselves so that we can deliver the service of God to others so we can be used of him for others.

you know, self didn't matter to these four men. What they could do for their friend did. That was the key part. It's like, it doesn't matter about us.

[24 : 18] What can we do for him to get him to Jesus? 1 Corinthians 1024. 1 Corinthians 1024. That no man seek his own but every man another's wealth.

Now, you just read that by itself and you go, no man seeketh his own but another man every man another's wealth. So, the key to the Christian life is stealing.

No, that's not what it means. It means we're not looking for ourselves. We're looking to help others advance.

You know, you think about it. You're married. What's your key goal in your marriage? It should be to help your spouse to advance and to go forward and to be better.

So, you're trying to help your spouse to make life better for them. How about your job? My job is there so I can make money and spend it on myself and enjoy life and have the good things of life.

[25 : 23] It's not going to last long, no. Or, is your job saying, you know, I'm here to be a part of this company, to help advance this company, move it forward, try to help my boss be successful in the things that he does?

I'm trying to move people forward. Pastor Jerry in Fort Lauderdale asked us a question. he said, do you work to live or work to give?

Yep. Do you work to live or work to give? And his point was, we work to give. We can't take it with us. You know, we may need it for certain necessities and stuff in life, but for the most part, just help others because they can't take it with you.

need. And it's not just the financial needs that you might see a fellow worker have. It's the spiritual needs that they make.

Yep. Yep. Yeah, so whatever need they have, spiritual, emotional, mental, physical. Yep. Fred? Mm-hmm.

[26 : 53] to see that whatever you're doing is going to further somebody else's life, like I used to work in a body shop. Well, you could spend a fortune on cars, as many people do, but you don't necessarily have to.

You can fix something so it works, so this person can go out and live the rest of his life of that car without being bankrupt. Mm-hmm. Yep. What's the purpose of a car?

To get from point A to point B? That's the purpose. Love it. So it doesn't have to be brand new. It can just be running fine. I was thinking last week, I think it was, I talked about the guy on the ladder, and he starts off from the bottom of the ladder, and then God has a tendency to flip the ladder around.

What's the world's view? I'm going up the ladder, and I'm stepping on people to get there, whereas this attitude is people are heading up the ladder, and I'm behind them, giving them a push.

Go, go, get out of my way, but pushing them up, and what happens? As I push them up, I go up too.

[27 : 59] So. So. I look at it this way. He could be coming down that ladder, because you have to fall, you can put your hand back, put up and hold him, yeah. To keep him from hurting himself on the way down.

That's a good point too. Good. Paul's secret to service was that fact that he says, I die daily.

2 Corinthians 12, 15 says this. 2 Corinthians 12, 15. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.

Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. He says, I'm willing to give myself to help you. I'm willing to give myself so that you can advance and you can go forward and you can know Christ.

But, he says, it seems like the more I do that, the more I love you, the more I put into you, the less I be loved. I remember Pastor Finnamore, I worked with him in Heartland, telling me, he said, he had watched it over and over and over again.

[29 : 08] Couples would come and they would say, our marriage is in trouble, we're going to wind up getting divorced, can you help us? And he would counsel with them and part of his counsel was, I will help you but you have to be in church on Sunday.

Okay, we can do that. They'd show up to church, he would spend time with them during the week, help them out. Come to church next Sunday, he spent time, he would get them until they got to the point where, oh man, things are great in our marriage, things are wonderful, you've just done so much for us, things are so good, I don't think we need this anymore.

We don't need church anymore. And off they would go. And he said, invariably, he said, you would help them and get them to where they wanted to be and then it's like, see ya. And Paul's like, you know, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

You know, we try to help people, we try to take them in the right way, we try to show them things, but we need to get past that. Who are we doing it for? We're doing it to help them, but more importantly, I'm doing it for Christ.

These men, these four men, they were doing it for their friend. They wanted to help their friend, they wanted to do things, but they knew the important thing was getting the friend to Christ. As much as they wanted to do things for him, Christ was the answer.

[30 : 27] And that's where we need to be. We need to get people to Christ. And let's have a word of prayer, because it's already past quarter past. Do you have any followers?