

On Mission with Jesus

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[0 : 00] I'm sorry, I haven't asked anybody, but I'm going to ask Ryan. Do you mind reading? Is that okay?

You've got a voice? Mark 3, verse 7.

Crowds followed Jesus. Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.

He appointed twelve, designating them apostles, that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed.

Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter. James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. To them he gave the name Bonerges, which means son of thunder.

[1 : 35] Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat.

When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, he is out of his mind. And the teachers of the law, who came down from Jerusalem, said, he is possessed by Beelzebub.

By the prince of demons he is driving out demons. So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables. How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand. His end has come.

In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them.

[2 : 42] But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. He is guilty of an eternal sin. He said this because they were saying, he has an evil spirit.

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.

Who are my mother and my brothers, he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.

Sorry, there are some sheets going around.

If anybody wants to take notes, we encourage people to do that. You can either take notes on the back of your new sheet, or there's some headed paper. Somebody mind getting the box of pens?

[3 : 46] I think they're in the cupboard somewhere. Thank you, Yelena. And if you have any questions at the end, we haven't got to the point of interrupting the talk just yet.

But if you really have to, you can put up your hand, and you can interrupt, and I might answer. I might just say, wait until the end afterwards. But all I'm doing is asking and encouraging you to think through what we're talking at, what we're looking at, and to ask questions afterwards, and to think through it together.

So we're looking at Mark's Gospel. Thank you, Yelena. There's pens there. If anybody would like a pen, just put up your hand. And the question that we're going to start with this morning is this, Satan, real or make-believe?

And it's simply this. Do you believe in Satan? That's a big question, isn't it?

Do you believe in Satan? Well, before we answer that, we're going to pray. Why don't we pray? Lord, we thank you for this day.

[5 : 04] We thank you for your help to us so far. And as we read your word, as we look at it together, we still need your help. We need the help of your Holy Spirit to hear what you are saying to us individually and together as a church, that we may understand better who Jesus is, what he has come to do, and what it means to follow him, what it means to be a part of his mission.

So please break into our lives and change our lives, disrupt us, do what you have to do so that we are on board with you and know what it is to follow you your way.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. So do you believe in Satan? Well, if you don't, I suggest that that proves that he does exist and that he is alive and well.

If you don't believe in him, I think that's proof that he does exist. Let me tell you why. C.S. Lewis wrote a book called *The Screwtape Letters*.

Some of you may have read it. It's a collection of letters from a senior devil called Screwtape to an apprentice devil called Wormwood. And Screwtape, the senior devil, his aim is to help Wormwood, this kind of new, inexperienced understudy, to guide a man who they call the patient, their job is to guide the patient, to our father below, Satan, and away from our enemy, who's God.

[6 : 52] And at one point, Wormwood, the younger devil, he asked the senior devil, Screwtape, about their existence, about whether people believe they exist. And here's Screwtape's advice.

He writes, My dear Wormwood, you ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient in ignorance of your own existence. Our policy for the moment is to conceal ourselves.

I do not think you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that devils are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you.

If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that, he therefore cannot believe in you.

You see, we shouldn't be surprised if people don't believe in Satan, because that's part of his tactics. He doesn't want us to believe in him. In fact, the title the Bible gives him is deceiver and father of lies.

[8 : 03] He's a fraud. He's described as the ancient serpent called the devil or Satan who leads the whole world astray. In 1 John 5.19, it tells us there that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

So this is really serious. Because his purpose is, in the words of Screwtape to Wormwood, guide us to the Father below, to Satan, to hell itself.

So it's very serious. And without a doubt, Satan does exist, and his influence is great. Now in Mark's Gospel, Jesus is coming up against Satan time and time again.

Wherever Jesus goes, he seems to be specifically driving out demons and healing those who are possessed by evil spirits. His ministry, so far, can be summed up in chapter 1, verse 39.

Where it says there, he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. That seems to be his priority.

[9 : 26] And Mark, the author, is highlighting these events to show us not only that Satan is real, but to show us that Jesus has come to destroy the work of Satan.

Jesus has come to rescue us from the snare and the grasp of Satan and to bring us into the freedom of his kingdom. Let's see how this happens.

Look at verse 7. Jesus is gaining popularity in his ministry. He's attracting a lot of people and the crowds begin to follow. Verse 7. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake and a large crowd, which was in the west, began to follow.

When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, and Edumea, which was down in the south. And they came from the regions across the Jordan, which was over in the east, and around Tyre and Sidon, which was in the north.

Now, this isn't just geographical information. This is a description for us of the worldwide mission of Jesus, that Jesus came into this world, and he came for people in this world, north, south, east, and west, regardless of their race or religion.

[10 : 54] And his mission for coming into this world, as we'll see, it'll unfold before us, is to rescue people, whoever they are and wherever they come from, from the grasp of Satan.

Verse 9. Because of the crowd, he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.

Now, the scene here, and I want us to try and picture this in our minds, is one of absolute chaos. I don't want you to think of your kind of little cuddly picture of Jesus and people lining up in an orderly queue, sitting beside the lake in a nice, sunny, shiny day.

People here are crowding in and they're pushing and they're shoving. There's no lines here. It's dangerous. People are being crushed in their attempt to touch Jesus.

All these people who are looking for healing, coming from all over the place, crowding in on Jesus. He's being mobbed at every side. And because he's got no limos to climb into, he has to make do with a boat.

[12:10] His disciples are on crowd control. And so Jesus gets into a boat for safety and so that he can speak to the crowds. And amidst all this disorder that's going on, look at verse 11.

In the middle of it all, whenever the evil spirit saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, you are the son of God. So can we picture what's going on here?

We have this aggressive mobbing crowd. There's chaos and there's disorder. And in the middle of it all, we have these demon-possessed people and the evil spirits present amongst the people.

And I think Mark here is stepping back and painting a picture for us to show just how broken the world we live in is. And the huge needs that there are of people.

And behind it all stand Satan and his work. But in all of this chaos and disorder, look at the calming authority of Jesus.

[13:28] Read verse 11 again. Whenever the evil spirit saw him, they fell down before him and they cried out, you are the son of God.

As on other occasions, the demons are one step ahead of everybody else. They've got Jesus' identity right. He is the son of God.

Jesus holds supernatural power and authority. He is God on earth in human form confronting Satan himself.

And look at their response to Jesus. Verse 11, they fell down before him. It's an act of submission. The demons have come up against not just a higher authority, they've come up against the authority, God himself.

And look how they respond to his command, verse 12. He gave them strict orders not to tell who he was. As we saw in the other weeks, he has come primarily to deal with spiritual needs.

[14:44] Physical needs are of concern. But he is concerned to rescue people. And so he comes showing them clearly that yes, Satan is real, but Jesus is the supreme king who is over and above all coming to free those who are under his grasp.

Now with such a huge crowd of people crushing him from every side, and in the middle of all of these crowds he's trying to deal with the people who are demon-possessed, this is obviously a work that Jesus can't do on his own.

So Jesus calls his disciples, his followers, to be part of his mission. He's become so overwhelmed he needs a band of people or as we were singing earlier an army of ordinary people to help him.

Look at verse 13. Jesus went up on a mountainside and he called to him those he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve designating them apostles.

In Genesis, the very first book of the Bible, the very first verse, it reads, in the beginning God made the heavens and the earth.

[16:15] Jesus. And that same idea and that same word is here where it's talking about Jesus making a new community of people.

It literally reads, Jesus made twelve. In other words, these disciples are a new creation, a new kind of people, a new creation for a new beginning of something different that's happening.

And I think it reminds us that we can't make ourselves disciples. We can't make ourselves a follower of Jesus. This is a work that Jesus does in the life of us.

He makes us disciples. He intervenes into our lives. We would never choose to be a disciple or a follower of Jesus unless he first chose us and intervened into our lives and made us a disciple.

So Jesus is forming this new creation, a new band of people, a new community. But this new community is for a purpose. Look at the rest of verse 14.

[17 : 26] That they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. They have been appointed for a mission because that's what apostle means.

Apostle means to commission or to send somebody out with a specific purpose. And we're told what that purpose is in verse 14. They are sent out to preach about Jesus, to talk about the good news of his kingdom coming.

And verse 15 to demonstrate what Jesus came to do, which was to defeat Satan by driving out demons. So very simply, their mission is not something different, it is an extension of the mission of Jesus.

They are to continue to do what Jesus has already started. Preaching was all about calling people into repentance, to submit to Jesus as their king, and the sign that we are to follow Jesus, why should we follow him above everybody else?

Because of his power and authority over Satan. So as the disciples went around preaching, and we'll see they do that in chapter 6, they drove out demons as a sign that Jesus was God's king, and that people must repent and follow him.

[18 : 57] But I don't want us to lose sight of the people that Jesus makes disciples. That was a great song we sang earlier, an army of ordinary people, and Peter says, I'm looking at you, you are ordinary, we're not an army, we don't look like an army, but we are an army if we're followers of Jesus.

But look at how ordinary we are, look at these people. Verse 16, these are the twelve he appointed, Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter, James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John, to them he gave the name Boandres, which means sons of thunder.

Now we don't know everything about these first disciples, but what we do know is very instructive for us. Later on in Acts we read that they were thought of as unschooled ordinary people.

In other words, they didn't quite get to college or university, they didn't do a great leaving, a little bit of sawdust upstairs. They weren't clever, ordinary people.

And then James and John, he tells us what their nickname was, sons of thunder. They were a hot tempered pair. They were always arguing and losing the rag.

[20 : 13] And then of course we know a bit more about Peter, don't we? He disowned Jesus. Always said I stand up for you. When the time came he was an absolute coward, a yellow belly. Reading on, verse 18, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew.

Well, sure we've met Matthew already, haven't we? He was the one in chapter 2, 13, the defrauding embezzler, the tax collector.

The equivalent today is somebody like one of our corrupt, crooked bank managers, and the executives who help themselves to our hard-earned savings. He's in there too.

And then reading on we have Thomas, well, he was a doubter. James, son of Alpheus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot. He was a Che Guevara of his day, a revolutionary.

He terrorised Rome, the occupying forces, not unlike one of our presidential candidates. These are not the kind of people that you would appoint as an elder for your church, are they?

[21 : 26] they're not the kind of people who you would say, let's get them on the mission. They're going to be good. I mean, James and John, they're going to unify everybody, aren't they? And Peter, we can always depend on him.

He'll be running a mile at the first side of trouble. Look at how ordinary, look at how much they fail, look at the kind of people that Jesus has said, I've made you disciples to be a part of my mission. But that is the amazing grace of God, taking ordinary people like you and me, with all our faults and all our failures and all our mess ups, and he makes us disciples.

The church, the body of Christ, is God's new creation, a new community of people, appointed for mission.

And that's what we're called to do. And the crowds of people that were coming to Jesus, he can't do it. And we're in a situation today, in the world, the church in the world, and it's under the control of the devil.

[22 : 42] And he has blinded people's eyes so that they can't see Jesus. They don't want to follow Jesus, they don't see the need to it, because they're all blinded. they think he doesn't exist.

And many people within our community and in our world are under the snare and the grasp of Satan, and he sent us on a mission to release people and to free them.

People like you and me, with all of our mess. people who are going to have an impact on the mission with Jesus.

Well, we can have great confidence in the mission because of what Jesus has accomplished. Look at verse 20. Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat.

When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, he's out of his mind, he's gone a bit loopy, this crowd business has gone to his head.

[23 : 56] The reaction, I think, is not unlike what our reaction would be. They're wanting to take charge of Jesus. In other words, they want to control Jesus.

They want Jesus to do what they want him to do. Not unlike the crowds who want Jesus as a healer. They're trying to control him and to squish him into a box.

But Jesus isn't going to be distracted from his mission. Jesus can't be controlled. We can't control him. In fact, he's out to prove that he has control over Satan himself.

Verse 22, and the teachers of the law, the religious guys, they came down from Jerusalem and said, Jesus is possessed by Beelzebub. By the prince of demons, he is driving out demons. Beelzebub, that's not very common. I don't think anybody's called that, but it's really a reference to Satan. And the religious leaders, they've been watching Jesus, they've recognised who he is, and they see that Jesus has power and authority to perform miracles.

[25 : 12] They've seen him do all the healing, they've seen him do all the pushing out of the demons, but they say the source, the power behind that is Satan.

Rather than see Jesus as God's king who's come to restore and to renew the broken world, they see that Jesus is a servant of Satan. Verse 23, so Jesus called them and he spoke to them in parables.

How can Satan drive out Satan? Don't be so silly. If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

Jesus' point is simple and clear. If Jesus' work is all about driving out Satan, Satan's demons, then how can you say that Jesus is on the side of Satan?

The religious leader's accusation is nonsensical. It's silly. Look at verse 25, if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

[26 : 18] And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand, his end has come. And to state his mission clearly, Jesus explains what he has come to do.

Verse 27, in fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man, then he can rob his house.

Now the image here is the strong man is Satan. He's got a house with captives, but if you want to release those captives, you've got to tie up the strong man and release them.

Or to put it in another way, we could picture it like this, a soldier going in behind enemy lines to free the captive. He goes in, he first overpowers and he conquers the enemy, ties him up and then carries off the captives.

and Jesus is saying, I am that soldier. This is a battle. This is a war. I am the one who has come from heaven.

[27 : 34] I've come into Satan's territory. I've invaded into this world. I have come to defeat the strong man, to tie him up and to release his prisoners.

And Jesus has already proven this as he drives out demons and he commands them to be quiet. But his final and ultimate display of power will come at the cross.

That's where the true battle is going to take place. Of course the cross was seen as a failure. Jesus died on the cross at the hands of people.

It looked like his end was over. But the death of Jesus was God's victory. It was the means by which we can be forgiven and the way in which people are set free.

Let me give you a couple of references. You can just listen or you can follow them. Colossians 2 verse 15 says this, talking about Jesus' cross and his power over evil.

[28 : 36] It says, having disarmed the powers and authority, Satan himself, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

and then in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 14. Since the children, that's us, have flesh and blood just as we're human, Jesus too shared in our humanity.

He came as a man into this world so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. Isn't that amazing what Jesus has come to do? He's been fighting a battle or rather that battle has been fought for us already on the cross.

on the cross as Jesus died it looked like Satan won the war. But the reality is Jesus won the battle. [29 : 51] God Now if we have been appointed for a mission the way we release people and set them free from the grasp and snare of Satan is to tell people the good news about what Jesus has done on the cross.

Jesus has already bound Satan. He's already been tied up. He can't hold people. His power has been restrained. And as we simply tell people the good news about Jesus he sets them free from the kingdom of darkness to bring them into a kingdom of light of hope of forgiveness of freedom of the assurance of eternity to come.

But Jesus isn't finished. He sends a very clear warning for anybody who ignores the work of Jesus and says don't believe you.

Can't be true. Look at verse 28. These are difficult verses and we've got to deal with them. Jesus says I tell you the truth all the sins and blasphemies that slanders of men will be forgiven them. That's good news isn't it? Anything we say and do will be forgiven but whoever slanders against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven.

[31 : 18] He is guilty of an eternal sin of hell itself. Now before we unpack this let me just address our immediate concern because like you I can be guaranteed you probably thought as I thought as I read this what if I have blasphemed what if I slandered against the Holy Spirit I'm never going to be forgiven.

What if I've done that? What if I don't know if I've done it? Well let me put you at ease. The fact that you have worry or concern about it is a sure sign that you have a repentant heart.

So those who don't worry or those who aren't questioning this I think they have much more to be concerned about but if you are concerned about it it is a sign of a repentant heart.

So let me explain. Remember back in chapter one Jesus' baptism. We're told that Jesus was sent by the Father and he was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

So the work of Jesus as Jesus goes about doing his work it is actually the work of the Holy Spirit. the teachers of the law that we met in verse 22 are claiming that Jesus' work isn't the work of the Holy Spirit it's the work of the prince of demons.

[32 : 51] As Jesus himself says in verse 30 they were saying all this because they were saying he has an evil spirit. But to see the work of Satan when it is actually the work of the Holy Spirit is to slander the Holy Spirit.

In other words if we can't distinguish between Jesus and Satan if we can't see the difference between evil and good if we can't differentiate between an evil spirit and the Holy Spirit if we just think it's all the same we're beyond repentance repentance.

We're beyond repentance. If you refuse to see Jesus as the supreme king over Satan if you reject that it is to be guilty of a sin with eternal consequences.

Hell is your only destiny. If you turn your back on Jesus and say he is not supreme he is not king and to turn your back on him completely is a very serious matter.

And let's note who are the people who are most likely to fall into this sin. Surprisingly verse 22 it's the religious people.

[34 : 28] The people who think they're better than everybody else, better than the sinners. They see no need of Jesus. I'm alright Jack.

Those kind of people. They're the ones most likely to fall into this sin. Ones who are full of pride, self-righteous.

people who are on the mission. We've got to take these things seriously. But we're on a mission. Or rather are we on the mission? Because we are either on the mission with Jesus or we are on a mission against Jesus.

We've all got to make our decision about that. Am I on the mission with Jesus or am I on a mission against Jesus? There's no sitting on the fence.

[35 : 26] We're either in one camp or the other. How do I know if I am on the mission with Jesus? Well, look at verse 31. We'll just read these verses quickly.

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Originally, they had come to get Jesus. and they're standing outside and they sent someone in to call Jesus. A crowd was sitting around him and they told him, your mother and your brothers are outside looking for you.

Who are my mother and brothers? Who's my real family? Jesus asked. Then he looked at those who were seated in the circle around him and he said, here are my mother and my brothers.

Here is my true family. Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother. Those who are on the mission with Jesus, those who are in his true family, are those who do his will.

What is his will? We'll go back to chapter 3 verse 14. That they might be with him. that they might be with Jesus.

[36 : 46] People who surround themselves with Jesus, who are there to listen to him, to learn from him, that he might send them out to preach. Who are concerned that people hear the good news and have authority to drive out demons, to tell people what Christ has done, that through Christ people can be released and set free.

they're the people who are on the mission with Jesus. An army of ordinary people called to be part of what Jesus is doing.

It's an amazing privilege and a wonderful call. Make sure you're on the right side. let's pray. Our Father God, we are amazed at who Jesus is with such power and such authority that evil itself falls down before you.

We thank you that we stand today living in the victory of Jesus, that he has overpowered Satan, hell itself, that when we believe and trust the good news, we can be set free and welcomed into an eternal kingdom.

And Father, help us to go this week recognizing that we are failures, we are messy people, ordinary people, made your disciples, but a new creation, a new community, on a mission with Jesus, bringing the good news and pointing others towards Jesus the Savior.

[38 : 52] Help us to get these things right. help us to live for you. And if we have not yet made that decision, help us, make us your disciple.

Ask him that he will make him yours. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing.

We're going to sing.