

# The Compassionate King

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[ 0 : 00 ] Lord, we ask that you would bless us, bless our minds, bless our ears, bless our hearts, so that we may hear you and understand, and that our hearts will be turned towards you.

Lord, we thank you for this gospel reading. And Lord, we ask that you would meet us this morning, that we would encounter the living God through your word.

In Jesus' mighty name, amen. So I've been listening to the Revolutions podcast for some time now. I don't know if anybody's listened to this podcast. It's excellent.

It's this guy named Mike Duncan who started out with a podcast on the history of Rome, and somehow it just snowballed into a career. And he is actually just wrapping up season 10 of 10 seasons on various revolutions.

So he started with the English Revolution. He's finishing on the Russian Revolution. So I've listened to like four seasons. I'm tracking with him for this Russian Revolution.

[ 1 : 07 ] And it seems like the most common thread in all of this, I mean, apart from there actually being a revolution in each season, because that's what the podcast is about, is that leaders are really bad at leading.

They are. And they lead in such a way that never seems to put their people first, but it seems to lead in such a way to make their coffers shine a bit more brightly with more gold, or expand their land, to tax people in such a way that leaves them destitute, to have this big ego trip, to conquer the world, and it's at the expense of just regular people who are just trying to live a regular life.

Appreciate that, guys. And you know, these leaders, they don't show compassion to their people. They seem to show contempt.

Let's keep that in the back of our mind as we continue to explore the ministry of Jesus as we wrap up Mark chapter 1 this week.

So a bit of a recap, if you weren't here, if you forget, no problem. Jesus returns from the wilderness. After Jesus gets baptized, he goes to the wilderness.

[ 2 : 36 ] He returns from the wilderness to the Galilee region, which is kind of like in the north part of what is today Israel. And he begins his ministry by proclaiming the gospel of God. And we learned last week that the gospel isn't just this kind of interesting good news that kind of gets us out of hell and gets us to heaven, but it's actually Jesus himself.

And the implications of the gospel are that the kingdom is at hand, and that the kingdom of God comes against the kingdom of this world, the kingdom of evil.

And we start to see goodness and humanity flourish in the way that God intended, at the core of which is that we get to have this relationship with God once again that was lost in the garden.

So that is a bit of the recap. In our scripture portion this week, after Jesus calls his first disciples, we start to see a number of miracles that happen.

And they're done in rapid fire succession. In fact, from this section all the way to the beginning of chapter 3, it is a rapid fire of Jesus either healing somebody or doing some kind of miracle or commanding nature in this supernatural way.

[ 3 : 54 ] So in this section, in this section, Jesus casts out a demon, he heals a sick woman, he heals a whole group of people, and then he heals another demon-possessed man before he cures somebody of leprosy.

So it's a very, very quick, intense portion of scripture. And one of the things that helps us to read this portion better is to see what Jesus does and see how people are reacting to him.

So it's really important that we understand what Jesus says, but really Mark is drawing our attention more so to what Jesus does. So the first thing we'll get into this section, starting in verse 21, is we're going to see that Jesus enters a synagogue and he begins to teach.

He is proclaiming the gospel message. So we remember the gospel message that Jesus is proclaiming in verse 14 and 15 in chapter 1. And here Jesus is proclaiming, it's implied that he's proclaiming that gospel message once again.

So, verse 21, it says this, And they, Jesus and his disciples, went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

[ 5 : 14 ] And it's really important that we understand that before all these miracles go down, before all of this incredible supernatural things begin to happen, Jesus, he teaches.

And he is proclaiming the gospel. It's never lost on Jesus. Even though the miracles come, he is there to proclaim the gospel. And he teaches it. He proclaims it.

He preaches it. And we see this again, because in verse 38, Jesus goes away in the early morning to pray. And this is after a bit of time healing people.

And his disciples come to get him. And it seems like his disciples are just wanting to ride this excitement. Like, Jesus is getting notoriety. People are pretty excited about him.

He's doing miracles. His fame is spreading. And they are going to get him, like, let's keep this up. And what does Jesus say in verse 38? Jesus says to his disciples, let us go on to the next town, that I may preach there also.

[ 6 : 21 ] And then a very key bit here. He says, for that is why I came out. Jesus is proclaiming the good news of Christ. The gospel. And that is what he is doing. And his preaching, interestingly, is connected to his divine authority.

That Jesus isn't some Messiah figure that's a bit of a poser. He's not this faith healer, so to speak, that just shows up and does a little abracadabra.

He has authority. And how do we know this? Well, let's go back to verse 21 to 28. Jesus enters the synagogue with his disciples and was teaching. Verse 22.

And they, the people in the synagogue, were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one with authority and not as the scribes. And that's not some kind of hit against the scribes.

It is just saying that this is something they haven't seen. Even the authority and prestige of the top of the religious establishment, Jesus' authority is well above that.

[ 7 : 27 ] And it's interesting that this authority is a divine authority. And Jesus preaches. How do we know that it's some kind of divine authority? Because it's, the people react and they recognize there's some kind of authority, but something else happens.

If you look down in verse 23, And immediately, there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?

Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Jesus' divine authority, his divine proclaiming of the gospel, that God himself has come to make all wrongs right, it doesn't sit well with somebody with an unclean spirit.

That this unclean spirit that is possessing this person has power, has some kind of authority. But it's very clear that the authority pales in comparison to Jesus.

This person who has the demon, the demons cry out, recognizing who Jesus is. Jesus, he shuts them up really quickly. And how does he cast out this demon?

[ 8 : 41 ] Is it this conjuring? Is this kind of reverse hex or some kind of weird magic trick? It's simply speaking.

In verse 25, but Jesus rebukes him, saying, be silent and come out of him. There's no back and forth, there's no kind of swords being drawn. Jesus speaks and it is done.

And the unclean spirit, verse 26, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they, everybody at the synagogue, were all amazed so that they questioned among themselves, saying, what is this?

A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. And at once, his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of the Galilee.

Jesus has this divine authority. He has this spiritual authority, this supernatural authority. The good news of God, of God, who really is God himself, right?

[ 9 : 44 ] The good news is Jesus. Jesus, it establishes the, the byproduct, so to speak, the implications of it, is the establishing of God's kingdom on earth that just comes up against the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of this world.

And it's a no contest affair. It is a, this isn't some kind of cosmic battle between angels and demons like we'd see in some kind of sci-fi or superhero movie.

It's a done deal. It's a no contest at all. It is Jesus speaking, and it is done. So, Jesus is the king who has come to establish his kingdom, and he has divine authority.

And how does he use his divine authority? Again, think back about any kind of history. I mean, I'm thinking of these revolutions that I've been learning about.

how do earthly kings, even the best ones, use their authority? I mean, at best, like, kind of good, like, for the flourishing of people, but really, in some ways, like, they're making sure that they're taken care of.

[10:57] Jesus, in his divine authority, he shows compassion on a troubled soul, a truly troubled soul. he shows compassion to rid this person of an unclean spirit.

He doesn't show contempt to the person. He doesn't say to the person, at least, it's not in Mark's account here, but he doesn't say to the person, what kind of stuff did you get into?

What kind of things were you dabbling in? What kind of issues, you know, do you really have?

What's your past? He doesn't say that. He sees the troubled person, and what does he do?

He has compassion. He has compassion. He doesn't put the person through some kind of purgatory or anything like that. He has compassion.

He doesn't show contempt. Mark wants us to see and know the authority of Jesus and that it is a deeply spiritual one.

[12:00] And here's where I'll pause in the narrative of our section here. And just to talk about something, if you're sitting here and there's a bit of like a question in your brain, a little maybe self-talk going on that's saying like, I don't even believe in some kind of, like it sounds fanciful.

Like this spiritual type of situation, a supernatural type of world. I mean, I'm sure you're not alone. I struggle with some of this stuff as well. For many of us in this post-modern time in Canada, this spiritual world, anybody that's talking about spirituality, it's cool if it's relegated to just, like that's your thing.

Enjoy it. If that kind of helps you to deal with life or it kind of, it reduces anxiety, it gets good. Like engage in that kind of stuff.

It's a very subjective attitude that we have towards spirituality. We recognize that really, in a sense, spirituality, it's kind of, it's kind of reduced to like a therapeutic type of hobby.

Maybe I'm not being too kind, but, and to somehow downplay therapy or some therapeutic thing, I'm not at all. But, we're cool with the spirituality if it's your thing, if it's subjective.

[13:27] But if all of a sudden I start talking about some kind of spirituality that's completely objective and that it is a real reality now, it's a bit of a problem for some folks, for our culture at large.

Like we celebrate, we enjoy Halloween and we put out ghosts and stuff like that if you're, if you celebrate Halloween. But nobody's trying to say, hey listen, like that's a real ghost.

Like there's some kind of real spirituality going on. As a culture, we're not doing that. But I find it very interesting that easily the biggest franchises when it comes to entertainment aren't historical dramas or even rom-coms.

But it is science fiction. It is superhero genres. These larger than life, supernatural characters that go on.

I mean, billions of dollars are spent, I guess were spent before the pandemic at movie theaters.

Now they're spent, you know, with subscriptions to various kind of like Netflix and whatnot.

[14:33] but nevertheless, billions of dollars are spent to enjoy a world that is not this world. And to say, well yeah, I like entertainment.

I think as a culture, there is this desire to, like it, we kind of want it to be real. We kind of want something to, to be real about some kind of fantasy world or sci-fi world.

And I'm not somehow trying to say that like Spider-Man or the Hobbits really exist somewhere. Like, good luck. Not, not saying any of that, but that, it's, it's as if we have this desire for something greater than the physical realm.

that there is some kind of spiritual realm. But that's not all of Canada. There's some people that it's like, they're, they're super into some kind of spirituality where they see everything as, as, there's a boogeyman or a spirit.

And maybe it's not so much folks here. I know that in the Middle East, there's this, there's this thing that, it really flavors almost everything for a huge portion of the population.

[15:46] It's called the Evil Eye. I don't know if you guys have ever heard of the Evil Eye. But the Evil Eye, it's in Judaism, it's in Islam, it's all over North Africa and the Middle East.

And all of a sudden everything is interpreted through a bit of a cosmic battle, some kind of spiritual back and forth. I have family in the Middle East and they'll wear, at least one of them, wears a medallion to ward off the Evil Eye.

Because if the Evil Eye hits you, game over. Like you're going to have to do some hardcore spiritual stuff. And again, I'm not trying to downplay it, but this is a reality for a lot of people. The Bible here doesn't somehow negate a spiritual realm, nor does it talk about it's the Wild West spiritual realm. That there is most certainly a spiritual realm in the scriptures that's talked about in Mark and the rest of the Bible. But make no mistake, God and God alone has authority over everything.

There isn't a 1A and a 1B in the spiritual realm. There is God and there's everything else. And this is a case in point where God, excuse me, there's an unclean spirit that opposes God's will and it's simply Jesus with the authority to say, be gone.

[17:04] Be gone. And it's done. And this is good news because for us, some of the things that plague us are physical conditions.

They are emotional problems. But a lot of it is spiritual. There is spiritual realities where we are struggling and it feels like there is something that is weighing down our life.

That it feels like I am walking through this life through thigh-high mud and I can't figure it out. And the good news is that God is above it all.

Jesus is above it all. And we can come to Him just as we are. And He's not going to have contempt on us. He's going to have compassion on us. And the past is the past.

It is. We can't undo the past. But we go to God, we go to Jesus, trusting that the same Jesus we see here is the same one we're going to encounter.

[18:19] The first week we talked about this, or last week actually, that Jesus, a part of the gospel message is to repent and believe, this ongoing repenting and believing. And that's all we need to do.

We come to God, I am sorry for what I have done, I repent of it, and I'm throwing myself at your mercy. He will not turn you away. The king with authority has compassion, not contempt, on his people.

So Jesus has authority. It's very, very clear in Mark over the spiritual realm. But also, this king, Jesus, is humble.

What do I mean? Three times in this section, and we'll see it in other times in Mark's gospel. Jesus shuts down any kind of good publicity.

He shuts it down. Verse 25, Jesus rebukes the demons, says, be silent and come out. In verse 34, he's healing those who are sick and with various diseases, and he casts out many demons, and he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him.

[19:32] And then in verse 43, after Jesus cleanses the leper, he says, it says, and Jesus sternly charged him. And this, sternly charge him, is a very clean way of saying, like, like, getting in his face.

I think the literal word is like he snorts at him. Like, there's this kind of, like, aggressive streak in Jesus. And he sternly charges this young man, or this man who is cleansed of leprosy, and he said to him, see that you say nothing to anybody, to anyone.

There's a lot of commentators that, they're in fits over why. And there are some that look to undermine the authority of the Bible by saying, see, this is proof that Jesus never considered himself divine.

He never considered himself some kind of Messiah figure. I would push back against that. A number of different reasons. But one of the reasons that I'll bring to your attention I think is absolutely stunning.

Jesus here says, be silent in verse 25. He doesn't permit the demons to speak in verse 34. See that you say nothing to anyone, anyone, anybody, in verse 43.

[20:47] And here, we have in view, Mark has in view, that Jesus is fulfilling the suffering servant person that the prophet Isaiah talks about.

There's four, in Isaiah, there's four sections that talk of this prophecy of this suffering servant that will come. And it's this progressively revealed person, and it kind of culminates in Isaiah 53.

It's a very famous chapter in Isaiah chapter 53. But one thing about this suffering servant who is understood to be the Messiah, who is God himself, is that he is humble.

He is very humble. That he is lowly and he is gentle. So, one suffering servant passage, Isaiah chapter 42, verses 2 and 3, says this, speaking of the servant, he will not cry aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the streets.

Very famous verse here, a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench. He will faithfully bring forth justice. That his suffering servant is gentle and he's humble and he's compassionate.

[ 22 : 07 ] But don't mistake it for weakness. It's not weak. This is a very beautiful picture of a compassionate king. Some of you who have been at church for a while might know that there's a bit of a reckoning happening for some specifically evangelical pastors that have been bullies.

that have pushed people around. That have not been gentle or compassionate. Who have not been humble. This is not the way of God. It is not.

And for whatever reason, we have equated humility and gentleness with weakness. But that's not the case at all. I mean, in each case, Jesus, it's on, when he is telling, be silent, permits him not to speak, say nothing to anybody.

He's doing anything but being weak. He's doing anything complete authority over anything that opposes him. But he is humble and he is weak. What does he do when all of a sudden his popularity grows?

He takes off early in the morning and he prays. We see this in verse 35 and on. And rising very early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus departed and went out to a desolate place and there he prayed.

[ 23 : 24 ] and then his disciples try to get him. Like, listen, we've got to capitalize on this kind of stuff. He is humble. He's compassionate. This is who the king is.

He doesn't have contempt for his people. He has compassion. Jesus becomes a servant of all, ultimately humbling himself to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Isn't it interesting that the king who is above all kings doesn't squeeze his subjects for every last penny they have?

Doesn't exploit them for all of their talents and treasures. What does he do? He lays down his life for them. He thinks of their benefit at the expense of his well-being.

The humble, compassionate king. And this brings us to the last bit. Jesus cleanses a leper and it's remarkable how little subtleties in the text have just a ton of meaning.

[ 24 : 36 ] Jesus heals people that are sick, but for lepers, he cleanses them. What do I mean?

Take a look with me in verse 40. And a leper came to him, and it's not necessarily leprosy, it might be.

There's like something like by this time when Jesus is on the scene, there's something like dozens, maybe even more than that. Different skin conditions that are like under the header leprosy.

And anyways, we'll get into that in a second. Verse 40, And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling, said to him, If you will, you can make me clean. How does Jesus respond?

Move with pity. He stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean. leprosy meant you're done. You are done.

You're outside of the community. You can't be a part of normal society. There are, I mean, we call them leper colonies today. They don't exist in North America.

[ 25 : 33 ] They still exist in parts of the world. They existed in Jesus' day. And to be a leper meant to say goodbye to your family, meant to say goodbye to a life of work and the dignity that comes with it.

And if you were to come into a town, you had to declare it, shouting it, and people would flee. So this leper comes up to Jesus. He risks soiling Jesus.

How does Jesus respond? He turns to him, it says, and he is moved with pity. He stretched out his hand and he touched him. He touched him. The untouchable gets touched.

And it doesn't say that he had pity, but he was like, all right, he girded up his loins, so to speak, and kind of took a big, deep, courageous breath and touched him. He had pity. The king had compassion and not contempt.

Compassion and not contempt. Four times in this section verses 40 to 45, it says, it talks about cleansing.

[ 26 : 47 ] Mark wants us to make no mistake that Jesus didn't just do, again, some abracadabra. He cleansed somebody who couldn't be cleansed. this picture of uncleanliness and Jesus touching it and restoring it.

It is such a big picture for this poor man, but it's a fantastic picture for us. I said earlier, the past is the past, but the past might not be the past for some of you folks.

And some of the past, I shouldn't say some of you folks as if it's not me too, it fully is me. The past isn't just the past. The past is, it's a hundred pound weighted vest that I'm trying to walk around with day after day.

Maybe it's heavier for you, maybe it's lighter. You've done things that you're not too proud of. You're ashamed of certain things.

You feel unclean. You do different things to make yourself feel clean and it works for maybe a bit, I don't know. I don't know what it is you do that makes you feel alright and good about yourself and I don't mean that flippantly.

[ 28 : 01 ] I genuinely mean it. But in the end, that uncleanliness comes. Jesus touches the leper and he wants to do the same to us. To restore us. The past can't be dealt with.

This leper couldn't do a thing about it. Jesus again doesn't say, listen, what did you do to become a leper? Like, why would you ever hang out with other lepers or I don't know what it would be.

It just says that he's moved with pity and he touches him. He restores him. The leprosy leaves him. There's great hope for the soul that feels unclean.

There's great hope. And that hope isn't for tomorrow or the next day. It's for now. Jesus doesn't say to the leper, listen, go through the whole ritual cleansing thing.

He heals him on the spot. And the man isn't partially restored. He's fully restored. And for us, maybe that full restoration is a bit of a process. Because unlike leprosy that just falls off miraculously, some of the inside leprosy just takes time.

[ 29 : 13 ] Again, why in verse 14 when Jesus says, he proclaims the gospel and he says to repent and believe, it's this ongoing belief because we forget.

So sometimes it is a process. Oftentimes it's a process. But we, again, can be sure that the Jesus we see here is the Jesus that we interact with now. He hasn't changed.

The story wraps up in verse 45 and this is where I'll wrap it up. It says, but the now-cleansed leper went out and began to talk freely about his cleansing and to spread the news so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town but was out in desolate places and people were coming to him from every quarter.

So the reason why Jesus had to go out, his popularity was, it was, it was just growing and for whatever reason he had to go out and people were coming to see him.

That's, like, that's, that's the simple reading, the literal reading of what's happening. But the way Mark positions that is that right on the heels of Jesus cleansing this leper, the leper goes into the town and Jesus goes outside of the town.

[ 30 : 29 ] It's as if Jesus switches places with the leper. He goes to the desolate places, he goes to the wilderness, the place where he can't engage with the community and again, Jesus does eventually go into the town so I'm not trying to make a huge thing out of this but the way Mark has positioned it, he is putting breadcrumbs out for us because we're starting to see who this Messiah is.

That he doesn't just work miracles, he takes on our fate and gives us his. He cleans us and he becomes unclean.

He takes our sin away from us and, and so we are made righteous and, and that sin rests on him and we're starting to see, Mark is painting this picture and we're starting to see of just little bits of who this Messiah is and what he's come to do.

And ultimately, we will understand who the Son of God is at the cross where Jesus dies not for his own sins but for your sin, for my sin.

And we start to see this beautiful picture of who this incredible King is. Jesus has all authority and yet he is humble and lowly. He's compassionate and does not show contempt and he will cleanse you.

[ 31 : 47 ] He will. It's a promise, not my promise. It's his. He will cleanse you if you only cry out to him. Have mercy upon me. You can cleanse me if you will. Why don't we stand and pray, stretch out and then we'll get into a time of intercession.

Lord God, we thank you that your word is rich. It is very rich and we thank you for your Son who has all authority over everything and that the battle is already won.

It's evil, can't hold a candle to your Son. And yet, your Son, he doesn't flex his authority at our expense but instead he is compassionate, that he is lowly and humble and yet almighty.

Lord, we ask that you would help us to not try to perfume the leprosy, so to speak, to hide the stench but instead we will go to your blessed Son and ask for his wonderful healing touch.

Lord, for us, Lord, help us to grow in our faith. If anybody here, Lord, has not quite put their faith and hope and trust in you, Lord, will you please draw them to yourself and that they will simply repent and believe, throw themselves at your feet.

[ 33 : 13 ] In Jesus' name, Amen.