

Priorities

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[0:00] If you've got your Bibles, go ahead and open them up to the Gospel of Mark chapter 1. We'll be finishing up this chapter today.

In the Gospel of Mark, then there are chapters.

A lot more. And they all seem to be front-loaded towards the beginning of the book. In fact, in this section, we're going to find healing of a mother-in-law, healing of a crowd, healing of the many, and healing of a leper.

I mean, boom, boom, boom, boom. And it's all prepping us for next week when we're going to be taking a look at another story about healing. So today we're going to really lay a foundation, put some groundwork in, and hopefully it'll be good.

Mark chapter 1, beginning in verse 29 through the end of the chapter. And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.

[1:19] Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons.

And he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place.

And there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, Everyone is looking for you. And he said to them, Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.

And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling, said to him, If you will, you can make me clean.

[2:35] Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once and said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priests, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded for a proof to them.

But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread 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.

Excuse me. Now, I could spend time talking about various things, like how Jesus went out in the morning to a desert place and prayed. We could talk about that. We could talk about the fact that Jesus touched the leper and healed him.

And the significance of that, I mean, is just huge. We could do all that. But what I want to do today is I want to take a look at this healing.

[3:55] And as we talk about it, I want to really focus on this, that no matter what's going on in your life, no matter what's happening, that we need to put God first in our lives.

That is the number one thing, is God first in your life. Now, let's talk about this for a second.

We need to start with a couple of verses. I've got them out here. I'm going to read them. You've got them written down on your handout.

In Matthew 6, verse 31 through 33, it says, Therefore, do not be anxious about anything, saying, What shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear?

For the Gentiles seek after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God. And that's really where we need to start with.

[5:07] If we turn to Colossians 3, verse 1, I think we talked about this one a little bit on Bible study.

It says, If then you've been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Romans 8, verses 4 through 6.

In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, it's talking about God had sent His Son. In the likeness of sinful flesh and forced sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.

In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

To set the mind on flesh is death, but to set the mind on Spirit is life and peace. We can go to 1 John. I know I'm flashing through these.

[6:16] Don't worry about it. You've got them there. You can read them again. Chapter 2, verses 15 through 17. It says this, Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer.

I'm in chapter 3. That is the wrong chapter. Let's try chapter 2, verse 15 through 17. Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride of life, is not from the Father, but from the world. The world is passing away along with its desires.

But whoever does the will of the Father abides forever. My friends, we need to have God first in our life. And that's not the way it is for many people.

Especially when we're talking about sickness and disease. Now, let's be honest. It's not fun to be sick, is it? Can I get an amen on that? The last couple of weeks have been absolutely miserable.

[7:24] You know, I'm getting a lot better. And now I only hack up along every time I go from vertical, you know, and I bend a little bit and everything gets bent. But I can stand upright and it's usually pretty good.

But being sick is not fun. We need to talk a little bit about the origin of sickness and disease. Genesis 1, verse 31.

Let's go ahead and turn there. God has finished all of His creative works. You know, He created the universe.

He created light. He separated the waters. He caused the grass. He caused the fish and the birds. He caused the animals. Everything is done being created.

And this is what God says. God saw everything that He had made. And behold, it was very good. Very good.

[8:22] And I have news for you. Last week, as I was barely able to breathe because of the congestion in my lungs, I could not say it was even approaching good.

It stunk to high heaven. And I know you guys know what I'm talking about because we've all been sick before, right? The idea of being very good eliminates the idea of sickness, disease, and any of that.

There was nothing wrong with creation. Everything that God created was very good. But then woman showed up and man tried to impress her and it just went bad, right?

Turn over to Genesis chapter 3 and we've got the story of the serpent deceiving Eve, Adam not being deceived but choosing sin knowingly, and God bringing the hammer.

And if we take a look at verse 17 in chapter 3, we read this. To Adam, he said, Because you've listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it.

[9:35] Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you.

And you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread. Till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken.

For you are dust. And to dust you shall return. Sin and corruption entered God's very good creation. And because of that, sickness, disease, misery, they find their place in our daily lives now.

It's not the way God created it. And so when Jesus shows up in Galilee, and He sees all this sickness and He heals it, it's because He's taking people who are not good at all, and He's restoring

them.

[10:41] It's a thing of beauty. But I want to... You're going to have to turn your page over and write this on the back, but this is one of the important things I'm going to say today.

All of creation is not subject to the laws of nature. Rather, all of nature is subject to the Word of God.

All creation is subject not to the laws of nature, but to the Word of God. If you turn to 2 Peter 3, this is important, because we're talking about where does sickness and disease come from.

There are people that are called naturalists, and we take biblical creative belief, and on the other side you have these naturalists.

These naturalists believe that nature, and the way things are, and you follow the laws of physics and all that. No. When I say all creation is not subject to the laws of nature, rather, all creation is subject to the Word of God, the idea is, who has sovereignty?

[12:06] Gravity does not have sovereignty over God. God is sovereign, and it is by His Word. Look at 2 Peter.

I'm sorry. 2 Peter 3, verse 1. I'm in 1 Peter. Turn the page. That looks better.

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

They will say, where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. That's the idea of naturalism, that the laws of nature reign supreme.

They always have and they always will. And what does the Word of God say? Verse 5. They deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the Word of God.

[13:28] Not some natural process, not some accidental collision of atoms, not the result of some big space explosion, but because God said.

Not only that, look what it says. Let's see. By the Word of God, verse 6. God spoke and the flood happened.

Verse 7. By the same Word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Who has sovereignty over all of creation? Is it nature or is it God? It is God. It is by His Word that all things exist.

That all things flow. That all things work. It's not because there's a set system that governs everything.

[14:41] You guys remember when Jesus was a little peckish on the road to Jerusalem? And He saw a fig tree and He went up to the fig tree and there were no figs on the fig tree because it wasn't the season of figs?

And what did Jesus do? Did Jesus go, I forgot it's not the season of figs. Or did He say, I am the God who spoke all things into being.

All of creation is to be subject and honor Me. And you, fig tree, failed. Be cursed. It's not the laws of the seasons.

It is God the Creator. Where does disease and sickness come from? It comes because man chose to violate the Word of God.

What is the teaching? What is the implication of this teaching? We are not related to monkeys. We are not the result of evolution.

[15:50] We are God's special creation, created in His image, according to His Word, for His purpose. Sickness and disease, which makes our life miserable at times, is not the result of natural actions.

Sickness and disease is the result of sin. Have I beat that drum hard enough? I can go on. I'll move forward.

I can come back to it. I probably will. So we've got the origin of sickness and disease. And now I want to talk about the blessing of sickness, the blessing of disease, and the blessing of death.

That ought to be an interesting conversation. Well, let's take a look at this. If you're still in 2 Peter, I want you to turn over to 3 John.

It should be just a couple of pages to your right. Because as I was doing my sermon prep and as I was studying, I came across what you would call a prosperity gospel preacher.

[17:05] You guys know what prosperity gospel is? Prosperity gospel is the health and wealth. You know, God wants you to be happy, healthy, and wealthy. And if you're sick, it's because you're a sinner, right?

Send money to me and I'll help pray for you and you'll be rich. You're better looking. And that's prosperity gospel. Benny Hinn, what's the...

Joel Osteen. Yeah, he's a big one for that. Woo! If you like Joel Osteen, I'm sorry. He's preaching a false gospel. Anyways, this prosperity gospel preacher based his entire theology on 3 John 1, the only chapter, verse 2, which says, Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health.

And that's where he stopped. In fact, he read it out of the King James. And if you've got the King James, it says, Above all things, I pray that you would be healthy and that you would be wealthy. And he went on to build this entire theology on this one verse. And he's absolutely misusing it. Because the verse didn't stop there.

[18:28] The verse continues on. He says, Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health as it goes well with your soul. There's a condition there.

It's the condition of your heart. But we'll go on. The false teachers use this verse to say that if there's anything less than stellar in your life, you are not right with God and you need to repent. That kind of stands in opposition to much of the Word of God. Like, let's take a look at Hebrews chapter 11, shall we? Let's talk about some of the spiritual heroes of old.

In Hebrews chapter 11, the hall of fame of faith, let's read verses 13 through 16. Talking about the forefathers of the faith, it says, These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeting them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they'd been thinking about the land from which they had gone out, they would have had the opportunity to return.

[19:58] But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city.

If we skip over to verse 36, others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment.

That's the exact opposite of what the health and wealth preachers want you to hear. They think if you're doing any of that, you're doing it wrong. But what does the Word of God say? They were stoned.

They were sawn in two. They were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy.

Whoa. Wandering about in deserts and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. All of these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised.

[21:10] Did you get that? Look, there are people out there, these false teachers, who say that if your life is not perfect, if you don't have a fat wallet, if you're not healthy and good looking, then you're doing something wrong and you're out of God's and you need to listen to them and follow them.

That's not what the Word of God says. The Word of God says that these people were commended by their faith and yet they were destitute. They were attacked.

They were... They had hard things in their life. But they had the approval of God. Take a look in Psalms 119.

After I said... After I put David's name on there, I'm like, I'm not exactly certain David wrote it, but David wrote a lot of the book of Psalms, so if I got that wrong, please forgive me.

Psalms 119. I want to take a look at verses 67 and 71. Psalms 119, verse 67.

[22:25] This is what we read. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep your Word. Verse 71.

It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. That is the exact opposite of these people who are saying, you've got to be happy, healthy, and wealthy.

God says, look, here's hardship in your life. Use it to remind yourself to turn to me. When you go through something hard, it could just very well be God is trying to draw you to himself.

In fact, in Romans 8, 28, what does it say? All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

All things includes the fact that for three weeks, I've been hacking up lungs every other time I turned around. All things include the fact that my bank is not as fat as I would like it to be.

[23 : 49] All things include the fact that Dick harasses me just because I went to McDonald's. Right? No.

That's not one of the blessings from God. God promises us that all things work together for good. I wrote this down.

While God does use hard times to teach us, He also uses hard times to show us off.

When we go through difficult times, it could be, as the psalmist said, I was going astray until my life fell apart and then I thought, oh yeah, God.

But on the other side is Job. Do you know what God did with Job? God took His servant and He held him up and He said, go ahead, take your best shot.

[24 : 58] God, this is my servant who honors me in His life. And He held him up for everybody to see. And they beat the snot out of Him. Took all His money, took all of His children, took all of His wealth, took all of His health, and left Him sitting in a pile of scabs picking at Himself with broken pottery.

And all His friends came over and said, you're a miserable wreck. Why don't you get right with God? Ask for forgiveness. But what was God saying? This is Job.

He's honorable. Look at Him. Even in the worst circumstances, He has not said one word against me. Now, we all know the story that Job was like, hey God, what's going on?

And God spoke to him. But sometimes God uses hard, bitter things in our life to draw us back to Him. And other times He uses hard, bitter things to show off faith.

to a world that needs to see it. Sickness, disease, death, these aren't signs of God's disfavor.

[26 : 12] But they are opportunities for us to live before Him in an honorable way. I want to talk about the danger of the easy road.

You probably have friends like this too, but one of my really close high school friends, that dude was born with a silver spoon. You know what I mean? He has Midas touch.

It doesn't matter what he does. He gets it right. He does it easy. It looks like he's a pro. I'm not talking about you. You're the other high school...

No. I read the book. I read the book that had been assigned in our English class.

On the bus, he goes, hey, what was the book about? I told him. On the bus, he wrote his report. I had taken three days to write mine. I got a C, he got an A, and he never cracked the book.

[27 : 16] Townley. Great guy. Great guy. Never in my life have I walked the easy road.

But you know, people, that everything just turns golden in their way, right? Take a look at this. Back in Mark chapter 1. I want you to see something.

In Mark chapter 1, Jesus shows up at Simon's house, and his mother-in-law is ill, and Jesus heals her, and what does she do?

She gets up and starts serving him. She's ill. She can't do anything. Jesus comes in, heals her. She gets up and immediately begins to serve.

I want to compare that to the leper because when I read the story of the leper, verse 40, the leper comes to Jesus imploring him and kneeling, said to him, if you will, you can make me clean.

[28 : 34] So far, so good, right? He goes to the master. He humbles himself before. If you can, you will make me, you can heal me. Moved with pity, he, Jesus, stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean.

First of all, just touching the leper is amazing. When I taught public high school, one of the things that they said is don't ever touch your students.

Don't ever touch your students. Don't ever. You go to jail. Man, I hugged my students. I touched my students. I loved all my students. They're working on a math problem. I come up, I put my hand on them.

I encourage them. They're having a bad day. I gave them a hug. They're having a really bad day. I gave them chocolate. But there is something about the physical touch that communicates at a different level.

That's why they didn't want to say, eh, no, no. Jesus touched the leper and healed him. Verse 42, immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean.

[29 : 42] Now, you've got to understand he lived under the Mosaic law. Under the Mosaic law, the leprosy had rules. Not supposed to hang around, not supposed to be, not supposed to be touched. But once you got cleaned, there was a certain thing that you were supposed to do to go get reintroduced back into society.

You had to go show it to the priest. You'd get locked in a room for a while and come back. The priest would look at you again. Okay, put you back in there, come out. And then you could be introduced into society having been cleansed.

But look what this guy does. Verse 43, Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once and said to him, see that you say nothing to anyone but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded.

I will be healed. Now, go get spiritually straight. Go take care of this with the priest. Don't say nothing to anybody.

Go to the priest and do what Moses commanded. Pretty straightforward, right? Not a lot to miss on that one. Shut up. Go to the priest.

[30 : 58] What's the first word of verse 45? God gives him a very clear, clean command, but he went out and began to talk freely about it.

Peter's mother-in-law got up and served the Lord. He went out, quite honestly, made a big deal about getting healed.

Look at me! Look at me! Look at me! Not serving the Lord. When life is easy, faith is hard.

How difficult was for that leper to get healed? He just went and asked Jesus, right? Right? Matthew 19, 23 through 24.

How difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. When life is easy, faith is hard. James 2, verse 5.

[32 : 22] It is the poor in this world that God has designated to be rich in faith. Because hardship brings us before the Lord. When we endure difficult days, we learn to trust in God.

If you're having a hard time, if things aren't easy for you, I get it. It's not fun. Don't get me wrong. But it's a blessing that teaches you to trust in God.

It gives you an opportunity to rest in the Lord. Don't get me wrong. I would love to find the winning Mega Millions lottery ticket in my stocking at Christmas time.

I've got nothing against that. But boy, when things are too easy. I really like what Augur has to say in Proverbs chapter 30.

This is really one of my favorite verses. Not for any deep spiritual, but I just think this is an incredible passage.

[33 : 38] In the words of Augur, chapter 30, verse 8 and 9. Remove far from me falsehood and lying. Give me neither poverty nor riches.

Feed me with the food that is needful for me. Lest I be full and deny you and say, who is the Lord? Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of God.

Don't give me too much, God. Don't give me too little. Let me walk before you. Yeah. All right.

The proper way to look at 3 John chapter 2, or chapter 1, verse 2. I pray earnestly that you would be healthy and the idea is as your soul prospers.

Look, it isn't a prayer that you be fat, healthy, and wealthy. It's a prayer that your soul would be right with God.

[34 : 52] And that as your soul is right with God, He would bless you. A lot of this that we're talking about today.

Jesus came and spent a lot of time healing people. But getting healed by God wasn't proof or wasn't it didn't lead to instant spiritual exaltation.

It didn't mean that you were better. It means that He had pity on you. It means that He cared. The question isn't what's your health?

The question is what's your heart? When you look into God's Word, are you a servant like Peter's mother-in-law?

Or are you serving yourself like the leper? God's mother-in-law? That's what we have to face. That's the challenge that is before us. My friends, I would be just thrilled to death if you were all perfectly healthy, had wealth to make Elon blush, that if everything in your life was a bed of roses, that would be great if your soul prospered.

[36 : 26] I would rather see you misery. I'd rather see you in the muck. I would much for my own self have to fight every step of every day as long as I was humble before the Lord.

We read these stories and by stories these are actual historical events that occurred that have been recorded for us in the Word of God. we read about the healing of the multitudes.

We read about the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. We read about the healing of the leper. But the question is, what is the condition of our heart?

And only you can answer that. But as we wrap this up as we pray, I pray that your heart is as humble and earnest as Peter's mother-in-law.

And that you see the opportunity before you to serve the Lord. Let's pray.