

PM Philippians 3:10 The power of His resurrection

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[0 : 00] Mark, Chapter 8. The Gospel of Mark, Chapter 8. This should be on page 1017 in the few Bibles.

Mark, Chapter 8. And we will begin our reading from verse 27. And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi.

And on the way he asked his disciples, Who do people say that I am? And they told him, John the Baptist, and others say Elijah, and others one of the prophets.

And he asked them, But who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, You're the Christ. And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, Get behind me, Satan, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.

[1 : 31] And calling the crowd to him, with his disciples, he said to them, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, often will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

[3 : 00] Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God.

And glory in Christ Jesus, I put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has a reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish. In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.

[4 : 14] The righteousness from God that depends on faith. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

So as some of you may know that prior to the pandemic, for my work I used to travel abroad very frequently.

And of course the world is a very different place than it was a few years ago, and travel is not quite back to what it was. But during this time there was one particular memorable occasion where I travelled to a particular university on the continent, where some PhD and post-doc students were having difficulties with their lasers in their main experiment.

And so I was tasked with going to replace some of this equipment and get them going again. And it was very, very important to them because the very next day that country's Minister of Science was going to be going and looking at their experiment, and he was going to be deciding whether or not they were going to get funding.

So you can see that they were going to be quite stressed, that things weren't working as they expected. Because the new experiment that they'd set up was problematic.

[5 : 47] So I went with some new equipment, which was supplied by a different company, and the equipment that I brought was actually, shall we say, kaput. It was broken, so it did not work at all.

And so this was distressing because not only was their experiment broken, but the new equipment that they'd just bought was also broken. And so they were planning on being up all night to get their experiment up and running for the demonstration the next day.

But they were kind of, they didn't know what to do, so they called their professor. A man who was quite formidable. He's published articles in Nature and various other journals, so he's quite a well-known professor.

And he entered the lab, and when he entered the lab, people were following him with cameras, which was slightly odd. And he said to me, don't worry about the cameras. So I tried to ignore them. After which we then had quite an uncomfortable and rather stressful conversation, in which he reiterated to me with a very outstretched finger that the demonstration must take place.

[6 : 57] So eventually we came up with a game plan. We stripped out some equipment from his less important experiments, and we put it in the other more important experiment, and we got everything working again.

Now a couple of months later, one of my colleagues pulls me over to a computer, someone who was aware of the story and the situation, and he shows me this picture. And this picture is myself and the professor with an outstretched finger from that very difficult conversation.

And the caption just said, Learning quantum physics, come and learn what the professor has to say about future developments. And we laughed together, because we knew that someone must have misinterpreted this picture when they were looking through a catalogue of images.

They see a picture of a man pointing his finger. But if he really knew why he was pointing that finger at me, then perhaps they would have selected a different image for their promotional poster.

This illustrates the point that as human beings we have very limited knowledge. We rely on our experience, or what others have told us, and it's very easy for us to misinterpret a situation.

[8 : 11] And there are some things that are worth knowing, and other things which are not. In this case, it's just a picture. The only people who know about the situation are myself and the professor. So it doesn't really matter about what the picture is subsequently used for.

So there are some things that are worth knowing, and other things, not so much. So what our text this morning seeks to address in the book of Philippians is what the Apostle Paul calls the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus.

That knowing Jesus is the most important thing in our lives. And so this morning we're going to explore Philippians chapter 3 and verse 8, in which we're going to think about what does it mean to know Jesus, where do we begin, and what is it about knowing Jesus that is so surpassing?

So, the first thing we want to look at, which we want to explore in terms of knowing Jesus, that is so surpassing in its worth, what it makes worldwide so excellent to know Jesus.

And the first thing we want to think about is that knowing Jesus, this knowledge, this relationship we have with Jesus has been bought for us or has been purchased for us.

[9 : 43] When we come to know Jesus, when we've put our faith and trust in Him, it's important to recognize that we were not the first to act. We are a responder to Jesus.

He is the initiator. We're not the one who takes the first step. God is the author of our salvation. It was Jesus who's taken the initiative.

He has taken the first step towards us because it was Jesus who first loved us. 1 John 4 and 19. We love because He first loved us.

While we didn't love Him, He loved us. And when we ignored God, God took action. And sometimes when we think about knowing God or knowing Jesus, it can seem quite improbable that we as human beings can even speak of such a thing as claiming to know God.

And from the secular point of view, such a religious claim can even be cringeworthy. And so how is it that we as very small, finite human beings in such a large universe can claim to know God?

[11 : 03] One thing that we learn in astronomy, and it continues to demonstrate to us, is that not only did God create an incredibly beautiful universe, but one that is also unimaginably large.

Where we have powerful telescopes which give us images of various astronomical features, such as nebulae, which are like stars, but rather than being compacted into one solid unit, they're spread across, and they're brightly coloured, and they can be 10,000 times the size of our own sun.

And so when we look at the Bible and we see King David, he says that in Psalm 8, When I consider your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

So this is a sentiment that's expressed by the psalmist in scripture, but the radical claim that the Christian makes is that the creator of the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the galaxies, the nebulae, that not only does he care about us, but that he has made himself known to us.

We cannot put God under the microscope, we cannot use our own experience to find out who God is. The prophet Isaiah says, To whom will you liken God?

[12 : 36] Or what likeness is there to compare to him? God who has no beginning or no end, he is infinite, eternal, and unchanging. How is it that we can know him?

The words that we even use to describe him are weak to capture what we mean. We see he is infinite, or we see he is not finite, and we see he is eternal, that is to just say he is not temporal. We see he is unchanging, that is to say he doesn't change. So how can we know such a being who created this vast universe within which exists complex biological machines like human beings, or microorganisms, or viruses?

We may not be able to stand above God and put him under a microscope and work out what kind of being he is to study him, but we can stand under God because God is the one who starts communicating with us.

Paul tells us earlier in the Philippians, the book of Philippians, when teaching of the theme of humility, in Philippians chapter 2, he says that Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

[14 : 02] And so how is it that God communicates with us? He gives us Jesus. Someone who is truly human, he comes to us in humility, Jesus steps down from heaven, and he comes down to our level, the human level, the level in which we experience pain, suffering, sickness, and sin.

He descends, condescends to us, to our level. So when we want to know what God the Father is like, we can look to his son, Jesus, because Jesus is God in the flesh.

So when we claim, when we make the claim that we know what God is like, this radical claim, we can do so in confidence because we have Jesus. Because he comes to us in love.

In Romans 5.8, Paul says that God shows his love for us in that while we were yet still sinners, Christ died for us.

So Jesus steps down from heaven in glory with a mission to seek out disciples. Jesus loves the unlovely.

[15 : 15] There wasn't anything in us that made him love us first. There was no standard we had to achieve. There was no behavior which earned his love. We love because he first loved us.

This is one thing that makes knowing Jesus so surpassing because he was the one who first loved us. He steps down to our level. He communicates with us. He gets to know us. And he dies for us. When we continue in Philippians 2, we see that Jesus laid aside his glory, it says, but emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form.

He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Jesus, who was the one who existed in glorious perfection, steps down into our temporal, finite, ever-changing world to die on the cross, in your place, so that your sin, which you have committed, can be forgiven.

Jesus provides this perfect sacrifice so that all of our guilt can be vanquished. The late theologian R.C. Sproul often asked the question of unbelievers, if they were complacent regarding their needs for a Savior, he would ask them the question, what do you do with your guilt?

[16 : 44] And this is a question which can really speak to our hearts, it's a question which can break us, because guilt, as a result of sin, is universally experienced.

We may ignore it, we may desensitize ourselves to it, we may rationalize it, but our guilt is an internal witness that points us to the concrete reality that we stand guilty before God.

We, as human beings, understand right from wrong, and so we experience guilt, and guilt can manifest itself as fear.

Fear that justice does in fact exist in the world and will come to us from God. But Jesus offers us a different way, because Jesus satisfied the justice of God.

By taking our guilt upon himself, he suffered in our place. So when Paul says, the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus is the most important thing in your life, because it concerns your eternal destiny.

[18 : 14] The surpassing worth of knowing Jesus is a relationship that has been purchased for us, and it came at a great cost, because the perfect Son of God died in the place of guilty sinners so that they can be liberated from all sin, guilt, and fear.

So Jesus exchanges this heavenly glory coming to us in humility, and he does it not just so that we can be forgiven, but also so that we can be glorified and lifted from our sin.

In 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9, Paul says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich. Jesus was humiliated, he was brought low, he suffered a cruel death as a result of capital punishment, and yet in this humility, he was born in Galilee, he wasn't born in Jerusalem or in Rome, he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, not in front of conquering armies.

Jesus displays meekness, and this meekness of Jesus is his new glorious majesty, because God does what is unexpected, and he turns human standards and expectations on their heads, because Jesus came to help the impoverished, the sick, and this is the Jesus who we worship, who transformed our expectations, who though we would expect some kind of, some greatness and majesty that reflects our understanding, but he instead shows us that his majesty is in his weakness.

[20 : 11] Another thing that we can consider with respect to this is that Jesus, or that God, opens our eyes and our hearts to receive this knowledge of him, and does awaken in us and desire to know Jesus experientially.

That is, it's not just a knowledge that we have in our heads, it's a knowledge that trusts him, that results in obedience to him. God is the one who acts, he loves us, he demonstrates this love for us by sending his son, and then he opens our blind eyes to see his glory, because God is in the business of dealing with our hearts.

In Ezekiel, the prophet says, and I will give them one heart and a new spirit I will put within them, I will remove their heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh.

And so if you struggle with doubt and lack of faith, come to him. God gives us a new heart ready to receive knowledge of him.

And he does this through the work of the Holy Spirit within us to draw us closer to Jesus. Jesus said of the Spirit, he will guide you in all truth. The Holy Spirit is the teacher of truth.

[21 : 32] And Paul says that the Spirit helps us in our weakness. So when we're in doubt, when we're weak in faith, the Spirit can minister to us, making God's Word alive in our hearts.

and the Spirit helps us to pray, to give us the words to say, and draws us closer to Jesus. So this knowing Jesus is of surpassing worth because we don't do it alone.

God helps us. It was him who first loved us. He makes himself known to us, he reveals himself to us, Jesus sacrifices his perfect life for us, and he opens our eyes to be able to see the glory of Jesus.

And the Spirit helps us in our weakness, teaches us all truth. So knowing Jesus is surpassing because it has been bought for us. So that's point one.

Point two, knowing Jesus is of surpassing worth because it is incompatible. So what do we compare this to?

[22 : 40] Again, it's not just simply a case of knowing Jesus or knowing about Jesus, having some facts about him. There's no uniqueness in having some facts about Jesus.

Cultural Christianity was prevalent in many Western societies for centuries. But the difference and distinction here is to know him personally, to trust him, to turn our lives over to him without worrying about the cost.

to trust him that our obedience to him is in fact for our good. And it's not a burden for us that he wants us to flourish.

His law facilitates this flourishing rather than stifling it. Jesus doesn't want to make our lives dull, but he wants to give us a bigger vision, a bigger purpose in life.

Now in this passage, Paul borrows the language of gain and loss from the words of Jesus. And this is why we read Mark, the Mark passage together.

[23 : 48] And so when we read Mark chapter 8, we see Jesus said, calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul?

So surely when Paul was carrying these words to the Philippians, he had in his mind the words of Jesus. That the greatest thing that any woman or man can do is obey the call of Jesus, deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him.

That to gain every great and good thing this world has to offer in sin is no gain at all, but rather loss of the most important thing which is eternal life of Jesus.

So when Paul says in Philippians 3, verses 7 to 9, But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

[25 : 09] For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him. So when Paul says this, he's reminding us of what he previously thought was gain in his life.

Those things which he valued very highly, he no longer does. He counts them as rubbish or as the authorised version renders this, he counts it as dumb.

Most of us will be familiar with the life of Paul. He goes into some detail here. In the beginning of this chapter there is language and issues which maybe we're not as familiar with.

Paul was a Hebrew, descendant of Abraham. He defends his pedigree. He excelled in obedience to the law. He was a zealot, a fanatic. He was a very religious man, a very moral man, obedient to the law that was given to Moses at Sinai.

But there was a reckoning in his life when he encountered Jesus. And if he were to hold these other things which he previously had, if he was to keep a hold of this obedience to the law, this zealous obedience to the law, this religiosity, if he was to hold on to these things rather than clinging on to Jesus, that would be gain, it would be loss.

[26 : 37] Because knowing Jesus is incomparable compared to all of these other things. Now someone may object, they may say, why is this? Why is it that you say it's incomparable?

And the reply would be that the unsatisfactory nature of inferior substitutes, maybe it's a complicated thing to say, unsatisfactory nature of inferior substitutes.

Is there anything that you could write down on a list which you could truly see was comprehensively and eternally satisfying? And the answer is of course not.

And this comes back to God being perfect in nature, holy, eternal, unchanging, incomprehensible, God is self-sufficient, and we are not.

We are created, we are dependent, we are made by God. There is one day in which we were brought into existence and there will be a day in which we will die. We were created by God for a bigger purpose, and so we should have fellowship with him.

[27 : 47] So when we're close to him, when we go to this source, this infinite source of joy, when we trust him, that is when we flourish.

Because it is that these times which we have fellowship with God, we serve God in our designed purpose to bring glory to God and to enjoy him. And so when we look elsewhere, when we look at other substitutes, when we try and substitute an aspect of something that God can provide in something other than God, it is by definition inferior.

So when we look for pleasure, or if we look for satisfaction in pleasure, or material possessions, or in relationships, or with our work, all of these things may not be bad in and of themselves, but they will not give you what they promise to give, that being lasting contentment.

Because when our appetites and our desires become dominant in our lives, those appetites and desires become an idol, they become our God.

Because in that view, we would make God very small. And in that view, we become enslaved to our own desires and appetites. They become disproportionate in our lives.

[29 : 08] But human beings need big, glorious purposes in our lives, in order to set everything else in their proper place. purpose. So you were made for a glorious purpose, and that purpose was to find our pleasure and satisfaction in God and in knowing Jesus and glorifying him.

And so when we think about this knowing Jesus eternally meeting our needs, we can sometimes doubt that. We think, how is it that Jesus can possibly eternally meet our needs?

And so that's where we can turn to the Gospels and we look at the one miracle of Jesus that is recorded in all four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

And all of them record the feeding of the 5,000. A story which we would tell in Sunday school. Now this story, the writers of the Gospel want us to know that this is a supremely important miracle. Because it shows us that Jesus is full of tender compassion for his disciples. And that he does, in fact, meet their needs. The crowds were hungry and Jesus supplied food from what was very little and he made what was very small into something that was abundant to feed the great crowds of people.

[30 : 46] Nobody went away hungry. No one comes to Jesus and is left empty. That's the message. Because in Jesus, he supplies everything that you would ever need.

He fills our lives with joy and hope. He gives us knowledge and understanding and he liberates us from the power of sin and addiction.

In Jesus, we have true freedom. And when we are in fellowship with him, we find our purpose and we find our true humanity.

humanity. Now one thing that we should probably not overlook and consider when we think about the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus is an issue which is addressed here which concerns the word righteousness.

Righteousness is something that Paul now considers to be gain. Indeed, I count everything as lost because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things in count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes through the law but that which comes through faith in Christ the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

[32 : 13] Paul has set his heart on righteousness and not a righteousness that comes as a result of obedience to God's law but a righteousness that is a gift through faith.

What is righteousness? We don't really say that word in our common vocabulary in our day to day life but Jesus said that righteousness is something which is essential.

He said unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. He said seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

And so righteousness refers to this relationship between God and man and it refers to the straightness of that relationship. A righteous action would be one that conforms to the requirements of that relationship.

We'll think of examples such as the Ten Commandments that we're to worship God alone that we're to have no idols that we're to keep the Sabbath day we're to love our neighbor. Now God is the one who he always keeps the side of the deal and we do not.

[33 : 22] We transgress. We break his law and so there's an injustice to this relationship. And we're the one who we're the guilty party.

Our path becomes crooked and not straight. Our relationship with God is broken. And so what Paul says here is that the righteousness which we should seek this restored fellowship with God, this straight path is not achieved of my own that comes through the law whereby outward observances, keeping God's law, to love God and love your neighbor, as if by keeping those things alone that is somehow sufficient to balance your account.

No amount of good actions on our part can make a crooked path straight. And we know this to be true. God's righteousness but through faith in Jesus we can receive his righteousness, this righteousness from God.

Jesus is the one who makes our crooked path straight. He dwelt with the Father in glory and perfect unity in righteousness. And he came to this earth and he was the only man ever to live a perfect life.

So the death of Jesus satisfied this justice of God against our sin. He corrects the injustice and Jesus gives us this gift of his righteousness so that we can stand before God and when God looks at us he sees Jesus and the work that he has done for us because we know him.

[35 : 04] Because we have faith in him and we trust him. We have this new position before God clothed in the righteousness of Jesus which is not our own but one that comes through faith and nothing can compare to this.

That Jesus the righteous one should die in our place and give us this gift. Now I could go on for many more reasons why knowing Jesus is incomparable in its worth but I think we should maybe move on to some application or just consider just this final point which is the surpassing worth of Jesus ought to shape our lives.

It is impossible for a person who has truly come to know Jesus not to be shaped by it. Not to have like an outward transformation that others can see.

And if everything that I've said up to this point is true then knowing Jesus should be the defining aspect of who we are. it ought to take center stage in our lives and that is what Paul is calling us to hear.

And this is why he's writing to the Philippians later on in Philippians in this chapter in verse 14 he says I press towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

[36 : 28] And so his encouragement to the Philippians is keep going. Keep going. Seek Jesus. seek out knowing him. Experience the power of his resurrection in your lives.

If we have trusted in Jesus then this should have an effect on us that we should want to imitate him. Imitate the manner of his life and how he treated others, how he cared for others, in his attitudes, in his suffering which is something we're going to look at later on this evening.

And so we ought to have this humility that Jesus had, this humility which we briefly looked at in Philippians chapter 2 which though he thought, though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God, something to be grasped, but he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And there may be some things that we have to lose in our lives, things that we must be willing to lose, and there are various examples here, one of those examples is our pride.

We cannot be proud, we should be humble and imitate Christ. We should be striving towards the goal of knowing Jesus, of imitating him.

[37 : 50] This knowledge of Jesus is experiential, it's something that should be lived out, it's not a passive knowledge of facts, but it's something that we entrust our lives to Jesus since he owns us, because he's purchased us.

And so that we should seek every day to live out a higher and bigger purpose, seeking more of God, to know him more, to enjoy him more, to be shaped by him, because it is in knowing God and pursuing knowing God, we become satisfied.

Now perhaps I can preach a sermon like this without referencing the book Knowing God by G.I. Packer, and I said in my introduction that I would say where we begin, so at the end here we're going to say where you begin in knowing Jesus, and G.I. Packer offers four points.

He says, firstly, when we want to know God, we must know about God. So we must first acknowledge, well we first actually acknowledge that we don't know very much about God at all, and those things which we do know about God might not be biblical.

And so when we start on this path of knowing Jesus, we start first by knowing about him, we find out about the life and ministry of Jesus, we should be amazed by his love, we should marvel at his miracles, and we should find out what Jesus is like.

[39 : 13] So we should know about God. Point two, throw yourself on the mercy of God. The temptation, once you find out more about God, when you read the law, when you find out that you don't match up, that you missed the mark, you might just despair that you missed the mark, which is one reaction, or the other reaction could be like Paul, in which you seek to please God by keeping his law.

But as you find out, the harder you peddle, the further from the shore you get. And so what you need to do is throw yourself on the mercy of God to give up and to trust him.

Three, come to Jesus in faith. Faith is a set to the truthfulness of the claims that Jesus made, as well as a concept to him being the Lord and master of your life.

And so we're to commit to him, we're to mark himself out, mark ourselves out as the disciple of Jesus, and we should demonstrate our faith by obeying him through loving those around us and by imitating him.

And lastly, we should become disciples. We should seek to grow as Christians in community, Lord's Day by Lord's Day, we should serve other Christians as best we can in whatever ways that God has gifted us.

[40 : 35] And that may not be very much, it may be very little, but that could be, that is our calling to serve God in the ways that he has gifted us. He's not asking you to go beyond what he has gifted you, but he is asking you to maybe step out of your comfort zone and to serve him in the gifts that he has given you.

And so we're to serve each other and we should become together more like the one who we profess to know. And so the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus is found in the reality that he was the one who first loved us, that he sacrificed himself for us.

It is surpassing because it cannot be compared to anything else. Jesus meets our needs, he gives us abundantly more than we need, and all the other pleasures and good things in our lives find their proper place when we pursue this greater and higher purpose of knowing God.

And he gives us this gift of righteousness so that we can be guiltless on the day of judgment, and he shapes us in his likeness day by day as we serve him in community.

And as someone has said before, just end on these words. Jesus is the path, and Jesus is the goal. Amen.

[41 : 52] May God.