

Jesus authority to bring us back into God's presence forever as his forgiven children

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[0 : 00] Mark chapter 1 verse 40 to chapter 2 verse 12. And a leper came to him, imploring him and kneeling, said to him, If you will, you can make me clean.

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 priest 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 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.

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was home. And many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even at the door.

[1 : 12] And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him.

And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven.

Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, Why do you question these things in your hearts?

Which is easier to say to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven? Or to say, Rise, take up your bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

[2 : 23] He said to the paralytic, I say to you, Rise, pick up your bed and go home. And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.

Good morning, everyone. Thanks, Helen. Let's pray again. Father, we would see Jesus. We would see your Son.

We would see Christ. Please open our eyes, we pray, to see his glory, his majesty, his authority, his identity, his grace, his goodness.

And we ask it in his name. Amen. Well, keep that passage open in front of you. When a tree is diseased and dying, I'm sure you would have seen a dying tree.

There are various obvious indications of this. Leaves turn the wrong colour and then fall off. You're left with a brittle skeleton of a tree.

[3 : 42] But the reality is that at the roots, there's a fungus, a disease that is unseen, less seen, less obvious, that is the root problem, that is the reason that the tree is dying.

It's a bit like that with the world, the Bible says. There's lots that's wrong with the world, there's lots that's wrong with the world, with our lives.

I don't know if you are feeling that at the moment particularly, with our bodies. There's lots that's wrong with the world. These are the leaves.

But there is a root problem. And the root problem is our broken relationship with God. And until that root problem can be sorted out, everything else is like gluing leaves back onto a dying tree.

But what if someone could fix the root problem of what's gone wrong with our world and with our lives? We've got two miracles here, the healing of a leper and the healing of a paralysed man. [5 : 00] And both of them are showing us something about Jesus and what he's come to do that is far greater of far greater consequence simply than healing a terminal skin disease or a body that doesn't work.

Mark is putting on display the authority of this king like none we've ever seen. You see where the section ends, they're amazed and they glorify God and they say, we've never seen anything like this.

Mark has introduced the king, Jesus, in the first few verses. Here is the king of an eternal kingdom. And then in his first section, surprise, surprise, he's put on display authority like none that we've ever seen before or since.

We've seen that Jesus can banish evil and Satan. We've seen that he can lift off suffering. And now finally Mark wants to show us the king who can deal with the root problem, which is our broken relationship with God.

You might put it like this. Jesus has authority to heal our souls as well as our bodies.

[6 : 21] That's the point today. We get these two miracles side by side. And if I, I've actually crossed out the chapter two number in my Bible, slightly naughtily, but you're not, they're not inspired, the numbers they were added later, I think in the 13th century, by a monk of some kind.

And I've put it, I've, I've re-put my two by the, by the verse 13, because I think actually Mark's section begins with, he went out again beside the sea.

You get chapter one, verse 16, passing beside the sea. Chapter two, verse 13, he went out again beside the sea. And so these two miracles he's put together, deliberately.

Why? Well, I think because there are two implications of our sin problem. Sin, by the way, as Ben's been speaking about, the way we've treated God and each other.

There are two implications of our sin problem that the Bible talks about. Number one, sin has made us spiritually unclean. That is massive in the Old Testament.

[7 : 34] If you've ever tried to read through the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament, big swathes of the Old Testament. The problem of sin is that it makes us unclean before God.

But secondly, sin makes us guilty. Unclean and guilty. That is that we face the judgment of God for what we've done. And those two things are slightly different things, with slightly different consequences.

Okay? So to be unclean means that God simply cannot have us anywhere near him, in his holiness and his purity, that we would tarnish his beauty and his purity.

Like the sun, God is fiercely pure and holy. We cannot be in his presence and live. A repeated refrain of the Old Testament, because we're unclean, naturally, by nature.

And therefore, we must be banished from his presence. That's one problem of sin. But to be guilty means that we must face a judgment day that is yet to come, but is terrible.

[8 : 49] Two slightly different sides to the problem of sin. put them together. Well, without a savior from sin, we are lost and destined to be in a broken relationship with God forever.

These two miracles together tell us that Jesus has the authority to bring us back into God's presence forever as his forgiven children.

Well, firstly, to make us clean, and you'll see that in verses 40 to 45. A leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling to him, said to him, kneeling, said to him, if you will, you can make me clean. 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 and show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded for a proof to them.

[10 : 03] This man with leprosy then comes up to Jesus. Can you imagine it? It really happens. There he is and the disciples presumably around, watching, wondering what's going to happen.

This man with leprosy, excluded from God's people and from God's presence. If you were a leper under the Old Testament law, wherever you went in a town, you had to cry out, unclean, unclean. The rabbis dictated that no one must go within 50 metres of a leper. Excluded from God's presence and his people, according to the law.

This leper comes up to Jesus and kneels before him and says, if you will, you can make me clean.

Jesus moved with pity, stretched out his hands, touched him, I will be clean. And at that moment, the leprosy left him. I wonder if you can imagine it, watching from the sidelines.

[11 : 08] God's skin completely healed. Leprosy completely gone. What's going on here? Well, leprosy was God's visual aid so that we can understand what he sees when he looks on the human heart.

Okay, so it's not that God finds deformed skin unclean. It's not that he finds bacteria unclean. But just as we might draw pictures for our children to try to explain to them, to show them something that's hard to grasp, so God has drawn a picture for us and his picture is the leper.

God says, look at the skin of the leper and understand what I see when I look on the human heart. We are lepers of the heart. We are spiritually unclean. That's the point. Leprosy has been God's visual aid to us.

And I think we know this is true deep down by nature. We're not the people that we know we should be. All the things we've said, we've done, we've thought.

[12 : 34] We know it's true. Even our consciences can tell us that. And if even our consciences can tell us that, well, what would we see if we stood in the blazing and pure presence of God?

So by nature, we are spiritually unclean. But, and what is this about? Very simply, the person who comes to Jesus in faith, like this leper, can be cleansed forever, washed, made clean, by his authoritative touch.

And therefore, what's the significance of that? Jesus can bring us back into the presence of God. Into his presence as we were always meant to be.

And no one is too far gone. That's the point. No one is too far gone. Doesn't matter what you've done. You can come to him and be cleansed forever.

He can deal with the filth of our sin, but he can also deal with the guilt of our sin. Do you see the paralytic? That's the point of the paralyzed man. Verse 3, they come to him bringing this paralyzed man to, verse 3.

[14 : 01] They can't get near to Jesus because he's teaching in a house and it's packed. They can't get in through the front door, but in the Mediterranean, they would have houses where you'd have the, you may have seen it, where the steps up to the roof on the outside, a flat roof, so easy enough for them to get up.

And I don't know what they used to dig the hole in the roof, but they must have done something reasonably violent to tear it up. And then they lowered this man into the room at Jesus' feet.

And look what he says, verse 5, when Jesus saw their faith, in other words, when he saw how confident they were that he could do something about this, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven.

And then 2, verse 10, but that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. This man was forgiven before God forever by the declaration of Jesus.

No more guilt, nothing to pay on judgment day. So by nature, we are filthy before God, but Jesus can make us clean forever.

[15 : 23] By nature, we are guilty before God, but Jesus can forgive us forever. He has the authority to do that. And as if that is not enough, and it would be enough, wouldn't it?

To be made clean, to be brought into his presence as forgiven people forever. But as if that were not enough, look at the word that he uses to describe, to address the paralyzed man.

Son. Child. It's the affectionate term of a father for his son. It is very deliberate. He declares him to be a child of God.

A precious child. Loved, cherished, washed, and forgiven. And so the point is that Jesus, the son of God, has the authority to bring sinners back to God forever.

Back into his presence as forgiven children. There is no better news than that. To have peace with God forever.

[16 : 44] Now I just want to pause on three suggestions, three observations, three further comments. Who then is Jesus? Now this question I think is raised by the text.

So look at the question that the scribes are asking in verse six. Some of the scribes are sitting there questioning in their hearts, why does this man speak like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

And immediately Jesus perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves said to them, why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your

sins are forgiven, or to say, rise, take up your bed and walk?

So the Pharisees, the scribes, they come to the reasonable and right conclusion, he would need to be God to do this, to declare forgiveness of sins.

And Jesus' answer is fascinating, isn't it? Why are you questioning these things? Why is this an issue for you? Can you not see that I have the authority of God?

[17 : 58] And that phrase, which is easier to say? A little bit puzzling, isn't it? It makes you scratch your head, which is easier to say? I think the point is, it is easier to say, your sins are forgiven, because nobody would necessarily know that you have that authority.

authority. And so Jesus says, in order to prove to you my invisible authority, I will show you my visible authority.

So that you may know, verse 10, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He said to the paralytic, get up.

I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home. And this man's wasted muscles are literally remade and reordered in a moment.

It actually happened. As only the Creator God could do. Jesus says, I will show you, I will prove to you my invisible authority through my visible authority.

[19 : 13] What therefore is the conclusion? Verse 10, realize that I, the Messiah, the Son of Man, have all the authority of God to forgive sins.

Now, I think in other words, he says to these Jewish leaders, I am a much greater Messiah than you think, than you realize.

Think about it for a second. The forgiveness of sins is the prerogative of Jesus, the Son. That's what he's saying.

That's my authority. The Father has given that authority to me. That means, of course, that nobody can be forgiven.

Nobody can be forgiven except by coming to Jesus through faith. forgive. But the question remains, surely only God can forgive sins.

[20 : 19] God is the wronged party, right? Only he can forgive sins. Yes. And so, tantalizingly, the question is, who do you think Jesus is?

Who do you think he's claiming to be? Second comment, this, of course, is our deepest need. And this comes back to the tree that we were talking about at the very beginning.

We have this all the time. If you've got kids or if you know kids, which I think probably is most of us, kids are somewhat short-sighted, right? So, in what they think they need.

You know, as parents, you can see that your 10-year-old son's greatest need is not to be able to only eat chocolate and play computer games every waking moment of every day.

Why can you see that? Because you can see further. They're short-sighted. They don't know what's best for them in the end. You can see what's coming down the line.

[21 : 25] The point is that we're all like children, spiritually. We're all spiritually short-sighted. Do you see, what a bizarre thing for Jesus to say to this paralyzed man in 2 verse 5.

Imagine it. He's been lowered down on the mat. He's lying there in front of Jesus, the whole room, the hush of the room, silent. As they wait to hear what he says, they're expecting him to do one thing.

And Jesus says, your sins are forgiven. as he lies there on the mat, paralyzed. I don't think he could have made the point more clearly, both to them then and to us today, that though every muscle in our bodies should stop working, our greatest need would still be to be forgiven before God.

Why? Because judgment day is coming. Jesus can see that. God must judge. And to fall under his judgment forever doesn't bear thinking about.

Forgiveness is our greatest need. But I just want us to see this, because this was new to me this time, coming back to these verses. Look how gently he shows the man his greatest need.

[22 : 49] he doesn't say, which he could have done, do you realise that forgiveness is your greatest need? You see that? In one and the same sentence, he shows him his need and he gives him his need.

Like the doctor whose cancer patient runs up to him, if you can imagine this in a hospital, the doctor whose cancer patient runs up to him or her, asking for for painkillers to deal with the symptoms of the cancer, please give me whatever it is, probably stronger than paracetamol, whatever painkillers there are.

Please give me those painkillers and instead the doctor hands him the drugs to take away cancer forever. That's what we're seeing here with Jesus. So to have peace with God is our deepest need. It is also our greatest dream. Of his kingdom and of peace there will be no end. Peace from Satan, peace from suffering and peace with God.

That's what we've been seeing in these verses and so that is why Jesus can bring the kingdom of God forever and that is why those in his kingdom will live forever.

[24 : 08] and so to come under the rule of Christ is to be set free, to be set free from Satan, to be set free from suffering in the end and to be set free from sin and for a relationship with God.

The last thing I want to say which we need to see is that this is his deep desire and we'll end here. but we need to see this. Verse 41, moved with pity he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him I will be clean.

We see here the character of Jesus and therefore the character of God. He didn't have to reach out and touch the leper. I take it the disciples remember this vividly as he moves towards the leper and touches him.

That's why Mark has added the detail of Jesus' hand choreography because he remembers the point at which perhaps everyone else around breathed a sigh of a gasp of shock as Jesus moved towards to touch the leper.

What is the point? I think the point is that God is not reluctant. Jesus is not reluctant. He moves towards the sinner who comes to him in faith.

[25 : 40] He will not cast you out whatever you've done. He will not cast you out. He moves towards the leper. He will move towards you to heal you to heal your soul.

I love as well that the paralyzed man doesn't even ask for forgiveness but Jesus gives him his need. Is Jesus not eager to forgive?

He didn't even ask for it. My son your sins are forgiven and then he heals him as well and so here we see in Jesus the overflowing mercy and grace of God.

He is not unwilling and he doesn't just want to fix something about us he wants to fix everything and so the sinner who comes to Christ in faith can be confident that Jesus can make us right with God forever but also that he will make us right with God forever.

He is eager to. It's as if he doesn't wait for the words to be out of our mouth. Yes be clean and if I can just as I close if I can just speak to three people firstly to the Christian here today I think these words mean that you are clean if you put your faith in Christ however unclean you may feel that's not true you are clean you have received the once for all touch of Christ to make you clean you are forgiven all of your sins past present and future you are a child of God forever and you are loved and Jesus feels the same about you today as he felt that first day that you came to him in faith his heart is for you he loves you well that is a cause for joy is it not whatever is happening in life and he is certainly worth leaving behind for the priorities of this world leaving behind them for him and his kingdom in which we are set free can I speak as well to the

[27 : 55] Christian who has drifted into sin there may be someone here who knows that's the case and one thing that's stopping you from repenting and coming back to Christ is that you're not sure what he will do with you well can you see here he will not turn you away he loves you come back to him receive the cleansing that he loves to give and the restoration that he loves to give and I'm conscious we may have we love it when people come and visit us and who wouldn't call themselves Christian and I'm sure there's someone here today for whom that is the case no one is too far gone the point here that's the point of the leper no matter how you've lived your life come and find the touch of Christ to make you clean forever come to

Jesus in faith receive the forgiveness of all of your sins and come to Jesus and become a child of God forever and be set free into his kingdom let's pray father we thank you for this very very good news that you have sent your son to deal with the root problem as well as every other problem and that he really does have the authority to heal our souls as well as our bodies thank you for what that means about the hope that we can have of an everlasting kingdom and of eternal life and thank you so much for the willingness with which your son Jesus and with which you come to us and welcome sinners we praise you we rejoice in you and we pray that you'd help us to go on responding in faith to Christ and we ask it in his name amen