

Jesus' authority over sickness/suffering

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[0 : 0 0] And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a 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 sunset 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 up 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 what I came for.

[1 : 1 4] And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues, and casting out demons. Now, why did Jesus come?

Why did Jesus come? Did he come to change the world? And if so, how? Will he sing to bring peace as an influential figure like Gandhi?

Will he speak to resolve the world's biggest problems, like the elite billionaires are trying to do today, with their wealth? What is Jesus' mission and focus?

Well, in chapter 1, you've already seen how Jesus is bringing radical change. His words have a powerful authority to draw people to him, and to expel the forces of evil.

But there's more to Jesus' power than what is just revealed in his words. We just read in Mark chapter 1 that Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law. But what is Mark trying to tell us about him in this?

[2 : 1 7] Is it that Jesus will bring radical change in healing? Maybe. But I reckon it's more than just the fact that Jesus can heal. Because if Jesus just came to heal, then does that mean we will never have to worry about sickness ever again?

And if Jesus just came to heal, well, does that mean if I get sick, I can pray and my sickness will be gone? Now, I don't know about when the last time that you ever found yourself in serious sickness and lying in hospital.

I thought back to the last time I was a patient in hospital. It was back in 2013. I had to go in for routine surgery on my back. Now, the routine surgery was meant to be a day procedure.

It meant that there was complications. I had to be kept in for a little longer than expected. And I don't know about you, but I personally don't like being in a hospital.

Nobody does, really, to be honest. It's supposed to be a place where you rest to get better. But every five minutes, you have nurses and doctors telling you to sleep as they're waking you up.

[3 : 22] Every five minutes, poking and prodding at you, taking your vitals, checking your signs, checking your pulse. But whilst I was there, I was definitely the youngest person in the room.

And the next youngest being at least 100 years older than me. But I remember meeting gentlemen who were stuck in that ward. They were in that hospital for weeks and months.

Now, they wanted to go home. But because of their various conditions and ailments, they couldn't do that. And they were trapped because they weren't fit enough. Now, that causes their anxiety to spiral and leads them to doubt and despair.

They're thinking, I don't want to be here. Will I ever get better and get out of this place? I don't want to be like this. Will this stop?

And the thing is, when serious sickness hits us, we can feel trapped. Our loved ones can feel trapped as well. And it makes us think that if we will ever be better again, will it ever happen?

[4 : 32] Now, I know that sounds a bit melodramatic, especially if it's something like you have a cold and you think, oh, this is never going to leave me. But it's the mentality we find ourselves in when we are right in the thick of being sick.

And in Mark chapter 1, Jesus invites us to see something bigger than the fact that he can just heal. He invites us to see the picture of a day where those struggles of sickness and suffering are gone.

They will no longer remain. Now, look back with me. Mark chapter 1, verses 1 to 14. Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

It's near. It's coming soon. And in verses 29 to 39, along with verses 16 to 28, Mark wants us to see what that preview of the kingdom looks like.

It is a kingdom without evil. But it is also a kingdom without sickness and suffering. It is a kingdom without sickness and suffering that has a compassionate king whose priority is to bring to us the word of life.

[5 : 58] And as we think about this preview of the kingdom, we're going to split it into these three parts. We're going to see the kingdom without suffering. We're going to see the compassionate king.

And we're going to see the priority to preach the word. So let's firstly think about this preview of the kingdom without suffering. Look at verses 29 to 34 with me here.

Verse 29 says, And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever. And immediately they told him about her.

And he came, took her by the hand, and lifted her up. And the fever left her, and she began to serve them. Let's just pause there for a second in our reading.

Now we're still in the 24-hour period of Jesus with his disciples in Capernaum on the Sabbath. And they head home here after a busy day in the synagogue. Now when they get to Simon's home, they tell Simon, or Jesus, about Simon's mother-in-law.

[7 : 02] And I honestly don't think they expected Jesus to do anything here. I think it's just a matter of fact the way they speak to him here. Now it's the same way that when you have guests coming over to your home, you tell them to take their shoes off.

And you give them the guest slippers. No. Who knows. Or maybe you tell them to beware of the evil cat. Cats are evil.

Trust me. I don't like cats. They're basically saying to Jesus here, don't worry about her. She's not well. She's lying in bed there with a fever. She hasn't been well for a while.

And yet, look at what the text says here. Look at verse 31. Immediately, in a matter of moments, Jesus restores her to full health as the fever lifts.

And before you know it, verse 31, the very end there, she began to serve them. She's serving her family and her guests. That to me is the sign of a full, immediate recovery.

[8 : 09] And it's not just Simon's mother-in-law here. Let's keep reading here from verse 32. 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.

So for those of you who were here last week, Phil spoke about the man who had the demon cast out of him by Jesus through a word in Mark chapter 1, verses 21 to 28.

And the reason for that is Jesus is telling Satan that it's game over for him. His time's up. Satan's day is done for.

Satan has lost the war between good and evil. And Jesus continues expelling evil forces here in verses 32 to 34. But there's more than that.

[9 : 09] Do you see that there? The whole town heard what Jesus did in the synagogue. And it tells us in verse 28 that his fame has spread. And off the back of that news, catching like wildfire, spreading across Capernaum, everyone comes to Jesus seeking help.

And Jesus, verse 34, heals them all. So what's Mark trying to tell us here?

You see, Mark is showing us another glimpse of what that kingdom looks like. Last week we saw the angle of how the kingdom of God has no place for Satan and his evil forces.

This time we are seeing a preview of how the kingdom of God has no place for sickness or suffering. Now it's Saturday night.

You've got a quiet night in. The kids are tucked up in bed. You want that quiet night in. And you're flicking through Netflix. You're flicking through Disney+. You're flicking through Amazon Prime. Whatever streaming service you use.

[10 : 17] And you just don't know what to watch, do you? You see the look of a film or a TV show and you go, it might be good. What do you do?

Well, if you're my generation, you go on YouTube and you look up a movie trailer. Maybe your generation, you look up the TV guide, Radio Times. You know, and you read to get a little glimpse.

I think I've just offended a lot of people here in the room. I'm sorry about that. Maybe that's not your kind of thing. Maybe you see a new recipe.

You want to try it out. Or you're walking through the supermarket. Asda, Sainsbury's, Marks and Spencer's. Take your pick. And you see this new thing for sale. This new food.

What will it taste like? What's it like? You take a sample of it. You try it out. It tastes good, doesn't it? The point of this is that previews, samples, glimpses, whatever it is, they give us a taster to help us to look forward to something that is good.

[11 : 26] This preview sample that Jesus gives us here should whet our appetites and leave us longing to see more of what the kingdom of God brings. It is a world without evil.

It is a world without sickness and suffering. It is a world that we look forward to, that we are thankful for, that we want to taste more of and see more of.

And when we think about that, a world without evil, a world without sickness and suffering, a world that people are striving today to find, doesn't that sound great?

Well, this is a preview of what God's kingdom is like. This is a glimpse of the good news of the gospel.

And the gospel is about Jesus. Mark chapter 1, verse 1. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel that Jesus is proclaiming here in verse 15.

[12 : 33] That the kingdom of God is at hand. So repent and believe in the gospel. But what's this king like?

Because Jesus, who is the one who brings an end to sickness and suffering, is the one who is God's king in the kingdom that is near. And in Mark's gospel, we get to know who Jesus is, as he's made known as a compassionate king.

And we see that as we get a glimpse of him in our second point, as we look again at verses 29 to 34. Now, look back at verses 30 to 31 with me here.

Think about what Jesus is actually doing here. Notice that in verses 21 to 28, he confronts the demon, casts it out with a word. Now surely if Jesus is going to heal, he's going to heal with a word as well, isn't he?

But look at how he does it here in verses 30 to 31. Now remember, Jesus isn't asked to heal, but he does it anyway. Not only does he do it, but look how he does it.

[13 : 43] Verse 31. Jesus came, took her by the hand, and lifted her up. Do you see that? Jesus came, took her by the hand, lifted her up.

And I think Mark wants us to see something of the character of Jesus here. He's being very clear and intentional with his words. Yes, Jesus has authority and power to heal, which is amazing in itself.

But he also has gentleness and compassion for those he came to help. And we see that here in verses 32 to 34.

Everyone at the city was gathered at the door. Those who brought the sick, those who brought the oppressed by demons. And what does Jesus do?

Verse 34. He healed many who were sick and cast out many demons. Jesus helps as many people as he possibly can because he has compassion on them.

[14 : 57] Something Jesus shows time and time again in the Gospels and he shows again at the end of Mark chapter 6 when he looks at the crowds who are helpless like sheep without a shepherd and he has compassion on them.

Why? Because Jesus is a compassionate king. Jesus is full of care and his heart goes out to them who need him most.

Jesus cares more deeply about the pain and problems of this world than we even do in culture and society today because it was a world that was made to know him and yet it's ruined because of sin.

Sin, this evil rebellion against God that drives a wedge between us and him. And it's this inward affection of Jesus that helps us to see what God's kingdom will be like that drives us and drives him to say repent and believe in the Gospel.

Turn away from your old life of sin and turn to me. It's this inward affection of Jesus that helps us to see what God's kingdom will be like with compassion that's found in it that gives us something to look forward to and gives us a reason to turn away from our old life of sin because there's compassion found in it through Jesus, its king.

[16 : 42] You see, Jesus is all compassion. But like I said, this is a glimpse. This is a window.

This is a preview. This is a sample. And as Jesus says in verse 15 here, the kingdom of God is at hand. It's near. But it's not here yet.

However, one day we will see the fulfillment of the kingdom when it arrives. And even though this is just a small view here in Mark chapter 1, we get a bigger picture later in the book of Revelation.

A picture of when God's kingdom does come and when it does, when it is fulfilled, this is what Revelation says. Revelation 21.

John says these words, And I saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned from her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

[17 : 57] He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. Did you hear that?

No more pain, no more suffering, no more sickness, no more tears. But not only that, God is the one who wipes the tears away from the eyes of his people.

These are the two things that we see in the picture that's painted here. We see a kingdom without suffering, or sickness, or pain. And we see a kingdom where God dwells compassionately and cares for his people.

And Mark wants us to see that those two things are found here in Jesus. The God who brings restoration and compassionate care and seeks to dwell with his people as their king.

[19 : 08] You see, this compassion of Jesus is something that can be easily gone sober here. And yet, Mark makes this so clear to us here in this passage. Jesus cares for those he came to save, so much so that he gives his life to rescue them.

Later in Mark, it tells us that he came to lay down his life as a ransom for the payment of sin that holds us accountable against holy and just God who will not allow sin to go unpunished or unpaid for.

He will not allow sin into his holy kingdom. And yet, in Jesus, if anyone turns from their sins and comes to him, if they come to him for help, he will not turn them away.

Now, to this point, I need to answer a question that you might either have or maybe you've heard before and you're not sure how to respond.

If Jesus came to do this here and if Jesus can do this here in Mark, then why doesn't it happen all the time today? Now, why do we maybe know of people who have asked for healing and not received it?

[20 : 23] And it's a very good question. It's a question that sits close to my heart personally, especially if I've known loved ones who have not survived serious illness or suffering. Why doesn't healing always happen now?

Is it because Jesus doesn't care? Is it because Jesus is unwilling to? And I think the point of this passage is not to come to Jesus and expect healing, but to know that one day there will be no more suffering or sickness as we've seen.

In the same way, there will be no more Satan. You see, suffering now is hard and sickness is hard too. But it helps us to recognize that all is not right with this world.

C.S. Lewis once said that pain is God's megaphone to rise a deaf world. It wakes us up from getting too comfortable with this life, particularly when life is peaceful and somewhat uneventful like it is here in London for all of us.

But one day, we can look forward to a day with confidence when sickness will be no more. And that preview of the kingdom that we see in Mark chapter 1 is fulfilled as sickness and suffering is removed just as we've seen in Revelation 21.

[21 : 42] But make no mistake, Jesus doesn't withhold his compassion from you until then. Jesus cares for you now. And if your trust is in him, then he will bring you into that kingdom that we've looked at, that we look ahead to, where our hope is fulfilled in him.

And for those of us who are now here on this earth, I find this quote from missionary Henry Martin really helpful. Henry Martin once said this when he was on the mission field, you are immortal in this life until God's purposes for you are complete.

You see, death is not the end. It is just the end of living in this lifetime. And if we are living in the hope of knowing Jesus, we have the certain hope of knowing that we will be in the new creation.

A place where the certainty of suffering, sickness, and sorrow are all gone. And those things are replaced with pleasure, wholeness, and joy through the compassionate king who draws us into his eternal home as Lord.

But until then, he has placed us here with a role, with a mission, with a window of opportunity to know him and to make him known.

[23 : 19] And we've seen this preview into this kingdom and we've seen the compassionate king. But the question that leads from this is what is Jesus going to do to help those in compassion? Because sickness and suffering is one thing.

But to constantly heal sickness is to do nothing more than to not deal with the root of the deeper problem. Because sickness and suffering exists because sin exists in this world.

And it's not that the consequences of sin leads to sickness and suffering, but because we live in a sinful, broken world, we need hope that lifts us out of that.

And Jesus' priority is to bring hope and life into a broken, sick world. We need that good news. And Jesus' message, Jesus' word, is what people need most.

This is Jesus' priority to bring the word of life. Look at verses 35 to 39 with me here. Rising very early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus departed, went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

[24 : 35] So let's pause here for a second. Let's see what Jesus' first thought is. Jesus' first thought that morning was to pray, to spend time with God, his heavenly father.

Notice how Jesus puts relational needs here first, but there's more here. Let's keep reading. Verse 36, 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. So think about it this way. If Jesus was going to keep his ministry in the vicinity of Capernaum, what impact would that have?

And if Jesus' ministry was just centered around healing of the sick, then how good would that be? Now short term, yes, not bad, decent, but long term, doesn't matter.

[25 : 45] Why? Because sickness is not the greatest problem here. even if we get sick and get better, we will still die.

But there's worse that is to come. You see, the reason for Jesus' urgency to spread the message wide is because time is short.

Now I've been watching The Bear. I don't know if anyone's heard of The Bear, have you? The Bear is an FX drama. It's probably more stressful than watching the news. But it's all about a Michelin star chef who's trying to rescue his dead brother's business.

And there's a phrase that keeps coming up time and time again. Every second counts. Every second counts.

people need to know the good news of the gospel.

[27 : 02] people are getting sick, yes, but worse still, people are dying. And so every second counts.

People need to hear the hope of the kingdom and the sign that is here with the same sign that Jesus shows in verses 21 to 28. Casting out demons and preaching the message that the good news is here.

God's kingdom of light that casts out darkness has dawned. Hope has come. And Jesus is proclaiming the word that brings life to men and women.

And what is it that brings the good gifts of the kingdom? Well, the good gifts of the kingdom are marked by the giver of the good gifts, the king of the kingdom, who is Jesus.

What does this mean for us today? Well, it means that we have a kingdom that we can look forward to. Thanks to the preview that Mark gives us of Jesus in this passage, it's coming soon.

[28 : 17] We can have absolute confidence in this because of that certain hope that we see here in Revelation. Yes, there are good gifts now. We want to be thankful for those good gifts.

But think about how much better those good gifts will be when they are paired with the compassionate king who we will get to enjoy them with. And the problems of pain, suffering, and sickness are gone forever.

But we also have hope in a message that we want to share. And remember, just as Henry Martin says, we are immortal whilst we are here on this earth until God's good purposes for us from him are fulfilled.

Lord has us here for a reason. To join him in that priority to spread the message of the hope of the kingdom.

The word that brings life and light to all around us. there is nothing more important than hearing the good news that Mark is proclaiming about Jesus here.

[29 : 25] And so the question I have for you is this. Are you listening? Do you realize that every second counts and there is no better time than either to follow Jesus for the first time now, if you're not a Christian or to follow him as Lord if you believe in him?

If you follow Jesus, you will see for yourself why his kingdom is important, why his kingdom is worth sharing, why his kingdom is good news for all who need to hear it.

Because it is a kingdom without suffering, without sickness, and with Jesus the compassionate king who gives us life in him. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that when we look at this passage, we thank you for the hope that is found in knowing Jesus. We thank you for that hope that is certain to happen when one day we will be with him in his kingdom forever.

When we will know true healing, when we will know true restoration, when we will know true freedom to live the life that we were called to live before sin entered this world.

[30 : 52] But Father, until then, help us to keep fixing our eyes on Jesus. Help us to keep looking to him each day, to follow him, to listen to his word, and to know that his word gives us life.

Lord, help us to share that life far and wide. Help us to share that truth to all we know, and help us to have the same priority as Jesus had, to make his name known.

Lord, we thank you for the hope of this word. We thank you for the hope of the gospel, and pray that you apply it to our hearts and to our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.