

The King's Authority

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[0:00] Good morning. Please keep your Bibles open to Mark chapter 1 and 2 as we talk about the King's authority.! I wonder how you feel when you hear that title, the King's authority.

! In the modern Western world, authority is often treated with suspicion, because people assume that authority means restriction.

And after COVID, I think that's even worse. People think that living under authority means we lose freedom, we lose the ability to choose, we lose the ability to self-actualize, which is a big thing right now, and self-express.

Well, when we look around, this assumption is understandable somehow, somewhat. But authority in this world has often been used to oppress and to benefit the elite, rather than to protect life and to give life to others.

And so when we read in Mark's Gospel that Jesus is King, some might question whether that is really good news. Well, in our passage today, Mark continues to show the nature of King Jesus' authority.

[1:28] And we see that his authority is different. And it's good. Because he's not just the king. He's the good servant king.

And in this passage, Mark doesn't just show us one good aspect of Jesus' authority. He shows us several aspects to show us its beauty.

You know, like notes in music. When only one note is played, it sounds all right. But when several notes are played together in a chord, we hear something beautiful.

So here is the first note. Verse 21 to 22. Here in the story, Jesus went into a synagogue on the Sabbath and taught.

And the people were amazed because his teaching carried authority. He's not like the teachers of the law. Now, the teachers of the law had authority.

[2:36] Of course they did. They were teachers. But their authority was like derivative authority. In their teachings, they usually cited tradition and previous teachers.

Like in their teaching, they had footnotes, so to speak. And Jesus is different. We get a sense of his teaching, not here in this passage, but in the Sermon on the Mount.

And Jesus taught like the author of the Bible himself had walked into the room. You know, in the Sermon on the Mount, he often said, I say to you this.

And so his listeners were amazed. You know how some teachings can be confusing or boring? Or if the teaching is labeled as authoritative, it's usually burdening.

But here, Jesus' words, Jesus' teaching caused amazement. Jesus' authority in his words is amazing.

[3:49] And not only amazing, his words are powerful. In verse 23, straight after that, while Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, there was a possessed man. It's a bit surprising.

A possessed man in a synagogue? Notice that the evil spirit in the man, inside the man, recognized who Jesus was before the crowd did.

It said, I know who you are, the Holy One of God. But this wasn't a confession of faith. It was not. Back then, there was a belief that in spiritual encounters like exorcism, knowing the name of the spiritual enemy and saying it gave power over it.

So often the exorcists would ask, what's your name, demon? And perhaps here, the spirit wanted to get the upper hand first. So it said, I know who you are.

You are the Holy One of God. Jesus of Nazareth. But Jesus didn't even need the spirit's name.

[5:02] His words were powerful enough. Jesus responded with a short command. Be quiet. Shut up, he said. Come out of him.

And the spirit obeyed. And again, people were amazed at the power of Jesus' words. Jesus' words have authority.

He's the king. He's God himself. God created the world with his word. And so here, God spoke and demons obeyed.

But notice how Jesus used the power of his words. Not to control people or to condemn them, but to give freedom.

The possessed man was now free. In our culture, we often define freedom as the absence of authority.

[6:07] We want absolute individual freedom. We don't like anyone else telling us what to think or what to do. But Marx shows us here that sometimes freedom requires a greater authority to confront what we can't overcome on our own.

We know this. That's why we like superhero movies. Just this week, I had a conversation with my atheist friend. He said, Ricky, you know what life is all about?

Life is all about freedom. He said. I said, okay, I agree. In the Christian faith, Jesus died to set us free. And he said, exactly.

He didn't even believe in Jesus. And then I asked, but freedom from what, though? Freedom from what? And he said, from any authority so we can live and enjoy life the way we want.

Hmm. You see, for this guy, authority and freedom don't go together. Authority restricts freedom. But as we kept talking, he started complaining.

[7:27] He moved from talking about authority to complaining about the current society. He said, people nowadays, Ricky, people nowadays sacrifice what's important in life.

That's why they can't enjoy life. They sacrifice their marriage for a career. They sacrifice friends to chase their own selfish ambitions. I thought, aha.

I said, yes. You see, that's the trap with freedom. Many people might think they're pursuing freedom when they do those things. Freedom to have a career.

Freedom to pursue their ambitions. But they don't realize that it's not real freedom. Because they're enslaved by those things. And they have to pursue them through sacrificing the good things in life.

You know that. He said, ah, I see what you mean. You see, when we talk about external authorities, the government, schools, your boss, whatever, we can fight them to a certain extent.

[8:35] But when the slavery is inside, spiritual slavery, here it's demonic possession. But we can also talk about our own selfishness, our selfish ambitions, our sin inside us, which the Bible calls slavery.

How do we fight that? It's inside us. We need a greater authority, a greater power to free us from ourselves and to show us the way to life.

And Jesus has that greater power and authority that he uses not to put people into bondage, but to free people from spiritual bondage.

That's the first note of Jesus' authority. Authority in his words that he uses to give freedom.

Freedom. Now, the second note.

In verse 29. From the synagogue, Jesus went into Simon and Andrew's house. It was still the Sabbath. Peter's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever.

[10:00] And Jesus took her by the hand and healed her. Jesus used his authority not only to free people from demonic possession, but also from physical sickness, like a fever.

A fever that occurs every day. Nothing is too trivial for Jesus to be involved and to use his great authority to free the people that he loves.

This is the king who's so powerful that even evil spirits obeyed his words. Surely, Jesus could have healed this woman only by his words.

He did not hesitate to take her by the hand and healed her. Even on a Sabbath, when it was supposed to be time for him to rest.

You see how he uses his authority? No wonder then, after this woman was healed, she began to wait on them, to serve them.

[11:18] Serving this amazing king makes sense, because he uses his great authority to serve us first. And that's also what the story about the leper shows.

If we jump a bit to verse 40, because I think this story has the same theme. In verse 40, a man with leprosy came to Jesus.

Skin disease. Back then, skin disease meant defilement and exclusion from community. A person with skin disease was not allowed to touch anyone or be touched by anyone.

It's a lonely life. And so Jesus was indignant in verse 41, angry at the devastation that the sickness had caused.

Now again, Jesus could have healed him using his words. But he didn't. He touched him. That touch crossed social, religious, and ceremonial lines.

[12:32] It was not allowed. You see, in Jesus, there's a different kind of authority. Human authority protects itself from contamination, whether physical or social contamination.

But Jesus' authority moves towards contamination to free the person from it. Jesus is the servant king.

His authority is good. And then, after that, Jesus sent the man away with a strong warning. See that you don't tell this to anyone. And yet, the man disobeyed.

He spread the news. It's kind of understandable that this man could not contain his thanksgiving and praise. He had been a social outcast, suffering physical and social defilement alone.

And then, suddenly, someone touched him. The king touched him, and he was restored. Of course, he wanted to spread the good news about Jesus.

[13:48] And yet, it was still disobedience. This man enjoyed the king's healing power and even told everyone about it, but he did not submit to the king's authority.

And so, he spread the news on his own terms rather than on the king's terms. I do wonder sometimes if a lot of Christians today are like this man, wanting the benefits of Jesus' power without falling under his authority.

They just want the miracles without obedience. Now, pay attention to verse 45.

As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly, but stayed outside in lonely places, which were the place of lepers. Lepers. Lepers were cast out of the society.

They had to stay outside of the community in lonely places. Now, the leper that Jesus healed enjoyed inclusion in the community. He could tell everyone, but Jesus was outside in lonely places.

[15:08] They had traded places, so to speak. Already here, early in Mark's gospel, we see the pattern that would culminate at the cross. This king used his authority to serve, to inconvenience himself, to restore others, healing on the Sabbath, touching a leper.

He even exchanged his freedom for theirs. Jesus' authority serves. His authority is not the kind that we should be scared of.

It's the kind that we want to embrace. This is the second note of Jesus' authority.

He doesn't just use his authority to give us freedom, but also to serve us in a way that is sacrificial. Now, the third note.

If we go back to verse 32. After healing Peter's mother-in-law, the whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many and drove out many demons.

[16:23] He was popular. But Jesus did not let popularity get into his head. In verse 35, after an evening of successful ministry, Jesus got up very early in the morning to pray.

Imagine this. You just had a successful night where your ministry was popular. People came from all over town to hear the gospel from you.

You were able to heal the sick and cast out demons. What would you do the next day? Some people would sleep in. Many leaders would build momentum, make themselves busy doing the same thing.

The kingdom of God is proclaimed. People believe the gospel, and even better, they're popular. They would keep doing the same thing.

But that's not what Jesus did. After an evening of successful ministry, Jesus withdrew from people to pray. Curious.

[17:34] And so, the disciples looked for him, and when they found him, they said, Jesus, everyone is looking for you. It's as if they're saying, what are you doing here?

Everyone is looking for you. Come back. You're popular. Why are you here? Let's go out there again. Let's do the same thing. But Jesus said, let's go somewhere else so I can preach there also. That's why I have come. People came to him for miracles, but Jesus' mission was clear. Jesus' authority was not driven by people's acceptance or applause or metrics of success or demands.

It was shaped by his communion with the Father, so he withdrew to pray. It's driven by the mission that the Father gave him, so he kept going to continue the mission despite what people wanted.

[18:45] that's a different kind of authority, isn't it? We live in a world where leaders are constantly looking for acceptance, for engagement, for popularity.

Even in the church, a lot of Christians tend to follow leaders who are popular, who are always available, who can draw thousands on a Sunday, who have lots of views on YouTube.

Okay, that one is successful. Let's keep doing that. Human authorities seek validation, but that's not the kind of authority Jesus has.

The only validation that Jesus sought was one from his Father. And so Jesus stayed on mission.

His authority wasn't swayed around by people's demands.

His authority is firm. He was focused on the mission that was given to him by his Father to preach the good news of the kingdom.

[19:56] That is a different kind of authority. that is the third note. Now the final note.

Chapter 2, verse 1. A few days later, Jesus entered Capernaum again, and so the people gathered again to hear him preach. The popular itinerant preacher is back.

So they gathered. He's so popular that there's no more space in the house where he was. It's packed with people. And so there's this paralyzed man who wanted to see Jesus for healing but couldn't because of the crowd.

And so he was being carried through the roof to see Jesus. Jesus saw their faith, verse 5, and then Jesus said something shocking.

He came to be healed. But the first thing that Jesus did was not healing him. He said, Son, your sins are forgiven.

[21:11] In the ancient Jewish worldview, sickness and sin were often connected. Not necessarily in a simple one-to-one way like you sinned and therefore now you're sick.

no, but in the sense that human brokenness, including sickness, was caused by sin. Now, Jesus had shown his authority over spiritual evil and over physical sickness.

Here, Jesus went to the deeper problem, sin. a paralyzed man wanted to be healed, but physical healing was not his biggest need.

Forgiveness was. And Jesus showed that he even had authority to offer divine forgiveness. But the religious teachers understood what this implied.

they thought, he's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Well, they were right, of course. Forgiveness is God's business.

[22:25] Perhaps Jesus was not blaspheming. Perhaps this is God himself. And so Jesus asked them a rhetorical question.

Which is easier? To say to this paralyzed man, your sins are forgiven or to say, get up, take your mat, and walk. Saying the former is easier, of course.

Saying it is easier. I could say that, that your sins are forgiven. It requires no proof. Saying the latter is harder. If I said that to you, you'd better be healed, otherwise I'd look bad.

It requires proof. But here Jesus did both. He said, he's the son of man, the king from Daniel 7, who is given authority over everything by God himself.

Even authority to forgive sin. And so he had said earlier that the man's sins had been forgiven, and so now he told him to get up, take his mat, and go home.

[23:37] And immediately the man did. Next verse, he got up, took his mat, walked out in full view of the mall, showing that Jesus did forgive his sins and heal him physically.

Jesus' authority does not stop at healing bodies or restoring social inclusion. It reaches the root, sin, guilt, alienation from God.

Forgiveness is the greatest human need because our deepest problem is not, first and foremost, the sickness in our bodies or stress in our minds or conflict in our relationships.

Those are real problems, but those are symptoms. Our deepest problem is separation from God because, like the Bible says, we insist that we are the king, not God.

We live our own way, we rule our own lives, and that is what sin is. Not just breaking rules, but rejecting God's rule.

[24:53] We want authority, not give all authority and power and glory to God. But what did God do? God in Jesus uses his authority to offer forgiveness, reconciliation with God.

And when God reconciles with us, it begins to reshape our relationship with others too. Jesus has the authority to give you that forgiveness.

Isn't his authority good? So now we've heard the full chord of Jesus' authority and seen its full beauty.

Well, not really full yet, we haven't finished the whole book, but we have seen more of its beauty. So friends, if you're not a Christian, maybe the word authority makes you nervous.

Jesus is king? Why is that good news? Well, yes, authority in this world is easily abused. But Jesus has a different kind of authority.

[26:12] Jesus uses his authority to give people life, to give people true freedom, restoration, inclusion, forgiveness, reconciliation, justification.

Jesus uses his authority to serve and not to load it over people. He's even willing to exchange places with us, and at the cross he did that.

He took our death and he gave us his life. What kind of king would do that? Kings are usually defended by the people.

The people have to die first before them. So my invitation today is come to the king who gives life. Trust him because this is the only perfectly good king this world has.

Life under his rule is good. This is the good life. You're still searching for the good life and you can't find it anywhere.

[27:24] try this authority of this king. And for us Christians, here is a chance to self-reflect.

Are we like the leper, wanting the benefits of Jesus' power but not falling under his authority? Or are we like Peter's mother-in-law who received healing in order that she might serve him as king?

What does that look like? Living under Jesus' authority means we listen to his word even when it confronts us. Of course it confronts us because we think we are the kings.

The true king is speaking, we're confronted. It means we follow his guidance in life even when it's costly. It means we turn away from self-rule every day towards the rule of Jesus.

It means serving others like he served us first. Because King Jesus is good. He's beautiful.

[28:40] And he's worth devoting our lives to. He died desde desde