

The King's Authority

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[0:00] And please turn your Bibles back to Mark chapter 1 and 2 as we consider the King's authority.! I wonder how you feel when you read that title, the King's authority.

! Because in the modern Western world, authority is often treated with suspicion. Because people assume that authority means restriction. I think it's even worse after COVID.

It's often assumed that when we are under authority, we lose our freedom, our personal freedom. We lose the ability to choose. We lose the ability to self-actualize, which is a big thing at the moment, and to self-express.

Yes. Well, when we look around, this assumption is somewhat understandable. 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, He's the Christ, He's God's chosen King, some might question whether that is really good news.

[1:21] Why is that good news? Well, in our passage today, Mark continues to show the nature of the King's authority, King Jesus' authority.

And we see that His authority is different. And it's good. Because He's not just the King, He's the good servant's 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.

It's kind of like notes in music. When only one note is played, it sounds all right, especially because Sue is playing it.

But when several notes are played together in a chord, we hear something beautiful. So, here is the first note of Jesus' authority.

[2:31] In 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. Of course, of course they did. They were teachers. But their authority was somewhat like derivative authority because in their teachings, they usually cited tradition and previous teachers.

It's like in their teaching, they had footnotes. But Jesus is different. We get a sense of His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus taught like the author of the Bible Himself. You know, like in the Sermon on the Mount, He often said, I say to you such and such.

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.

[3:51] It expects you to do things that are burdening. But here, Jesus' words caused amazement. Amazing. Jesus' authority in His words is amazing.

Amazing. And not only amazing, His words are powerful. Straight after that, in verse 23, while Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, there was a possessed man.

It's kind of curious that there was a possessed man in the synagogue. But notice that the evil spirit 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. Of course 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.

And so exorcists would often ask the name of the demon. What's your name? And perhaps here, maybe the spirit wanted to get the upper hand first.

[5:06] And so it said, I know who you are, the Holy One of God, Jesus of Nazareth. But Jesus didn't even need the spirit's name, you notice. His words were powerful enough.

Jesus responded with a short command. Be quiet. Shut up. Come out of him. And the spirit obeyed. It's amazing. And so again, people were so 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, even demons, obeyed.

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

[6:16] The possessed man was now free. In our culture, we often define freedom as the absence of authority.

We don't like it when anyone else tells us what to think or what to do. That's freedom for us. We want absolute, individual freedom.

But Marx shows us here that sometimes freedom requires a greater authority to confront what we can't overcome on our own. 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 can get behind that in the Christian faith.

Jesus died to set us free. Exactly, he said. He didn't even believe in Jesus. And then I asked, but freedom from what though?

[7:22] 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. freedom. But as we kept on talking, he moved from complaining about authority to complaining about the current society.

And he said, Ricky, people nowadays, people these days 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. And I thought, aha! Aha! Aha! Yes, I said. You see, that's the trap of freedom.

Many people might think they're pursuing freedom, 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.

[8:30] You know that to be true. And he said, ah, I see what you mean. You see, when we talk about external authorities, we can sort of fight them, the government to a certain extent, our bosses, the school.

But when the slavery is inside, spiritual slavery, in this text, it's demonic possession, but we can also talk about our selfishness, our selfish ambitions, our sin inside us, that the Bible describes, calls slavery.

How do we fight that? We need a greater authority, a greater power to free us and to show us the way of life.

We need a greater power to save us from ourselves. And Jesus has that greater power and authority. authority. And he uses it not to put people into bondage, but to free people from spiritual bondage.

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

[10:01] Now the second note, 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 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. It happens every day. But nothing is too trivial for Jesus to be involved and to use his 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 using his words.

And yet 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.

[11:18] You see how this king uses his authority? No wonder then, after this woman was healed, she began to serve them.

Serving this amazing king makes sense because he uses his great authority to serve us first. And I think 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, a skin disease, came to Jesus.

Back then, and I think now as well, skin disease meant defilement and exclusion from the community. It was worse back then. A person with skin disease was not allowed to touch anyone or be touched by anyone.

It's a lonely life. So, the text says in verse 41, Jesus was indignant, he was angry at the devastation that this sickness had caused.

[12:35] Now again, Jesus could have healed him using his words. He didn't have to touch him and yet he did. He touched him. That touch crossed social, religious, and ceremonial lines.

It was not allowed. You see here in Jesus, a different kind of authority. Human authority protects itself from contamination, whether physical contamination or social contamination.

But Jesus' authority moves towards contamination to free people from it. Jesus is the servant king. His authority is good. And then, 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. On the one hand, it's kind of understandable that this man could not contain his thanksgiving and praise.

[13:46] 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. And yet, on the other hand, 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. Sometimes I wonder whether a lot of Christians today are like this man, wanting the benefits of Jesus' miraculous power without falling under his authority.

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.

[15:06] 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 talked to everyone, but Jesus was outside in lonely places.

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 good. 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.

[16:39] Jesus 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 had a successful ministry 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. perhaps many leaders would build momentum. That's a good strategy. 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.

This is a different authority. After an evening of successful ministry, Jesus withdrew from people to pray. Furious.

[17:57] Jesus. And so the disciples looked for him. When they found him, they said, everyone is looking for you. It's as if they're saying, Jesus, everyone is looking for you.

Come back. What are you doing here? Let's go out there again and do the same thing. But Jesus said, let us go somewhere else so I can preach there also.

That is why I have come. Jesus' authority was not driven by popularity or by people's acceptance or applause or metrics of success.

It was shaped by his communion with the Father. And 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. people wanted miracles, but Jesus was firm on his mission to preach the gospel.

[19:06] That's a different kind of authority, isn't it? God. We live in a world where leaders are constantly looking for acceptance, for likes, for engagement.

Even in the church, a lot of Christians tend to follow leaders who are popular with people, who are always available, who can draw thousands on a Sunday, who have lots of views on YouTube. human authorities seek validation. Oh, that strategy works, let's keep doing that.

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.

[20:16] This authority is different. This is the third note of Jesus' authority. 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. He's popular.

In fact, 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 to be healed, but couldn't because of the crowd.

And so he was being carried through the roof. They dug the roof, they destroyed it, and carried the man through the roof to see Jesus.

in verse 5. Jesus saw their faith, and then Jesus said something shocking. This man came to be healed, but Jesus said, son, your sins are forgiven.

[21:33] In the ancient Jewish worldview, sickness and sin were often connected, not necessarily in a simple one-to-one way. Some people might have believed that, like you sinned and therefore you are sick.

But in the sense that human brokenness in the world was caused by sin. Now, Jesus had shown his authority over spiritual evil and physical sickness.

Here, before healing the man, Jesus went to the deeper problem, sin. healing. This man came for healing, but physical healing was not the man's biggest need.

Forgiveness of sin was. And Jesus showed that he even had the authority to offer divine forgiveness. forgiveness.

But the religious teachers understood what this implied. They thought, he's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

[22:43] And they were right, of course, forgiveness is God's business. forgiveness. But 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?

Of course, saying the former is easier. Saying it is easier. I could say 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. Because otherwise I'd look bad. It requires proof. But here Jesus did both.

He said that he's the son of man, the king from Daniel 7, who is given authority over everything on heaven and earth. by God himself.

[23:51] 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. And the man did.

The very next verse, the man got up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of the more. 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 of the problem.

Sin, guilt, alienation from God. Forgiveness is the greatest human need because our deepest problem is not first and foremost our sickness in the body or stress in our minds or conflict in our relationships.

Those are real problems but they're just symptoms. our deepest problem is separation from God because like the Bible says, we insist that we are the king, not God.

[25:08] So we are separated from him. We live our own way, we rule our own lives, and that is what sin is. It's not just breaking rules, it's rejecting God's rule.

We want authority and 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.

And when God reconciles with us, it begins to reshape our relationship with others too. We're reconciled with the Creator and therefore we can begin reconciliation with fellow creatures.

Jesus has the authority to give you that. His authority is good. authority is good.

So now we've heard the full cord of Jesus' authority and we've seen its full beauty. And so friends, if you're not a Christian, maybe the word authority makes you nervous.

[26:32] And yes, authority in this world is easily abused, but Jesus has a different kind of authority, doesn't he? Jesus uses his authority to give people life, true freedom, restoration, inclusion, forgiveness, reconciliation.

Jesus uses his authority to serve. He's even willing to exchange places with us and at the cross he did that. He took our death and gave us his life.

No other kings do that. Human kings get protected by bodyguards and people. The bodyguards have to die first before the king dies. This king died for his people.

And so my invitation today is come to the king who gives life. Trust him because this is the only good king, the only perfectly good king that this world has.

Life under his rule is good. It's the good life. If you're still looking for that good life and you can't find it anywhere, try the rule of Jesus.

[27:59] He's the good king. And for us Christians, here's a chance to self-reflect. I really like the leper, wanting the benefits of Jesus' power, but not falling under his authority.

We ask for his power to work, miracles, in our sickness, in our finances, but we don't fall. We don't want to obey.

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 Jesus' word confronts us. We think we are the kings, and when the true king speaks, we get confronted.

It means we follow his guidance in life even when it's costly. It means we turn away from self-rule every single day towards the rule of Jesus.

[29:14] It means serving others like the king has served us first. Because king Jesus is good, he's beautiful, and he's worth devoting our lives to.