

The King's Authority and Mission

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 October 2011

Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 0 0] As you remain standing, let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we do again thank you for your word. And we ask now that you would help us to understand it, and not only understand it, but to live in light of it.

And we ask this so that your church may be built up and your name glorified, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Please do take a seat. It would be very helpful if you had a Bible open at Mark 1, because we'll be working our way through that.

And there's also an outline in the bulletin, which you may also find helpful. I heard a mildly amusing joke once about three men travelling on a plane.

There was a scientist, a pastor, an Anglican pastor, of course, and a young backpacker with his backpack. And these three men were travelling on the plane when there was engine failure.

The pilot turned to the three men on the plane and said, men, we're going to crash. The good news is we have some parachutes. The bad news is I have one, and there's only two left for you three.

[1 : 0 5] And with that, the pilot jumped from the plane. The scientist very quickly grabbed the other parachute and said, I am one of the greatest minds the world has ever seen. I must survive for the sake of humanity.

And with that, he jumped from the plane. The pastor then said to the young backpacker, son, I've lived a long life and I know where I'm headed. You take the last parachute. To which the young backpacker replied, no, no, it's okay.

That bright spark scientist actually took my backpack. Now, the point of the joke is, it matters that you pick the real deal, doesn't it?

Especially when your life is at stake, whether it's a parachute or a king who can save you. Now, last week we heard Jesus announce that, oh, sorry, be announced that he is the king.

The king is here. And if Jesus is the real king, then, you'd expect him to have some real authority because that's what kings have, don't they? And that's exactly what we see in this next section of Mark's gospel.

[2 : 1 2] Now, this section is quite a long section, as you may have realized, as Gary read it very well to us this morning. But I think it belongs together for two reasons. Firstly, because Mark seems to begin each new section in his opening chapters with a reference to the sea.

And let me show you. So have a look in your Bibles at verse 16 of chapter 1. Here he begins a new section, as it were, and he says, as Jesus passed along the sea of Galilee. And at the end of our section, chapter 2, verse 12, have a look at the next verse, which is verse 13, bottom right-hand side of the page there, beginning of the new section, and we read, Jesus went out again beside the sea.

And that runs all the way over the page to chapter 3, verse 7, where again the sea is mentioned. Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea.

It begins a new section. Or chapter 4, verse 1, again Jesus began to teach beside the sea. And so you have this little refrain through the opening chapters of Mark, which seems to begin a new section.

And so I think these episodes this morning belong together. But the second reason I think they belong together is because of the theme authority that runs through them all. And we'll see that as we go through these episodes.

[3 : 26] The first episode is Jesus' authoritative call, point 1, verse 16. We read, As Jesus passed along the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

And Jesus said to them, Follow me and I will make you fish for people. And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And he went a little farther. He saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John, who were in the boat, mending the nets.

Immediately he called them, and they left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men and followed Jesus. Now at first glance, this appears that Jesus comes out of nowhere and says to two men, or in fact four men that he's never met, Follow me and they do.

But that's not quite the case. In fact, in John chapter 1, we're told that Simon and Andrew were disciples of John the Baptist, whom we met last week. It was about a year ago, before this happened, and Simon and Andrew actually met Jesus when Jesus had come to be baptized by John the Baptist.

We read that in John's Gospel. The verses are on your outline. And so when Jesus calls them, they know there's something about Jesus worth following. But this doesn't make Jesus' call any less authoritative.

[4 : 44] I mean, it's been about a year, and they don't even know where they're going. Yet despite all this, they immediately leave everything they know. See verse 18 again?

And immediately they left their nets and followed Jesus. And the same is true of James and John. They left their father in the boat. See you, Dad. We're off. And followed Jesus, not even knowing where they were going.

They left their livelihood. They left their family to follow Jesus and to take part in his mission of catching or saving people for the kingdom. And they did it immediately, even though they didn't know where they were going, or I suspect, even though they didn't really understand what Jesus meant by catching people.

Why did they do this? Well, I take it it's because they recognized something in Jesus. They recognized his authority, perhaps as king. And so when he calls, they must follow.

And that's pretty impressive authority, I think. I mean, I've tried calling my children and they seem perfectly happy not to immediately obey. But these men follow Jesus immediately.

[5 : 51] Such is the authority of this king. And this authority is now highlighted in a number of ways, like his teaching. Point two, verse 21. They went to Capernaum and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.

They were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. Jesus enters a Jewish church one Saturday, which was their Sabbath, and there he teaches, presumably, about God's kingdom coming near because that's what he's been proclaiming back in verse 15, as we heard last week.

But when he teaches, he does not teach like the rabbis or the scribes. You see, when the rabbis taught, they would often quote other rabbis. They would rely on another person's authority. For example, they would say, just as Rabbi Joe Bloggs said, dot, dot, dot.

They'd rely on someone else's authority. But Jesus spoke with his own authority. He said things like, you've heard it said, dot, dot, dot, but I say to you.

You see, he relied on his own authority. He didn't rely on someone else's. He spoke with his own authority as though he was God himself. But that's the point, isn't it? He is. Not that the Jews made this connection.

[7 : 01] Rather, they were astounded at this authoritative teaching. But it wasn't the only thing they were astounded at. For look what happens next in verse 23. Just then, there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean or evil spirit.

And he cried out, what have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. But Jesus rebuked him, saying, be silent, and come out of him.

And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed and kept on asking one another, what is this? A new teaching and with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.

And at once, his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee. Now, back in verse 24 there, there's almost a defensive tone to the evil spirit's voice, isn't there?

The spirit says, what have you to do with us? It's as though the evil spirit is saying, you have no business with us yet, Jesus. For although the people don't know who Jesus is, the evil spirit does.

[8 : 06] He knows that Jesus is the Holy One of God, the one who was anointed with the Holy Spirit as we saw at his baptism last week. And his evil spirit knows also that Jesus is the one who will ultimately defeat them, conquer Satan and all evil, just as we saw at Jesus' temptation last week.

And so the evil spirit is asking, have you come to destroy me and all of us, Jesus, before the appointed time? Of course, the answer is no.

But by casting out these demons, Jesus is again showing that he will defeat Satan at the cross and then finish him off when he returns. And notice the spirit obeys at once.

Immediately, he's silenced and he leaves the man. You see, Jesus has real authority even over evil. But this casting out of evil, unclean spirit, also confirms Jesus' teaching.

See the link made by the people in verse 27. They said, what is this? A new teaching and with authority he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.

[9 : 14] It's as though the authority Jesus has over the evil spirit confirms the truth of his teaching, of this new teaching. What was new about the teaching?

Well, it's what Jesus had been saying back in verse 15, that God's kingdom has come near. You see, they were all waiting for God's kingdom but it was news to them that it had been brought near in the person of Jesus.

And by casting out the evil spirit, Jesus was confirming in a real way the truth of this teaching that the kingdom of God was now near. You see, casting out demons and healing the sick were signs that pointed to God's new kingdom.

Our first reading from Isaiah spoke about God's kingdom being a place where the eyes of the blind are open, the lame leap like the deer and no unclean or evil will be found there.

And so when we see Jesus casting out evil spirits and healing the sick, it shows us in a real way that God's kingdom has come near. It is being established by Jesus.

[10 : 19] He doesn't just teach about it in an authoritative way, he also has the power and the authority to make it happen. And so in verse 29 we read, As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.

Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her and she began to serve them.

Simon's mother-in-law is sick. Now at this point I could say all sorts of things about mother-in-laws and how Simon may have been tempted to let her suffer but I won't just in case you meet mine one day and mine is lovely just for the record.

But Simon and Andrew told Jesus about her and by simply taking her hand and literally raising her up she is healed. Now this is great power or authority over sickness, isn't it?

If only modern medicine were able to do that. But notice also what the mother-in-law does next. After being saved, after being raised up, what does she do? She begins to serve.

[11 : 25] And I wonder if this is a lovely little picture of what it means for us to become Christians. That is, when Jesus forgives us and raises us up from being spiritually sick as it were, then in response we too are to serve him and his people, are we not?

In verse 32 to 34 Jesus' authority over sickness and evil is again shown. For we read, that evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons and the whole city was gathered around the door.

That would have been an amazing sight. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons and he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew who he was.

You see, Jesus casts out many demons though he keeps them silent and he heals all sorts of various diseases, it says. And no matter what it was, Jesus could heal it. I don't know if you've ever heard of this disease, but I heard just the other day of a disease called Stendhal syndrome.

Has anyone heard of the syndrome called Stendhal syndrome? Do you know what it is? A person who suffers Stendhal syndrome is a person who has been exposed to too much artwork in a short space of time.

[12 : 35] It's true apparently. And they actually get dizziness and suffer from hallucinations. Apparently it's true. Now I doubt they would have suffered from that particular syndrome back in Jesus' day.

I'm not even sure they had oil paintings back then. But if there was that kind of syndrome, like that, easy, Jesus could have healed it. He has real authority you see over sickness.

Now I realise that these sorts of miracles are hard for people to believe. And sometimes they're even hard for us to believe. And they defy our Western minds which only accept what we think is rational.

But the thing is, if Jesus is King, if Jesus is God, the Son himself, then these miracles are completely rational. For if God made the world, then miracles are a piece of cake for him, are they not?

It makes sense that Jesus, who is God the Son, can do these things. It is rational if you think about it. What's more, there's actually evidence outside the Bible that Jesus performed these type of miracles or wonderful works.

[13 : 42] In fact, a man called Josephus was a Jewish historian, not a Christian, didn't like Jesus at all. And this is what he writes in his history books. It says, Now there was about, at this time, a man called Jesus, a wise man, for he was a doer of wonderful works.

He means miracles there. A teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. Now he goes on to hassle Jesus in his other works, but here he admits that Jesus is a doer of wonderful works, that he did miracles.

non-Christian historical source. You see, there is evidence to believe these things actually happened in history. And of course, what they show us is that Jesus has the authority over sickness, that he is the King and God the Son.

And just in case we haven't got the point, we see another episode of Healing in verse 40. A leper came to Jesus, begging him, and kneeling, he said to Jesus, if you choose, you can make me clean. Moved with pity or compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I do choose, be made clean.

And immediately the leprosy left him and he was made clean. Jesus is filled with compassion, isn't he? And we see this by the fact that he touched the untouchable.

[15 : 02] You see, he'd never touch a leper because it was an infectious disease. I mean, if I had a highly infectious skin disease, would you naturally want to shake my hand at the door?

In fact, someone from 830 who was more game than you, he went, no, out loud. I went, of course not. That's not our natural reaction. And because it was so infectious, the Old Testament declared them to be ceremonially unclean.

They had to live outside the city alone. And if you touched them, then you became ceremonially unclean as well as running the risk of being infected. Now, Jesus just had to say the word to heal him, but instead he reaches out and touches him.

Why? Because Jesus had a genuine compassion for him as he does for outcasts and lonely. And I think in a small way, it points to what Jesus does for us all at the cross.

For by touching the leper, Jesus becomes unclean and the leper becomes clean. Doesn't he? What happens at the cross? At the cross, Jesus takes our unrighteousness and we are given righteousness.

[16 : 07] It's a small little picture of what Jesus does at the cross. Well, Jesus heals this man and makes him ceremonially clean. And then in verse 43, the tone actually changes a little. See verse 43?

After sternly warning him, he sent him away at once, saying to him, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go show yourself to the priests and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded as a testimony to them.

But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the word so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country and people came to him from every quarter.

The story with such a promising beginning ends rather sadly, doesn't it? With this man disobeying Jesus. And now, perhaps he thought he was doing Jesus a favour and telling lots of people about what Jesus did, but I think it's more likely he simply treated Jesus like a genie.

He got his wish and after he got his wish, he didn't care about following Jesus' instructions. Now, I know that may sound a bit harsh but we'll meet others like this man in a couple of weeks' time.

[17 : 16] What's more, verse 43 literally says, And rebuking him, Jesus immediately cast him out, saying, See that you say nothing to no one.

And the word cast him out is the same word used for when Jesus casts out the fake mourners when Jairus' daughter died. It's the same word used when Jesus casts out the fake worshippers when he clears the temple.

And so I suspect that this man is a fake follower. He simply came to consume from Jesus rather than to serve him like Simon's mother-in-law did as we saw earlier.

And it's here we also see one reason why Jesus had been telling people to be silent. I don't know if you noticed that, but back in verse 25 as soon as the evil spirit speaks of Jesus' identity Jesus says, Be silent.

And then in verse 34 Jesus does not let the demons speak about who he is. And here he tells the leper not to say anything either. Why? Well so that his preaching ministry may not be hindered as it now is.

[18 : 20] For now he can no longer go into the towns openly to preach, can he? But it says he has to stay out into the country. This is why Jesus kept telling people to be quiet for his mission was primarily not to heal but to preach as we'll see in a moment.

But the other reason he wants to conceal his identity for the moment is because people have their own expectations about the king. They thought the king would come and get rid of the Romans who were ruling the country at the time. But this is not Jesus' mission.

He has come to establish God's kingdom, not by getting rid of the Romans, but by giving his life as a ransom for many. for only in this way can he save people, not from the Romans, but from the greater danger of hell, you see.

Jesus has come to grant forgiveness, which is their greatest need. And we see this in our next episode, our last episode, chapter 2, verse 1. Now Jesus has back in Capernaum.

It says at home, I suspect he's back at Simon's mother-in-law's house, perhaps that's where he was staying, and people had poured in again, perhaps to see a miracle, even to be healed themselves. Certainly that's why the paralyzed man was there.

[19 : 53] But notice Jesus is not healing them, but verse 2, what is he doing? He's speaking the word to them, for this is primarily what he came to do. Nevertheless, along comes this paralyzed man, carried by four friends, but they cannot get to Jesus.

And so what do they do? Well, they climb on the roof and put a big hole in the roof, as you do. They give Simon's mother-in-law a new skylight, just for a kitchen. And then they lower the man down, and no doubt with all eyes on Jesus, everyone watching to see what Jesus will do next.

And so we read in verse 5, when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven. Now, if I were the paralytic, I would have been thinking, oh, that's nice, Jesus, but what I really want is to walk.

Can't you see that I'm paralysed? I need to walk so that I can work, so that I can provide food and perhaps earn some money to pay for the roof that my friends have just vandalised. So what are you doing, Jesus?

And I suspect there would have been others there thinking the same thing. This man needs healing, clearly. So why are you pronouncing forgiveness? Jesus, what are you doing? Well, as you may know, Jesus is addressing the man's greatest need, forgiveness.

[21 : 03] If you ask people today what their greatest need was, what do you think people might say? Good health? More money? A house? A car? A job? Perhaps that Collingwood would win the premiership next year?

I'm sorry about that for those Collingwood supporters. But how many people would say forgiveness? Not many, would they? But this is our greatest need, for without it we won't see heaven, but instead we'll suffer hell.

But there was another group of people asking themselves what Jesus was doing as well, though they had different reasons for asking. See verse 6? It says, Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, why does this fellow speak in this way?

It is blasphemy. Who can forgive sins but God alone? The scribes and teachers of Jewish law were asking each other what Jesus was doing as well, but not because he didn't heal the paralytic, but because he was acting like God.

Of course, again, he is God, but again, they didn't see it, did they? And so in verse 8, we read this, At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves, and he said to them, Why do you raise such questions in your hearts?

[22 : 13] Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, stand up and take your mat and walk. But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic, I say to you, stand up, take your mat, and go to your home.

And he stood up and immediately took his mat and went out before all of them, so that they were all amazed, and glorified God saying, We have never seen anything like this.

You see, by healing this man, Jesus confirms that he does have the authority, God's authority, to forgive sins. And you see, Jesus calls himself the Son of Man, which as we heard from the children's talk this morning, was a reference from Daniel.

In fact, on the next slide, there's the passage that it alludes to from Daniel 7. And here, the Son of Man that Daniel sees approaches God, the Ancient of Days, and was led into his presence.

And then, verse 14, he was given authority, glory, and sovereign power. You see, Jesus is saying he is this Son of Man who has been given God's authority, including the authority to forgive sins.

[23 : 19] And then he proves it by healing the man. Just as Jesus' authority to teach is confirmed by casting out the evil spirit. So here, his authority to forgive is confirmed by healing the paralytic.

You see, all these episodes demonstrate Jesus has great authority, and so he must be the real king. He must be the real deal. Now, before we wrap up, it's worth noticing that sandwiched between all these accounts are verses 35 to 39, which we skipped over.

And that speaks of his mission. See verse 35? In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, Everyone is searching for you. And he answered, Let us go to the neighboring town so that I may proclaim the message there also, for that is what I came out to do.

And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons. See what Jesus says? Let us go to neighboring town so that I may proclaim the message there also, for that is what I came to do.

[24 : 26] You see, although these miracles show us Jesus has real authority and therefore he's the real king, it's not why he came. At the heart of all these accounts is Jesus saying that he came to preach.

He came to proclaim that God's kingdom had come near, so repent and believe. And the preaching of this message was Jesus' priority. It's what we saw him doing in the synagogue when the evil spirit came.

It's what we saw him doing at the house when the paralytic came. In fact, Jesus often initiates preaching and only rarely initiates healing. Did you know? But why this priority of preaching over healing?

Well, because as we're seeing, physical healing is not our greatest need. Our greatest need is forgiveness. And so he preached that people might repent, believe, and be forgiven by the death he would soon die.

Well, I started this morning with that joke about making sure we pick the real parachute, the real deal to save us. And the point is, Jesus is that real parachute.

[25 : 29] Jesus is that real king who has authority to forgive us and save us from our sins. He is the real king because he has real authority, as I said, to forgive us and bring us safely to our heavenly home.

And so the question is, if Jesus is the real king who can save us, then is he our king? Do we believe in him and follow him as our king and saviour? Any other king we follow, like ourselves or the world, is like putting on a backpack instead of a parachute to save ourselves.

Jesus is the real king who can save us and so is he your king? And if he is our king, then he ought to have authority in our lives, or do not?

That is, Jesus and his mission ought to shape our priorities, how we spend our time, our money, our energy. You see, the disciples recognised Jesus' authority and so it shaped their lives, didn't it? They followed him immediately and took part in his mission.

Oh, sure, they fished again and they, you know, related to their family again. I mean, after all, Simon went back to his mother-in-law's house. But when Jesus called, they followed. They took part in Jesus' mission.

[26 : 41] You see, Jesus' authority was the greatest authority in their lives. And if Jesus shaped their lives like this, should it not shape ours? When I was younger, I had a problem, I must confess, with keeping to the speed limits.

I used to argue that I should be able to drive fast so that I could spend less time in the car and more time at church where I was going to because that's where God wanted me to go anyway. I know it's flawed logic. I should have just left earlier.

But then I can remember reading that God wants us to obey the authorities, including the speed limits. And if Jesus was my king, then he needed to have real authority in my life, even over the way I drove.

For a friend of mine called Brendan, he got rid of some songs on his iPod. You know what an iPod is? Those music device things? He got rid of some songs because they had unhelpful lyrics and he replaced it with some daily devotions by Spurgeon, I think it was.

Why? Because Jesus is his king and so Jesus had authority even over what he listened to, what he watched. Or like some friends of ours who had three children, she came to church one day late looking frazzled because the kids really didn't want to come and so it was a battle to get there.

[27 : 53] And when I said, I'm sorry it was so tough for you to get here, she responded, well, Jesus is more important than the kids. How many of us would say that? You see, Jesus has authority even over her family.

Another friend, Archie, tax time, receives his tax return, tithes 10% of it to mission. Why? Because Jesus is his king and Jesus' mission shapes his life.

Now, I don't know what it means for you but the question is, if Jesus is our king, then does he have real authority in our lives? Let's pray that he would, that he and his mission might shape the way we live.

Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you that Jesus is the real king as seen by the real authority he has over evil, over sickness, even people's lives.

And so we ask, Heavenly Father, that you would help us who trust in Jesus as our king to have his authority shape our lives, to have his mission shape our priorities.

[29 : 03] And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.