

The Gospel and Prejudice

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[0 : 0 0] Recently, I've been in my devotional reading, it had me in the book of Proverbs. And one of the Proverbs that I read is one you're probably familiar with.

! It's Proverbs 11.22. And it says, like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion.

And this proverb really speaks about contradictory things. That's all it speaks about is nothing putting women down or anything like that. It just is talking about how in life we see things that are contradictions.

Imagine seeing a pig with a gold ring in its snout. Who would do that? And then also, a beautiful woman who acts in ugly ways.

It's a contradiction. It just shouldn't be because the gold ring, the pig, the kind of animal that a pig is, it overshadows the gold ring.

[1 : 0 1] And a beautiful woman, if she has ugly ways, her ugly ways would overshadow her beauty. And so we see these contradictory things in life. But I think more contradictory than a pig with a gold ring in its snout or a beautiful woman who lacks discretion is a Christian who's prejudiced.

I think that is a more contradictory and a more ugly sight than a pig with a gold ring in its snout or a beautiful woman who acts in ugly ways.

But the truth is, we do see that. I want to talk about that this morning. I want to talk about Christians who act in an unbecoming way by demonstrating prejudice towards people.

And just to make sure that we're on the same page, I know sometimes we use words and we generally use them, but here's how I want to talk about prejudice this morning. Prejudice, by the Collins Dictionary definition, is an unreasonable dislike of a particular group of people or things or a preference for one group of people or things over another.

So it's an unreasonable dislike of a particular group of people or things or a preference for one group of people or things over another.

[2 : 4 4] And we know prejudice comes in all kinds of different forms. The common ones being prejudice based on race, skin color, and national origin.

Some people hold these prejudices and not sometimes even based on the national origin, but even the national origin of a person's parents where they are descended from.

The Jews are an example of this. The Jews were prejudiced to all non-Jews, whom the Bible refers to as Gentiles.

And although it was God's intent from the very beginning that the nation of Israel would be the life-giving river to all the nations, the Jews were prejudiced against the very people that God intended to start with them to be able to reach.

They were to be this life-giving river out to all the nations. And they didn't even want to associate with the Gentiles. And we have been saying, as we have been working our way through the Gospel of Mark, those of you who are visiting with us this morning, we are in a sermon series in the Gospel of Mark.

[3 : 56] And we are picking up this morning just where we left off last time. And what we have been saying is Mark has been highlighting this prejudice among the Jews towards the Gentiles. And in particular, in chapter 7, we saw how Mark has been showing this, how the Jews were prejudiced towards the Gentiles.

Now, the Gospel of Mark was written primarily to Gentiles. The Gospels have different audiences. So Matthew, for example, was writing to Jewish people.

And Mark was writing predominantly to Gentiles. And so Mark is making a case against the way the Jews treated Gentiles.

And he's helping the Gentiles to see that the Gospel is very different from the way the Jews made it out to be. He's helping them to see that God is very different from the God that the Jews presented.

The Jews presented a Jewish God. And what Mark is showing is, no, God is an all-people God. He is a Jew and he is a Gentile God.

[5 : 08] And so that's Mark's main motivation in this particular section of his Gospel in particular. Now, those of you who are here a few weeks ago, you'd remember that we began in chapter 7.

And we looked at this account of the Pharisees and the scribes and how they would wash their hands when they went into the town, when they came back because they felt that when they contacted, well, came into contact with the Gentiles, they were dirty.

So they'd wash their hands and they would wash their utensils before they would eat with them. And they would wash even the dining couch because they felt that they would be defiled by the Gentiles.

And Jesus challenged them. Jesus said to them, Your lips are near to me. He quoted out of Isaiah where God says, Your lips are near to me, but your heart is far from me.

You worship me with your lips. You give me lip service, but your heart is not in your worship. And then last week, we looked at verses 14 through 23, where we consider this parable that Jesus told, where he said, Teaching against the scribes and the Pharisees, he says, The things on the outside don't defile you.

[6 : 29] He said, What defiles you is the sin in your heart. He said, That's where sin comes from. It comes from your heart, because every single one of us, our heart is a sin factory.

We don't sin because things outside of ourselves cause us to sin and defile us. We sin because our hearts are exceedingly sinful. We are broken, fallen people in all of us.

Born in sin, shaped in iniquity, and so our hearts produce sin. And that was the point that Jesus made to the scribes and the Pharisees, and we considered that last week.

And the bottom line of that is, none of us can change our hearts. No amount of good works, no amount of new habits can change our hearts. Only God can transform the human heart.

And what Jesus was actually saying to the scribes and the Pharisees, and really to all of us, is, You can wash as much as you want. You can do all those religious things. It'll never change the root problem that you have with defilement and sin.

[7 : 36] It comes from within. In last week's sermon, that is what we covered. But Jesus is not just one to teach and then not live what he teaches.

And Mark is showing us that in this section that we have come to this morning. Mark wants to show us that Jesus not only teaches against prejudice, but Jesus himself demonstrates that he is against prejudice.

So this section that we have come to this morning is pretty lengthy. The section we are covering this morning is Mark chapter 7, verses 24, through chapter 8, verse 10.

So you can please turn your Bibles if you have not yet done so. And we are going to be looking at this lengthy section. But here's what I want us to see from this section and from this sermon this morning.

The gospel is for all people, but prejudice hinders its spread to some people. The gospel is for all people, but prejudice hinders its spread to some people.

[8 : 56] The Jews were hindering the spread of God's message that was to all people, that God would bless all the nations through the Jewish nations, through Abraham.

That was God's promise to Abraham. He says, I'm going to bless all the nations through you. He was just starting with the Jews. He was not ending with the Jews. He was starting with the Jews, but he didn't intend to end there.

So Jesus comes into the world, and he comes into the world as the Savior of the world. The Savior for all people, Jew and Gentile.

And Mark helps us to see that Jesus not only taught this, but Jesus actually lived it. And so before we look at this section of Mark's gospel in more detail, let's take a moment to pray.

Father, we thank you this morning that we have this privilege of being able to have your word, to read it, and to hear what you would say to us through it.

[10 : 04] Lord, would you help us all to see any area of prejudice in our hearts? Lord, help us. And Lord, help us to recognize, especially those of us who name the name of Christ, that that is more contradictory than a gold ring in a pig's snout.

More contradictory than a beautiful woman who acts in ugly ways. Lord, help us to not only see that, but where it is in our lives.

Help us to repent of it. Recognizing that those who have put their trust in Jesus are also called to help others to put their trust in Jesus. And that includes all people.

So Father, would you help us to hear that? Help me, Lord, to be faithful to proclaim that this morning. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you've ever been to court, or if you've ever watched a court proceeding on television, you'll notice that lawyers would bring in court what they call exhibits.

[11 : 21] Normally it's a document or some item, and they were presented to the court, and they say, I'm submitting this into evidence, and the judge would say, well, that's exhibit so-and-so, exhibit A, or exhibit 1, or something like that.

And what we see Mark doing in this section that we have come to this morning, in Mark chapter 7, verses 24 through Mark chapter 10, Mark chapter 8, verse 10, Mark is presenting evidence.

He's presenting exhibits to show that Jesus Christ has come to all people. That the gospel belongs to all people.

It is a world gospel. It is the gospel for all people. And so what Mark does in this section is, he presents what I would consider three exhibits to show this.

Three exhibits to show that the gospel is for all people, Jew and Gentiles, whatever their circumstances are. And in our remaining time, I want to consider these three exhibits that Mark provides as evidence to show that Jesus is a living example of what he preached.

[12 : 33] Again, remember, Mark is trying to persuade a predominantly Gentile audience, and that's why he writes in this way. And a little later, we're going to look at Matthew's account.

And you'll see Matthew presents the account a little different, and you will be able to see that Matthew's account is a little different because Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience. Let's consider the first bit of evidence that we find in Mark chapter 7, verses 24 through 30.

And it's the account of the Syrophoenician woman, which I will call Exhibit A. So we're going to read section by section and we'll consider it.

So please follow along as I read, beginning in verse 24 of Mark chapter 7. And from there, he arose.

Now, notice this is a continuation. Jesus has just told the Pharisees what defiles them, and Mark tells us from there. So from there, he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

[13 : 38] And he entered the house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet.

Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And he said to her, Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and serve it to the dogs.

But she answered him, Yes, Lord. Yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. And he said to her, For this statement you may go your way.

The demon has left your daughter, And she went home and found the child lying in bed, and the demon gone. Now what we see in this first bit of evidence that Mark gives us to show who Jesus was and why he came, we see that Jesus seems to be doing something very deliberate after this rebuke of the Pharisees for their prejudice towards the Gentiles.

What Jesus does, according to Mark, Jesus says, From there he arose and went away in the region of Tyre and Sidon, into a Gentile region.

[15 : 07] It is almost as if Jesus is now going to deliberately live out what he has told the Pharisees and the scribes they were wrongly doing. And this area, Tyre, the people from Tyre were actually arch enemies, ancient arch enemies of the Jews.

They had a long history of just being enemies. So Jesus, with deliberation, goes into this Gentile area. And remember, no Orthodox Jew will do this.

And Gentiles knew that no Orthodox Jew would do this. So any Gentile, Mark's audience, when they're reading this, they're saying, Jesus gets up and he goes into Tyre and Sidon.

They know that that doesn't, that doesn't happen. And so, he goes into this area and he doesn't want anyone to know he's in this house.

He goes into a house, again, something the Jews would not do because they would feel they're going to be contaminated. He goes in and doesn't want anyone to be there. But Mark tells us it was impossible for them to be hidden.

[16 : 21] And what's interesting about this is that it tells us that the fame of Jesus, the name of Jesus, had gone out so sufficiently that he could not even go into a Gentile region without being known.

The word had gotten into this area about him and his ministry so he could not be hidden. And what I think is interesting about this is some of the very people that you think are not aware, are not interested in God or the things of God, are far more interested and far more aware than we know.

And that's what Jesus shows us as he goes in this area where these are supposed to be pagan people. These are supposed to be idolatrous people. But yet, they knew about Jesus.

And what I say to us just in making a point that in the same way that Jesus went to them, we need to realize that we likewise need to go to some people who would be seen as outsiders, who would be seen as the outcasts.

But in this account, the most interesting account, a very interesting thing happens. This woman gets word and when we read Matthew's account, we get to see that this woman didn't just care about Jesus like someone say, man, go to this house, there's this man, you could heal people, your daughter could probably be delivered from this demon.

[17 : 56] Matthew presented that this woman knew about Jesus because she goes and she says, oh, son of David, have mercy on me. This woman had heard of Jesus and she heard that he was in this house and she knew her daughter is afflicted by this demon, possessed by this demon, and so she desperately goes to this house and pleads with Jesus to deliver her daughter.

This woman was desperate and we can see this woman was determined. And then in verse 27, we read this very difficult statement, a statement that is very troubling for some people where when she begs Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter, Jesus says in verse 27, let the children be fed first for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

And the words of Jesus, rightly understood, would be referring to Jews as the children, the children of Abraham and everybody else outside as far as the Jews would see them as dogs.

They were dogs. They were Gentile dogs. They had no place in the scheme of things. And so Jesus actually employs the very view, the prevailing view of Jews and he presents it in response to this woman.

It's not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs. Let the children eat first and then let the dogs eat.

[19 : 40] But this woman wasn't put off. she wasn't put off by what Jesus said and she said to him, yes Lord, yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.

And Jesus commends the woman for a statement and Jesus says to the woman, go your way, your daughter is going to be well. And she goes home and sure enough her daughter's laying in bed, the demon is gone.

And what's the point of this very intriguing encounter that Jesus has with this woman and this very intriguing statement that he makes to her.

Again, remember Mark is writing to a Gentile audience. And Jesus refers to the woman in the same way the Jews would refer to a Gentile as a dog and who is unclean.

to give us some insight into how we should make sense of this, let's turn to Matthew's account in Matthew 15. We'll come back to Mark chapter 7.

[20 : 50] But let's look at Matthew 15 and we'll start in verse 21. And let me just make a quick point before we look at this.

If you remember, even the way these two gospels begin shows it to two different audiences. When Matthew writes his gospel, where does he start?

He starts with a long genealogy. And his point is to show the Jews that Jesus is a real Jew, that Jesus descended from Abraham, he descended from David, so when you go into Matthew chapter 1, that's all you see, this long genealogy to prove that Jesus is Jewish.

Mark doesn't do that. Because he's writing to a Gentile audience and they don't care. He starts his gospel this way, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's all he says. No ancestry, no genealogy. He's not trying to convince them of the same thing that Matthew is trying to convince his Jewish audience.

[22 : 04] So, this account that we're going to read, Matthew is writing this for Jewish eyes. So, here's what he says, starting in verse 21. And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon, and behold a Canaanite woman.

He just refers to as a Canaanite woman. Mark says she was Syrophenician, more specifically telling us the area that she was from. Mark says, Matthew says, oh, she was just a Canaanite.

from that region, came out and was crying, have mercy on me, oh, Lord, son of David. My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.

but he didn't answer a word. So, here we see Matthew giving a bit more detail that Jesus initially did not answer this woman. Then, it says, and his disciples came and begged him, saying, send her away, for she is crying out after us.

He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But she came and knelt before him, saying, Lord, help me.

[23 : 25] And he answered, it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. She said, yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table.

Then Jesus answered her, oh, woman, great is your faith, be it done for you as you desire. And her daughter was healed instantly. What I find in particular insightful from Matthew's account that helps us to appreciate Mark's account is this statement that Jesus makes in verse 24 where he says, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

God's love. Now, let me confess this morning that though I have interacted with people about this text before, I've never studied this text or preached on it before, and it's only this time that I've really studied it and labored over it to try to understand what is going on in this statement that Jesus makes.

this statement that Jesus makes to the disciples, I was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

I believe that Jesus is speaking to the disciples as they saw his mission. The disciples of Jesus, you should not get this confused, Jews.

[25 : 00] They had some of the same prejudices that the rest of the Jews had. They were with Jesus, but they had their own prejudices, and so Jesus is saying to them, it seems like he's not making a statement of fact, and here's why we know he's not making a statement of fact.

If he was only called to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, why is he going into Gentile territory and doing what he does? He would be disobedient.

If the father says, you only go to Jews, and we find him deliberately going into this Gentile region and doing what we're going to see him do, it seems that Jesus is not stating this as a fact.

He is almost saying it to them this way. But you all know, I've only come to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. people? That's what you think.

In other words, you're not as blatant as those Pharisees and scribes. You're with me, but you think I'm a Jewish Jesus as well. And we see this being played out in the book of Acts.

[26 : 10] We see when the gospel came to the Jews and the day of Pentecost, the church started the same prejudices that the Judaistic Pharisees had, these Christian Jews had.

They did not want to associate with the Gentiles. we see the big showdown between Peter and Paul in the church of Galatia. And so it seems to me that Jesus is making this statement to them to also challenge them when he says, but I've only come to the lost sheep at the house of Israel.

And so now the woman comes to him. This is the picture. The picture seems to be like this. This woman is almost outside saying, heal my daughter. My daughter is possessed with a demon.

Please heal her. And she is shouting and Jesus is ignoring her. And the disciples say, man, send her away. This woman is making noise in her head. Send her away. And Jesus makes a statement to them.

And then it seems like somehow this woman gets close to him. She falls on her knees and she says, have mercy on me. Son of David, and so it is apparent that Jesus is interacting with the realities, both of the disciples and the realities of the Jews in general.

[27 : 51] Now let's go back to Mark, Mark chapter seven. Mark chapter seven. chapter seven. seven. And here's what I think we should remember as we try to make sense of what Jesus says to this woman.

Here's the reality. All of us, all of us, in terms of the sequence of the gospel, all of us who, when I say all of us, I mean all of us non-Jews.

Gentiles. And all of us, in a sense, got served after the Jews. All of us.

And yet served at the same time. We're all outsiders, in a sense. And Paul says it this way. He says it this way in Ephesians chapter two. He says you are all strangers and aliens and separated from the common gods of Israel.

So all of us are served second. The gospel is, what did Paul say again in Romans 1.16?

[29 : 01] He says the gospel is the power of God and who does it come to first? First to the Jew and also to the Greek or to the Gentiles.

And so in that sense we are all outsiders and we should not stumble over that fact. We should not stumble over the fact that that is just God's own providence and God's own sovereignty that he chose to do it that way.

Not because the Jews are special and better than anybody else but just a sovereign God decided that he would go into a pagan land, choose this man called Abraham and he would say to this pagan man I'm going to bless all the nations through you and essentially he started with that pagan man's offspring but never intended it to stop there because he told Abraham the whole world I'm going to bless through you.

So we should not stumble over this fact that the gospel is to the Jew first. But here is what's interesting. This woman says to Jesus I'll just take crumbs.

Even the dogs would eat crumbs. Crumbs from you would be the answer to my prayers. And the question is this. Does Jesus give her crumbs? No he doesn't.

[30 : 25] As a matter of fact Jesus does an amazing thing. When he says to her go your way great is your faith. In the statement that you made your daughter is going to be well.

She goes home her daughter is healed. The demon has left her daughter and this woman doesn't get crumbs. this woman gets bread. Even though the gospel and the dealings of God and God's redemptive plan didn't start with the Gentiles proper.

I mean if you want to take it in a very literal sense Abraham was not a Jew. Abraham was a Gentile. He came out of a moon worshipping land. But let me think of it in another way.

Yeah the gospel didn't come to us first us Gentiles. But the gospel came to us. The same gospel. No different gospel. Not crumbs. The full substance of the gospel.

And this woman was not put off by that. And it seems that what Mark is essentially saying to his Jewish audience is this. Don't be put off by the prejudice and the racism of the Jews.

[31 : 40] Because if you do you will miss the gospel that also comes to you. this woman could have said you call me a dog? Man I don't need that.

And she would walk out. if that woman and others like her stumble over these words of Jesus they will not receive the bread that yes he gives first to the children but then also to the dogs to the ones who come second.

Interesting and I don't want to press this too much but I want you to look at what Jesus says again. He says in verse 27 let the children be fed first for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

This woman introduced the idea of crumbs. Jesus never said I'll give you crumbs. He said the children are going to eat first and then we will consider the outsiders the other ones.

So I think this is a very important thing for us to see that Mark is making this point to his Gentile audience and saying look don't let Jewish racism Jewish demeaning comments and views about who you are cause you to miss that this is your portion as well.

[33 : 20] I think in this encounter though we also get a picture of the fact that we as followers of Jesus Christ can have prejudices against the very people who need Jesus just as much as we need Jesus.

This woman's daughter was possessed by a demon. She had a great need and he was doing this for Jews as well. They had needs.

These people are no different. And sometimes we can forget that we can forget that those of us who have come to Christ and whose lives Christ has touched and transformed.

That people who we hold prejudices against they need the same gospel. They need the same Jesus in their lives to touch them and to transform them and to change them. And yet because of our prejudices we never bring Jesus to them.

As a matter of fact what we do is we obscure Jesus for them. And we make them have these distorted views about who Jesus is and the point to them as well is if you allow those distortions to get to you and cause you to dismiss wholesale what Jesus is about you're going to do it to your own spiritual harm.

[34 : 40] You have to be able to overcome that. See beyond that so that you likewise may be blessed.

it's very interesting how Mark lays out his gospel. If you look at what Mark does you will notice in chapter 7 verses 1 through 23 that's like if you want to think of a sandwich that's like the first slice of bread.

And then in chapter 8 verses 11 through 13 that's like the second slice of bread and in those two slices Jesus is dealing with Pharisees.

he's fighting with them arguing with them. And then sandwiched right between that is these three encounters in Gentile territory. The three encounters we're going to look at all in Gentile territory.

Nobody's fighting with them. The Gentiles aren't fighting with them. It's the religious people who are fighting with them. And I think the same is true for us as well.

[35 : 45] People who are away from God and who we hold prejudices against a far more open to God and the things of God and the gospel than some of the people that we're minded to talk to.

And some of the people that we are comfortable talking to, all they do is engage us in a bunch of debates and a bunch of arguments instead of those people who are far away from God.

And Mark is trying to help us to see this. Arguments with the Pharisees, Jesus going into a Gentile territory and doing three specific things and then as he leaves that back to arguing with the Pharisees again.

Brothers and sisters, the same way that Jesus deliberately goes into this Gentile territory, we likewise need to go into Gentile territory.

I want to ask you this morning, I want you to think about your own prejudices, whatever they might be. you know, in the Bahamas, my assessment is we have three main prejudices.

[36 : 55] We have three main prejudices nationally, and like these disciples of Jesus who followed Jesus, the same way some of the same Jewish prejudices followed them and continued to be a part of their reality even as they followed Christ, even as they led the church.

The same is true for many of us who have come to Christ, but we still retain many of the national prejudices that we have as a people.

in the Bahamas, the main the first, I mentioned three prejudices.

The first prejudice we have is we're prejudiced towards foreigners, in particular, people from the Caribbean, and especially against Haitians and those of Haitian ancestry.

That is a widespread prejudice that we have. And my own experience has shown me that even for those who have come to Christ and named the name of Christ, those prejudices are still a reality in their lives.

[38 : 15] On Wednesday, Wednesday afternoon, I happened to turn the radio on as I was driving home and I heard Brother Lyndon, he was on Rendell Jones' show and he was being interviewed by Rendell.

He did an all around fantastic job covering things from the economy to social parts of our country, talking about the hurricane and what needs to be done and all that.

And Rendell Jones, and let me just say this about Rendell Jones, because I've been on this show and he takes me to task, but Rendell Jones does not necessarily believe the things that he comes across seeming to believe.

He plays the devil's advocate. Now, sometimes it's hard to tell whether he believes it or he's just playing it, but that's what he does. And so to some of these challenging Lyndon, and obviously one of the things that came up was the whole issue of Haitians conversation.

And I must say, I listened to Lyndon's response, and I told him I was proud of his response. He was faithful to the truth, he was faithful to reality, and I couldn't have been prouder.

[39 : 34] And one of the reasons I was proud was because I recognized that he was not representing the prevailing view in our country. Many people, no doubt, railed against him. And rebuked him for the things that he said.

As it relates to what needs to be done with the reality of the large illegal immigration population that we have in the country from Haiti in particular.

His comments were measured, his comments were common sense, his comments were the right thing. But they aren't representative of what it is in our country broadly.

And I could not have been prouder of him because I think he represents the truth of scripture. And I'll say this, anyone of Haitian origin, parentage, descendancy, would have been glad to speak to Lyndon.

They would not have felt being pushed away in some way as the Jews would have done towards the Gentiles. And see, brothers and sisters, here's what I will say to us.

[40 : 47] We have a greater responsibility, we who are Christians and who are in the majority, we have a greater responsibility to go to those who are marginalized.

Those who are marginalized will not come to us. This is why the woman at the well in John chapter 4, the Samaritan woman, this is why she was amazed that Jesus talked to her.

Because Jesus was the one who was a part of a group of people who marginalized the Samaritans and here he is the one starting a conversation with her. And it's the same with us brothers and sisters.

Those who are in minority and marginalized will not, as I've heard Tim say, they won't cross the aisle.

They won't reach out. We have to do that. that is on us. So that's the first prejudice. The second prejudice that we have, largest of people, is towards homosexuals and those who have any kind of gender confusion, any kind of distorted sexual behavior.

[42 : 00] Now, I'm not talking about heterosexual sexual morality. We tend to overlook adultery and fornication, those kinds of things.

That's sexual brokenness as well. That's broken sexuality because that's not God's design for us. But we tend to pay more attention and have more objection, not just to the conduct, but to the people who engage in this conduct.

We hold these prejudices towards them. And in a sense, we then become like Jews and they become like Gentiles and we have a great divide between us and we have prejudices towards them and so we won't reach out to them, we won't go to them, we won't cross the aisle to them to try to share with them.

And so though they need the gospel as much as we need the gospel, it's hindered towards them because we won't go to them. And when I say we, I don't mean every single one of us, I mean we generally, we broadly.

And then the third area in our country where we have prejudices is we have social prejudices. We're class people, we're class minded people.

[43 : 19] And again, this is a contradiction in the scripture because the Bible says we have to condescend to those who are of lower estates. And so in our country, we, in some countries they may say, well don't marry a person of this color or whatever, but we would tend to be saying things like, well don't marry no one who don't have a college degree, don't marry anyone who don't make more money than you or this or that.

And so our social prejudices are based on lack of education or lack of money or based on where a person lives and the trappings of their life and what they seem to have or not have.

It's a prejudice we have. And I think if we're all honest, you've been around conversations where people talk about marriage and they talk about the kind of person you should marry or not marry. And these things come up.

And while on one hand we would object to a person might say to a child, white child or black child, don't marry a white person or don't marry a black person if it's a different race, we think nothing about saying, well, don't marry someone who doesn't have this or who doesn't have that or who is from that background or the other background.

Brothers and sisters, all of these prejudices are sin. They're sin. And not only are they sin, they're serious sin.

[44 : 47] And they're serious sin because what they do is they alienate us and people from the gospel that we are supposed to be bringing to them.

And these are people who are made in the image and in the likeness of God and they are broken like us and the only hope for them is the transforming effect of Jesus Christ in their lives.

And we who have that gospel hinder that gospel by not going to them. As Jesus went into this Gentile territory, into this Gentile house brothers and sisters, we need to be going into these Gentile territories as they were for us, these prejudices, reaching out intentionally and bearing the light of the gospel to those who need it.

Now some Gentiles reading Mark's gospel might say, well, I don't know, I still wonder about Jesus. I mean, after all, he likens this woman to a dog.

He doesn't even go to the woman's house. I wonder why he didn't go to her house. If he really didn't have a prejudice, he should have just gone to the woman's house. And so Mark gives us another account.

[46 : 08] He gives us another account of Jesus ministering to someone. And we find it, again in Gentile territory, we find it in verses 31 through 37, and this is what I would call exhibit B, the healing of a deaf man.

So follow along as I read that section. Mark chapter 7, starting in verse 31. Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee in the region of the Decapolis, and they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.

And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and at this spitting, touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, Ephaphata, that is, be opened.

And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. And Jesus charged them to tell no one.

But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, he has done all things well, he even makes the deaf hear, and the mute speak.

[47 : 36] in this account, Jesus shows by his own example how wrong the Pharisees and the scribes were in their belief that when you touch Gentiles, you become unclean.

People brought this deaf man to Jesus with his speech impediment. They said to him, would you lay your hand on him and heal him? They didn't just say heal him, they said lay your hand on him and heal him.

And how many of you know that Jesus could have done that? We just see he spoke the word and the demon left from this girl. He could have done that. But Jesus ministers to this Gentile man in a most personal and compassionate way.

This man who is deaf and dumb and I think you could kind of imagine the kind of life that he lived. Probably was marginalized.

Obviously couldn't have conversation. So he's probably isolated in many ways. And Jesus goes to this man and Mark tells us he puts his fingers in his ears and then he spits evidently on his fingers.

[48 : 54] I presume he uses his fingers and then he touches the man's tongue and he says, Be opened. and the man is healed.

Now, I think since we know that Jesus had the power to heal this man without even touching him, I believe that it is clear that Jesus wanted to communicate something by this personal, intimate, compassionate way that he ministered to this man.

a man who may not have been touched in a long time, a man who may not have been shown that kind of care, but a man who would have understood this is a Jew who's doing this to me.

Because rest assured that today while races may not be as distinct, they were then and he would have known that Jesus was a Jew and Jesus would have known that he was a Gentile and Jesus ministers to this man in a very, very personal way.

And I think it spoke also to those who were present, those who were there. We see in verse 36, Jesus charged them, don't tell anyone. The more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it and what they said to him.

[50 : 22] Look at the verdict that they give in verse 37. He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and he makes the mute speak.

Isn't it interesting that even when Jesus says don't share it, when Jesus has done something for you, you can't help but share it. And brothers, that's the way it's supposed to be.

Jesus has done for us who have trusted in Christ far more than what he did for this man who was deaf and dumb. Jesus didn't just open our ears and heal our tongues and tell us go on our way.

No, he raised us from the dead as we sang about this morning. He brought us from life, he brought us from death to life. He brought us from being objects of the wrath of God to being objects of his mercy.

And if this man could be so excited and the people who saw that could be so excited to share that Jesus touched them, brothers and sisters, how much more those of us who have been brought from death to life should be sharing that good news, saying to people, Christ can turn your life around.

[51 : 41] I was moved this morning as we sang in Christ alone. I was moved as we sang O happy day.

The last night of O happy day is forever I am changed. Forever. Not temporarily. Forever we are changed. When Jesus touches us, we are changed forever.

And so these people could not help but share it. And brothers and sisters, I think they provide for us an example.

people. Well, someone might say, well, okay, that's great. He heals this woman's daughter, Cassidema, out of her, and he heals this man.

So he does that for two Gentiles. But what about Gentiles in general? What about beyond just two people who could be just tokens? And it seems like Mark is anticipating that objection as well.

[52 : 45] And so Mark gives us the third exhibit in chapter 8, verses 1 through 10. Chapter 8, verses 1 through 10.

This third exhibit, I call it exhibit C, is the feeding of the 4,000. Follow along as I read, beginning in verse 1. In those days when, again, a great crowd had gathered and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and they have nothing to eat.

And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from a far way. And his disciples answered him, how can one feed these people with bread here in this desert place?

And he asked them, how many loaves do you have? They said seven. And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground and he took the seven loaves and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people and they set them before the crowd.

And they had a few small fish and having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. And they ate and were satisfied and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

[54 : 16] And there were about 4,000 people and he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanusa.

Now Mark does not exactly tell us the location of this feeding of the 4,000 person, but the context strongly suggests that it was still Gentile territory.

Now for support of this, I'm going to lean on someone who is much smarter than I am, whose commentary I have been reading as we have been going through the series in Mark.

Dr. Mark Strauss, in his commentary, commenting on this point about where did this feeding take place. here's what he writes. The most important question here with reference to Mark's narrative theology is whether he envisions the context as predominantly Gentile, thus being a complement to the Jewish feeding of the 5,000.

Remember some weeks ago Brother Lyndon preached on the feeding of the 5,000, which was in a Jewish context. And then he concludes with this statement. while few scholars have rejected this, the majority affirm it based on a number of considerations.

[55 : 46] And I won't go into all of them, I'll just mention two. The two considerations are one, just the context of the Gentile controversy with the Jews, and also the region that Jesus went to, because it says in verse 1, in those days, not some other days, but in those days, evidently the days that he was in this Gentile territory.

And then also, we would notice that when the disciples said to Jesus, look, it's not enough bread to feed these people, he said, I can't let them go because they have come from far away.

And that term is often used to refer to the Gentile nations, that they are far away from Israel. So, hopefully that satisfies you that this feeding also takes place in Jewish territory.

And Mark, not Jewish, Gentile territory, and Mark seems to want to contrast it with the feeding of the 5,000 in the Jewish territory, which has a big picture meaning.

The feeding of the 5,000 is not just that Jesus shows, hey, I could feed 5,000 people, bet you can't match that. That's not what it is. Jesus is showing that he's the bread of life.

[57 : 10] The physical miracle is to point to the spiritual miracle that Jesus needs to give spiritual bread to all those who will be eternally sustained with eternal life.

He's the only one who can give it. And since he did it predominantly to Jews, what we now see is he's doing it in this Gentile region to show Jesus is the bread of life as well for the Gentiles, not just for the Jews.

He's also the bread of life for the Gentiles. And that's the point of the whole account.

the point of the whole account is that Jesus is compassionate, that Jesus is concerned about Gentiles the same way that he is concerned about the Jews.

If he was unconcerning, you'd say, well, okay, that's it, I've taught you, taught you for three days, you can go on your way now, and they will die as they were on their way. No, he showed compassion for them.

[58 : 15] So any Gentile reading this account would know, he's a compassionate man. he was concerned about how the people would make it back, and he multiplied food for them.

But the bigger picture is not just that physical miracle, the bigger picture is that Jesus is the true bread of life. He is the bread who's come down from heaven, and those who feast on him will not be hungry.

Those who drink from him will not be thirsty, never again. in a spiritual sense. I think when we consider this account, consider these people, Gentile people, listening to Jesus, a Jew, and it seems like for three days, they listened to him.

Again, I think the picture we see is that people who are away from God are far more interested in hearing than sometimes we think. We see also that Jesus is both a Jesus of compassion and one who is sufficient for the needs.

Do you know that you look at verse eight, it says when they ate and were satisfied, they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

[59 : 51] Why do you think they give us that detail? Why do you think that also is important? I think what helps us to see is Jesus is more than enough. He's sufficient.

He's more than sufficient. He's more than sufficient. Even after thousands are fed, even after countless millions have come to Christ, there's still more bread for those on the outside.

There's still more living bread that they can come and they can receive and they can be nourished upon. Jesus Christ, in the same way the bread multiplied was miraculously sufficient and more than enough, Jesus is more than enough for the people.

I was going to conclude right now, but I hear the rain coming down and if I conclude right now, you'd have to go into rain.

But I will conclude. I want to conclude by asking you, what are your prejudices? And what kind of people are they against?

[61 : 01] Maybe I didn't identify the particular prejudices that you may hold. What are they? Are they racial or ethnic? Based on skin color?

Or based on where people are from or who their parents are? Is it based on people's lifestyle? Whether it's one of sexual brokenness like homosexuals?

Is it based on social factors? A person standing in society based on education or finances or where they live or don't live?

What are your prejudices? And who might be the people that those prejudices are hindering the gospel towards?

People in your sphere of influence who you more than anyone else is more positioned to reach? The prejudices blinding you to the need that these people have for the same gospel that has come to us.

[62 : 13] Brothers and sisters, I want to encourage us this morning to ask the Lord, as the psalmist says, Lord, search me and try me. And maybe searching isn't needed.

Maybe you know. Maybe you know right away where those prejudices are. And I would call us this morning to repent. I would call us to remember that all people are made in the image and the likeness of God.

And as he receives whoever comes to him, we must as well and we must take the gospel to them and we must cross the aisle and go to them.

if you're here this morning and you are an unbeliever and you don't know Christ, I want to say to you that unlike what most people think, that you have to kind of get right and change your life and do this and all this before you come to Christ, no, you can't.

If you try to change your life to get it right to come to Christ, that's a trick of the devil because you would never come. Because you can't change your life. We come as we are. and we bring our sin and brokenness to the only one who can forgive them and who can heal us and transform our lives.

[63 : 37] And I say to you this morning that Jesus Christ came for all people and he comes to all people. and if you believe that and turn to him today, scripture says he will not turn you away.

If you come in faith, repenting and believing. Let's bow in prayer. Amen.