

# Good News

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Date: 05 March 2017

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us now turn to the part of scripture that we read. The gospel according to Mark, chapter 1, reading at verse 29.

And immediately Jesus, that's the he that's in the verse, left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.

Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up.

And the fever left her and she began to serve them. I think it is worth noting and remembering how the gospel according to Mark begins.

If you look at the first verse of this chapter that we read together, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

[ 1 : 11 ] And you might be saying, well, that is simple enough and easy enough to understand. Why should it be significant or important?

Well, for this reason, the word gospel means literally good news. So now read the opening verse of the gospel again.

But when you do so, insert the words good news in place of the word gospel. The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mark wishes us to hear good news. He wants us to know what the good news is.

Good news that focuses our attention on Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ is at the heart of the message of good news.

[ 2 : 23 ] In fact, you might say, Jesus is the good news. And in a broken world, there is always sad news.

The ongoing Syrian conflict. The war in Mosul between Iraqi forces and ISIS. The associated constant level of suffering, pain, deprivation and fear.

Famine and associated suffering in southern Sudan. As a direct consequence of the ongoing conflict in that country.

And there seems no end to the stories of suffering that cross our media screens. But in contrast, the gospel is set before us as good news.

Good news about Jesus Christ. And can we not all agree that the world needs to hear good news?

[ 3 : 29 ] In a sad world. In a world of conflict and strife. In a world that is riven by animosities of one kind or another.

The world needs to hear the message of good news. And that is, in particular, what Mark is doing. And we have to ask ourselves, when we are reading this gospel.

Always worthwhile to remember that it is about good news. And to ask ourselves, what is the good news that Mark wants us to see in every section of the gospel.

Mark wants us to see in every section of the gospel.

It is a message that comes with divine power. And so, he also tells us how he deals with a man possessed by an unclean spirit.

[ 4 : 57 ] And these events take place in the public domain. And are widely reported. They cause a stir among the population.

Mark tells us that as a consequence, at once his fame spread everywhere. Throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

But in the verses for consideration this evening. Mark takes us, the reader, into a private dwelling. He takes us out of the public domain.

Into the private and less public. Where we find Christ also performing a miracle. What good news does this set before us?

Well, first of all, I'd like to consider with you the facts of this miracle. As the mark sets them before us. Secondly, the message that arises from this miracle.

[ 6 : 02 ] And thirdly, the effect that this healing has upon an unnamed woman. First of all, the facts that are associated with this miracle.

It is recorded for us, not just in Mark's gospel. But also in Matthew and Luke. And it is always useful to compare the different gospel accounts.

When you are looking at a part of any gospel. Each writer may have a different emphasis. But it helps us to grasp a fuller picture of what is set before us in the gospels.

Many might be aware that Mark was the writer of this gospel. But that much of the information comes from the apostle Peter.

So you find personal touches throughout the gospel of Mark. That you will not find in the other gospel writers. Mark tells us several facts about the miracle.

[ 7 : 16 ] He tells us, for example, when this miracle took place. In terms of the day of the week. And where it took place. Immediately, he, that is Jesus, left the synagogue.

And entered the house of Simon. Mark, like every other gospel writer. Has his own unique style. Often you find him using the term immediately.

If you go through even the verses that we read this evening. Immediately, immediately, immediately is a word. That occurs and recurs often in his writing.

And it's almost as if he is in a hurry. The style that he uses to write. We are told that Jesus and his companions, says Mark, immediately go to the house of Simon and Andrew.

We also know that it was the Jewish Sabbath. And that the synagogue was located in Capernaum. How do we know that?

[ 8 : 31 ] Well, verse 21. They went into Capernaum. And immediately on the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And it's after he left the synagogue that he went into this house.

Luke's account tells us, He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. He was teaching them on the Sabbath. And although it was in Capernaum that he taught in the synagogue on the Jewish Sabbath.

Does that mean that it was in Capernaum that the miracle was performed? We know that it was in the house of Simon, Peter. Matthew tells us when Jesus entered Peter's house, Luke, he left the synagogue and entered Simon's house.

In this gospel, we are told that the house is in joint ownership. And that may not be something that was widely known. Certainly not reported by the other gospel writers.

But in this gospel, because of Peter's input, I believe, we are told he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew.

[ 9 : 42 ] Where was the house located? John's gospel could help us in our research. For John, in speaking of Philip, who became a disciple, tells us that Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

It would appear there are two places in the Bible that bear the name Bethsaida. Bethsaida was on the west side of the Sea of Galilee and the other on the east or the northeastern side of the Sea of Galilee.

Bethsaida on the west side was located close to Capernaum and therefore in close proximity to the synagogue there, not too far away from this home.

Bethsaida means literally the house of fishing. And in the house of fishing, that is the name of the town, in the house of fishing, Jesus goes into the home of two fishermen, Simon and Andrew.

Was this the home that they grew up in? Possibly. But I cannot be certain about that. But of this I am certain that it was a home where the Lord Jesus Christ was welcomed and where he felt at home.

[ 11 : 20 ] And that raises a question for you and me. Is that the kind of home to which we belong this evening? A home where Jesus Christ is welcome?

A home where Jesus Christ would feel at home? In your company and in mine. And where we would feel at home in his company?

And where we would take immense delight in having the Lord Jesus in our home? Would he be welcomed into our homes?

Would he feel at home there? Is worship to the Lord made in our homes? Well, these are questions that we ought to ask ourselves as we reflect upon this passage of truth.

Mark also tells us that another couple of fishermen were in the company, Sebedee's sons, James and John. So here we have the great fishermen of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 12 : 32 ] And four fishermen as his companions. Now that is true, literally they were fishermen. That is what they did for a living.

But these fishermen had submitted to a higher calling. A calling that came with compelling and authoritative power.

Follow me, says Jesus to these men, and I will make you become fishers of men. In his company, they were to be taught the necessary skills to become fishers of men.

Now as everyone knows, in the life of the fishermen, literally is not an easy one. There is much to learn about the different faces of the sea.

There is much to learn about the patterns followed by different species of fish. Before one can consider themselves a skilled fisherman.

[ 13 : 37 ] And here were these four skilled fishermen who had learned these skills because their livelihood depended on it. But now they were to be taught the necessary skills to set the net of the gospel and catch men.

They were to be taught the art of man fishing. Fishing, in the natural world, is difficult. But in my view, and I am open to challenge, in my view, it is child's play in comparison to the art of man fishing.

And if you are a fisherman here this evening, you may disagree. But in my view, fishing in the natural world is child's play in comparison to the art of man fishing.

It is the most difficult type of fishing that I know. But who better to teach them than Jesus himself? Who had the necessary skills for the job but Jesus?

So this miracle was performed on the Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, at a private venue in the home of Simon and Andrew in Bethsaida.

[ 14 : 55 ] That's the first fact. The second fact we are told is this. There was illness in the home. Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever.

Luke, who had medical expertise, gives us an added factor, presumably because of his medical expertise.

Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill, says Luke, with a high fever. The language used by Luke would suggest that she was a very sick woman.

Not sure what was used of anything in those days to seek to lower the effect of fever. But this was her condition.

The fact that this feverish, unnamed woman was Peter's mother-in-law, tells us that Peter was a married man. He couldn't have had a mother-in-law unless he was married.

[ 15 : 55 ] And yet, there is nothing ever said about his family. You could almost be forgiven for thinking that Peter was a bachelor.

But that is not the case. She is his mother-in-law. And there is, and I'm almost tempted to use this as a quiz question.

There is one brief mention of a wife for Peter in the New Testament. I'd almost put a piece of paper around and ask you to write down where it is to be found.

Well, just to save you the trouble at this moment, you'll find a reference to it in the first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 9 and verse 5.

Reference to the fact that Peter had a wife. Was Andrew married? We're not told. This is all the family information that we are given.

[ 17 : 04 ] We're not told how long she had been ill, but just the fact of her illness. Now, if Peter had known of the illness, would he have invited Christ to the home?

Well, I can't answer that question. So that's the second factor. First factor, it is a jointly owned home. And we know the day of the weekend which he went there.

Second factor, his mother-in-law. The mother-in-law of Peter was ill. The third fact, Mark tells us, is their reaction to the illness. Immediately they told Jesus about the sick woman, about her.

Mark doesn't tell us who told Jesus. Was it Peter and his wife? One would certainly expect them to be deeply concerned.

Was it Peter and Andrew being joint donors? Or were all those in the home with one voice telling Jesus about this nameless woman's condition?

[ 18 : 10 ] Luke's take on the situation is more forceful than Mark. He says they appealed to Jesus on her behalf.

Matthew omits this completely from his account. He merely reports how Jesus went directly to the bedside of the sick woman. It seems to me, given Mark's influence, given Peter's influence rather, that Mark's account is the more accurate.

But that Luke's account is an interpretation of Mark's. In other words, Luke understands the actual telling, as reported by Mark, to be an appeal made to Jesus on behalf of the sick woman.

No doubt, the telling did imply an appeal. For you may remember, on another occasion in the Bible, where two sisters had a very sick brother.

And they sent a message to Jesus, and the message just simply went like this. Lord, he whom you love is ill. He whom you love is ill.

[ 19 : 33 ] They didn't tell Jesus how he should deal with the illness. They didn't prescribe conditions to Jesus. They merely brought their burden to the attention of the Lord.

They didn't dictate to the Lord how he should deal with this matter. They laid their burden on him and before him. And is that not what we are all counseled to do in the word of God?

Oh, cast your burden on the Lord. Why? He will care for you. He'll never let the righteous fall.

But bring him safely through. And it seems to me, going by my own experience, that we are often prone to dictate terms to the Lord when we bring our burdens to him.

Lord, do it this way. Deal with it in this way. Rather than leave it in the more than capable hands of Almighty God. And it may be at this early stage of being with the Lord that these men do not yet feel that they can come too close.

[ 20 : 45 ] But in telling him of this illness of this woman, are they not indicating that they believed that he had the power to heal? And that he also had the willingness to heal?

They had already witnessed a demonstration of his power in the synagogue. They had listened to his authoritative teaching in the synagogue.

And when Luke says they appealed to him, it may not have been a direct appeal as such. But the appeal was in the telly. That's the third fact.

The fourth fact is this. Mark tells us how Jesus responded to this information. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up.

Matthew tells us he touched her hand. Dr. Luke says, and he stood over her. And it seems to me that's a very graphic image. The kind of image I would have of a doctor coming to visit a sick person.

[ 21 : 50 ] Standing over the sick person's bed. He stood over, says Luke, and rebuked the fever. Now, when you put all these together, amalgam as it were, all the different accounts that are given by the gospel writers, then you notice how Jesus dealt with this woman.

And we are told the fever left her immediately without any delay or period of convalescence or recuperation. She is able to resume her domestic duties.

One moment totally listless, without strength. One moment her body on fire with the effect of the fever. The next shivering uncontrollably with the effect of the fever.

And she is immediately healed with all trace of the fever gone. She doesn't need a time to recuperate. So that's the miracle of healing.

The facts. The day. The place. The illness. The telling. And the healing.

[ 23 : 07 ] And that brings me secondly then to the message that arises from the miracle. I said at the outset that Mark's gospel is about good news.

The good news about Jesus Christ. And so the first item of good news to arise from this miracle, I believe we are taught how approachable the Lord Jesus Christ is.

And is that not something that we all need to hear? The approachableness of Jesus Christ. It was immediately after preaching and teaching in the synagogue and casting out an unclean spirit, this miracle done.

And in coming to this home, he was in all probability exhausted from his efforts. He had true humanity. He required rest.

He required renewal of strength. He was a true man. He had preached. His energies had been expended. They had been greatly expended in proclaiming the message.

[ 24 : 17 ] He would be drained. He had confronted the powers of darkness and cowed them into submission by his power. Remember the impression created by his preaching.

They were all amazed. So what they questioned among themselves saying, What is this? A new teaching with authority. And despite their level of ignorance, they regarded his identity. Regarding his identity, they were able to recognize that there was a huge difference between his teaching and that of the scribes. Here is the one who is the eternal word. And he proclaims himself. He himself is in the message. And their attitude reminds me of something I read recorded in the book of the Apostle of the North. I am not saying that it is an anecdote that I would wish people to repeat. But it concerns a certain Murdo McKenzie, who was a Gaelic teacher.

[ 25 : 26 ] He lived, incidentally, in where I had my last congregation, in Laxey, in Lox. But he originally belonged to Ascent, across the waters there. He had gone to communion services in Uig. The time the gospel had come to Lewis with power and made such a distinction when the power of the gospel spread. He had gone to Uig and the expected preacher on Saturday morning of the communion was to have been a Reverend William McCree.

Murdo was not too happy about this. In fact, he thought this gentleman ought not to have been there. Sadly, a lot of this has not changed in attitude and mind. unbeknown to Murdo and most of those gathered for the service, Dr. MacDonald of Ferrantosh was on one of his numerous journeys to St. Kilda.

[ 26 : 42 ] And because of unfavorable weather conditions, he had been unable to go there, to come ashore in Tarbert. On hearing about the communion services in Uig, he had traveled across the moors from Harris to Uig, arriving in time to be asked to conduct the Saturday service.

Now, most people were oblivious to this. The services were held in a tent outdoors. And this man, Murdo, was sitting with his back to the tent. He didn't see Dr. MacDonald go into the pulpit. And as the first psalm was given out, Murdo's thought process was, well, he cannot spoil this on me at any rate. Then came the prayer. And as the prayer went on, Murdo began to enjoy the prayer. And he said to himself, pity on him who would say that Mr. William has no grace. As the prayer continued, he became more interested. If I have grace myself, now just notice what he's saying, if I have grace myself, Mr. William has it too. [ 28 : 09 ] And it seems to me that Murdo had a very high opinion of himself. Until as the prayer developed further, I would give my authority, says, that Mr. William has grace.

Now, there are many things you might criticize about the attitude of Murdo. But one thing you can say is that the Christ in the life of Murdo was rejoicing at the Christ in the life of Dr. MacDonald. As he considered he was in the presence of one who was leading him, into the presence of the Most High. And thereby he rejoiced. Well, there is no doubt about the preacher who was in the synagogue. He is full of grace and truth. He cannot be anything else, given who he is, the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, despite how exhausted he might have been and in need of recharging, he was willing to go the next mile in attending to the needs of this sick woman.

[ 29 : 18 ] He doesn't deter them from coming to him with their burden. And there is encouragement for you and me here too. Is your sin a heavy burden for you this evening?

Tell it to the Lord. Are you walking in darkness this evening? Tell it to the Lord. For he is the light. Are you beset by the temptations of Satan? Tell it to the Lord. Because he has vanquished the powers of darkness.

Are you being tried? Go and tell Jesus everything, whatever it is. You have much to disclose. Keep nothing back. Tell them all. Tell them of the world's warnings. Tell them of the saints' smittings. Tell them of your fears, your anguish.

[ 30 : 22 ] Tell them of your low moments. Tell them of your discouragements. Tell them of your mental despondencies. Tell them of your gloomy fears. Tell them of your lack of understanding.

Tell them if you are suffering from some kind of physical illness. tell them of your failing health. Tell them of your lack of strength. Tell them of the pain. Tell them of the sleepless nights. Tell them all that is in your life. Because here is one in whom you can readily confide as the one who is able to undertake for you and to do for you above and beyond what you can ask or even think.

Oh, if you are here tonight and you are fearful and apprehensive of the future, tell them. Tell them. Tell them you do, maybe that you fear but you do not love them.

But you do not believe them. Tell them there is not a thing that you cannot tell them. all the temptations that beset you, the difficulties, the hidden trials, the sorrows that confront you in the path of life.

[ 31 : 42 ] Tell them all. Because there is nothing that you may not confide in him in love and in faith. Tell them there is no temporal need, no spiritual sorrow.

Casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you. and as the psalmist exhorts us, oh, people trust in him always, to him alone pour out your heart.

Oh, have you got the confidence and the assurance of faith to do that? To tell the Lord all your cares, all your burdens, all your anxieties, all your sorrows.

Do you take them to the Lord in prayer? Because that is in lessons what these men are teaching us here. We too are commanded to lose ourselves in the love of Christ, to hide ourselves in the wounds of Jesus, to wash in the blood of Jesus.

Is there not good news there? And the second element of good news is this, how truly merciful and compassionate Christ is.

[ 33 : 02 ] This woman is unknown, apart from the fact that we are told that she is the mother-in-law of one of the most notable disciples in the Bible.

If you were to conduct a test, go around this audience this evening, name one of the disciples, you could almost be certain that Peter would be one of the names mentioned frequently.

And yet the Holy Spirit is silent on any other information about this woman except what we find here with regard to her illness.

Christ meeting with her in the depth of her need. And because he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, in great condescension, he still stoops to meet with the deep needs of sinners, right up to the present hour.

Because by nature we are shackled by the chains of our iniquities. We are bound with the strong cords of sin, and we could never break free.

[ 34 : 15 ] But not the second person of the Trinity take in our nature, stoop down to meet with us. You know, it's interesting that the Apostle Paul, when he commends humility to be in the life of the Christian, indicates how Christ stooped down.

The nature of man is to rise up and up and up and be supreme to God. God and yet Christ, in teaching true humility, comes down, down, down, until ultimately he comes into the very dust of death, so that sinners might be elevated.

He is the one, says the psalmist, who stoops down low to look on heaven and earth below. He raises outcasts from the dust and from the ash heap, lifts the poor.

Who are the outcasts? Who are the poor? Myself and yourself. Unworthy, undeserving sinners.

Oh, is that also not good news? How we need to hear how willing he is to meet with the needy, with the helpless, with the unworthy, that this man receives sinners and eats with them.

[ 35 : 47 ] That's even the assessment of his enemies. And the good news here is that the same Christ who met with this woman in the very depth of her need is able to meet with anyone here tonight who is still in the flesh, sold under sin, and deliver you from its power.

How truly merciful and compassionate is Christ and how open to being approached. But there is something else to the authoritative power possessed by Jesus.

He took her by the hand and lifted her up. I've already mentioned the picture that Luke gives to us. Remember when the disciples were in the great storm and that resulted in great fear been in the lives of the disciples.

And they approached Christ to intervene. He's asleep in the stern of the boat. The Bible tells us he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves and they ceased and there was a calm.

And then we are told of their reaction. They marveled, saying one to another. Who then is this that he commands even winds and water and they obey him?

[ 37 : 19 ] Who then is this that even winds and water and they obey him? How often has the question been asked, who is this indeed?

And the answer that the Bible gives us is this, I am the Lord your God who stirs up the sea so that its waves roll. The Lord of hosts is his name.

And there is Christ in the stern of the boat and the power of his divinity is shining through the frailty of his humanity. Yes.

I had a little discussion this morning with someone who was querying this factor. And it occurred to me, there he is on the boat.

What impressed the disciples? It was the authoritative power that was processed by this person. You and I could go down to the shoreline there.

[ 38 : 23 ] We could shout until we were hoarse and we wouldn't silence the wind and we wouldn't calm the waves. but here is the God man with authoritative definitive power and he is able to quell the star as the one who possesses authority over all the elements.

His divinity shining through the frailty of his humanity. you remember when the disciples caught the many fish and Peter saying depart from me O Lord for I am a sinful man.

Would Peter do that in the presence of another man? No he would not. But he recognized again that he was in the presence of God in our nature.

Well is this not also good news? He has power to heal from fever and illness. Authoritative power as a person of the glorious trinity.

The message that arises from the miracle is approachable, he is considerate, he is merciful and compassionate in possession of power to deliver. The miracle of healing itself, the facts, and finally this because the time is going, the effect it has upon an aimless woman, she began to serve them.

[ 39 : 59 ] Now what I read into that is this, that she prepared a meal for them. And I would like to think that she never prepared a meal with such love, and her heart so full of gratitude, as on that evening, when she prepared this meal.

What a lovely, glad meal that would be. Wouldn't you like to have sat down in that home?

We don't know how elaborate the meal was, whether it is something that the women for mission might consider doing, we don't know. But what we know is that they sat down as those who were served by one whose heart was brimful of gratitude for what Christ had done in her life.

You see, her service is spontaneous. There's an element of spontaneity in this service. it's not something that's coerced.

She's not forced to serve. She lifted it up, the fever left it, and she began to serve them.

[ 41 : 31 ] And you see, that ought to prompt the question in my life and yours. How can we too serve the Lord? We're not to be cumbered about with much serving, like Martha.

We're not to put serving before eating and drinking at the table of the truth. Mary chose the good part.

But we are still to serve. So ask yourself, could you be doing more to serve the Lord? God, as someone whose life has been totally changed by the authoritative touch of the Lord Jesus Christ? Could you do that little bit more? To serve the Lord Jesus Christ? It doesn't have to be something big. It doesn't have to be something that a lot of people will speak about can be very small.

It can be just putting your name on the WFM sheet and booking a meal. It doesn't have to be something highly significant, something that you get a lot of praise for.

[ 43 : 00 ] This woman is not looking for praise. She's expressing her indebtedness and her gratitude to the Almighty for what he has done for us.

How is you and is my life and yours testimony to what Christ has done for us? There was an old man once and he was reputed to have said, he saved me and he will never hear the end of it.

You know, that ought to be the attitude of every saved again person. Voluntary service.

Spontaneous voluntary service. So much so because you see that is a mark that Jesus recognizes at the end.

When the separation is done, truly I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me. Paul, in writing to the Romans, I appealed to you therefore brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

[ 44 : 22 ] Do not be conformed to the world, transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable, and perfect. And it seems to me that this voluntary service, a service that is prompted by the spirit of gratitude in the soul of this woman, the service of love, the service in which she is acutely aware of her deep indebtedness to the Lord.

Oh, would it not be wonderful if we were all filled with the same spirit, to serve the Lord Jesus? Yes, were we touched by the spirit that caused the hymn writer to say, were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small, love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my

all.

She served voluntarily and freely. The miracle of healing itself, the facts of the miracle, the message that arises from the miracle, the approachableness of Christ, and so on, and the effect that it has upon this nameless woman.

She served voluntarily, lovingly, happily, joyfully, as one who was aware of her deep indebtedness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is there an awareness of indebtedness in your life? Or are you here tonight as someone who is still a stranger to the power, and the authority, and the grace, and the condescension, and the mercy, and the love of Jesus Christ?

[ 46 : 23 ] Oh, my friend, you don't know what you're missing. Will you not ask him to come into your heart and life? Let us pray. Let us pray.

Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us