

Mark 1:40-2:12 (PM)

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[0 : 00] Well, you might have already guessed I'm an Englishman, and there's a few things I thought it's really important for me to make very clear as we begin our time together. And one of the areas that I struggle with is driving.

Have you noticed that you may drive on the right side of the road, but it's not necessarily correct? I've also discovered I had brought a sign with me tonight, but you know what? It's, I've got no idea where it is. So if you find a sign, I'd like to have it back again, that'd be great. Do you know where it is? It's in the car. No, I looked in the car, it's not in the car.

Did you put it in the car? Okay, I think it was in the car. Anyway, so if you see a circle, and it has a number 50, okay, what does that mean, Canadians?

Do you drive your car? What does it mean about 50 kilometres? It means you must go faster than 50 kilometres. Is that right?

[1 : 05] It's not, is it? No. And that's just one of the things that I've struggled with. As you come up to lights, have you come up, you know you've got three lights? Yeah, you've got your red, amber and green.

What does the red stand for? Stop. Stop. What does the green stand for? Blue. What does the amber stand for? Speed up.

Now, if I was in England, I would start gently putting my foot on that, but let's just say, I'm learning, I'm learning, I'm trying to understand how things work. Anyway, but signs, when you see a sign, it is there for a purpose, isn't it?

You see a sign and you don't go, oh, that's exciting. I love a good sign, especially if it's made of metal and it's got a pretty number on it or a bit of colour.

Signs are not there for us to get excited about, are they? Why do we have signs? Because they point to something else. They inform us of something else.

[2 : 12] So as we read in Mark, I think we're going to discover that there are, like in John's Gospel, and he spells out, these are signs.

I think we're going to see in Mark's Gospel that some of the miracles that we're going to be introduced to are special signs that help us to see something a little bit bigger.

Do you see what I mean? Do you understand? It's a sign that points to something else. So while you're there, kind of going, oh, there's a leper and he's been healed, that's very exciting.

Actually, Mark hasn't included every healing. Did you spot that in our Bible passage? In last week's passage, we're told that Jesus actually wandered on for the next village for exactly that reason.

He's got to preach. He hasn't come just to set up a pop-up hospital. He's come to preach and tell us the reason why he came.

[3 : 12] And so, Mark 1, 32, tells us many were healed. So why, if many were healed, do we have these two stories? The story of the leper and the story of the paralyzed man.

And I think Mark is helping us to see that Jesus is, well, the gospel of the Son of God that is Jesus, as he spelt out at the beginning of his gospel.

So, come with me. Can you put your gospel spectacles on? Because I want you not to see just the miracle. I want you to see through the miracle the bigger picture of what Jesus is doing.

Come with me and have a little look at Mark. Open up your Bible passage, Mark chapter 1, and let's have a little read. But first of all, I think we need to understand a bit more about leprosy.

My brother used to be the leprosy mission representative at school. It sounded like night. It was a way of raising money and sending it off to people who had leprosy.

[4 : 18] But did I really know what leprosy was? Well, you start reading and you think, this is horrid. You know what leprosy is? Let me read it to you.

I don't need these glasses, by the way. But let me read it to you anyway. Patients with leprosy experience disfigurement of the skin and bones, twisting of the limbs, curling of the fingers to form characteristic claws, tumor-like growths, and the largest number of deformities developed from loss of pain sensation due to extensive nerve damage.

Do you know, I was shocked when I was younger, when someone said to me, do you know lepers, a lot of their fingers go missing. I said, ooh, did they drop off? No, the rats ate them.

And because they don't have any feeling, they don't know when they've burnt their fingers or when the rats are eating them or something else is happening. It's a shocker, isn't it?

What's even more shocking than the horrid nature of leprosy is what happened to someone who had leprosy in this time. Do you know what happened to them?

[5 : 24] Let me read it to you. Leviticus. You've got a Bible? Flip over to Leviticus chapter 13 and 14. In the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, third book of the Bible, and it tells us about leprosy.

It tells us how serious leprosy is. A little bit of kind of COVID understanding of how it's contagious, but it's far more.

It is a killer. I think the anticipated time that someone lived with leprosy was about nine years. That's what I've heard. And people who had leprosy, let me read to you what happened to them.

Leviticus chapter 14 verse 45 says this. The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes. So they're told to wear torn clothes.

They have to let their hair hang loose. And they must cover over their lip and cry out, unclean, unclean. They must remain unclean.

[6 : 28] They shall remain unclean as long as they have the disease. And they are to live alone. To live alone. Their dwelling shall be outside the camp.

So not only is this a horrid disease, disfigurement, but actually you're sent away. You're sent away from your family, from your friends, from your loved one. You have to live on your own with this horrid disease.

So with that in mind, come back with me to Mark. Look again at Mark chapter 1 and see how shocking.

The problem with reading some of these gospel stories is that we aren't shocked by them. And we should be shocked by them. You should read this story and go, No way!

Did Jesus really do that? That's what we should be responding. But often we go, oh, that's very interesting. So put your gospel spectacles on and let's have a little read of what happened.

[7 : 32] Mark. We're told in Mark chapter 1 about this sick person. And so when this leper meets Jesus, read with me what happens next.

And the leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling, said to him, If you will, you can make me clean. Notice he didn't say, Sorry, Jesus, if you don't mind, if you've got a bit of time, do you think you might be able to help?

He didn't form an orderly queue, as the British often do. He basically barged in and said, If you're willing, you can make me clean.

It was a declaration that he knows who Jesus is, or at least he knows that Jesus has been healing. He knows that Jesus has been transforming people's lives physically. But the question for him was more, is Jesus willing?

Does he feel sorry for this mess of a person who was deformed and living outside? Does he care about the outsider? Does Jesus truly care about people and their circumstances?

[9 : 11] And how does Jesus respond? He said, I am willing. Be clean. And then comes the greatest shock of all. Jesus did what?

What did he do? What does it tell us in the passage? He stretched out his hand, verse 41, and? Oh, come on.

Touched him. You don't touch a leper. What happens if you touch a leper? If they're contagious, what happens? You get leprosy.

What then happens once you get leprosy? You get disfigured and you get kicked out of the community. Jesus touched him.

And we see the biggest shock. A total transformation. The king has come. The kingdom of God is here. And instead of this man who touched a leper, ending up with leprosy and getting kicked out of the town.

[10:16] What does Jesus do? He touches him. He makes him clean. And suddenly the man who was the outsider, the unclean, the ostracized, suddenly gets invited back into community.

Back into the family. And particularly leprosy is seen as not just a physical ailment. It's seen as more than that.

Come with me with the restoration. Again, back in Leviticus, chapter 14. See what happened when someone got healed. And as you read this, put on your Old Testament spectacles and glean some of the things that we see here.

Leviticus, chapter 14, verse 3. It says this. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, In the case of leprous disease, if they are healed in the leprous person, the priest shall command them to take for him, who is to be cleansed, two live, clean birds, and cedarwood and scarlet yarn and hyssop.

Immediately you're there going, why two birds? Hyssop? Hang on a second. And that's come up a couple of times in the Bible. Do you know when the hyssop is mentioned?

[11:35] Hyssop's the very thing that you paint the blood on the door on the Exodus. You come across that? Hyssop's the very thing that also they stretched out to give Jesus wine vinegar at his death.

Hyssop is also the thing in Psalm 51 that David says, Cleanse me and I shall be whiter than snow. All of these things are illusions.

And so when we hear about these two birds and we hear about the hyssop and we hear about this thing, verse 5, The priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in an earthenware vessel over fresh water.

He shall take the live bird with the cedarwood and the scarlet yarn and the hyssop and dip them in the live bird in the blood of the bird. See how gory and graphic it is? I've got a bird.

I've killed one. I've taken another bird. I've dipped it in the blood. And then what am I going to do? I'll sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease.

[12:37] I'm going to sprinkle it over the one who is just being cleansed from leprosy. You thought bringing a puppet was pretty impressive.

I could have brought a couple of birds. But I didn't. So what do you do? You've killed one bird. You've sprinkled the blood with the other bird and then you let it go free.

Two birds. One died. One goes free. Blood is shed. And you start seeing some Old Testament kind of clues, signs, that are going to point to someone who is going to die so that others can go free.

If that's not big enough, carry on with me. Here we go. Let's read on. Verse 8. And the priest shall command them to kill one of the birds. That's the birds. A little bit further on it tells us, then to get day 8.

Verse 10. And on the eighth day, he shall then take two male lambs without blemish and one ewe lamb, a year old, without blemish, and a grain offering of three-tenths of oil, of ephah, of flour, of fine flour, mixed with oil, and one log of oil, and one log of oil, sprinkled blood, and then the priest shall offer the sin offering to make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness.

[14:00] Can you see that leprosy in the Old Testament is far more than a physical disfigurement, but actually is used as an image of our uncleanness before God?

Can you see that atonement needs to be made? Death needs to come. Freedom will be given and offered. And so it's no wonder that we read here about a spotless lamb that is substituted.

So when Jesus touches the leper, what happens is this, is he is taking the place, taking the sin, taking the sickness, and the king is bringing his kingdom, and bringing his authority, and bringing about his kingdom cleanliness.

If you will, you can make me clean. Jesus comes, and he says, I will, and I can make you clean. So, moved with pity, he comes, he touches him, and as a result, the man is cleansed.

Can you see that Mark used this story as a picture of what Jesus is coming to do? But not just this one, he then uses the next one as well. It's the paralyzed man.

[15:21] But before we get to the paralyzed man, have you spotted what happens next? What happened to Jesus after the man was healed of leprosy? Verse 43. Jesus said to him, go, tell everyone, tell everyone, I'm setting up a hospital here, and just bring them, and I'll come and heal them, all of them.

Did he say that? No. What did he say? He said, don't go tell anyone. Why did he say that? Surely Jesus is not hiding. I think the truth is that Jesus, well, is declaring that they're not ready to fully understand why he came.

They know of his wonder, the marvelous things that he did, but he has a far greater mission, and that's what we're going to see next. Jesus tells him, don't say anything, and yet the man, who can blame him, went and told everyone.

And the result, isn't this ironic? From this point onwards, Jesus could no longer, verse 45, could no longer openly enter a town.

The outsider has come in. The insider has gone out. The one who is unclean has been made clean. And we know that Christ, who is clean, is going to take our sin and our suffering, and die in our place.

[16:46] That's the picture that we have here. Let me tell you a story. The other day, I'm living in North Van at the moment. It's great. There is a bear or two in North Vancouver.

Little Englishman, obviously, very excited about seeing bears, until you see what they can do. You see that bears basically find food.

One morning, Tuesday morning, rubbish morning, taking all the recycling out. Suddenly, mmm, that doesn't smell very nice. There, next door, there was a rather large hole in the door of next door. A large animal had made a hole, had climbed through, grabbed the bin, dragged the bin out, opened the bin, and had a lovely little munch.

The bear had basically attacked and got what it wanted. Well, being a dutiful neighbour, I got out my bits and bobs and I cleaned and tidied it up, then rushed off to work.

[17:57] But do you know what? The rest of the day, shh, I stunk. It's really hard to get rid of that smell. It's really hard to get rid of that.

Well, that's what we're going to find. Instead of us smelling and stinking of sin, Jesus comes and does the impossible. He cleanses us, gives us his righteousness, and we are free indeed.

Let me quickly go on to the other story which is very familiar probably to you. Jesus heals the paralytic. Jesus, obviously, is in Capernaum.

He's in Capernaum, his hometown, his home area, everybody's coming out to see him and when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they climbed up the side. Often the houses were flat roofed, they made a hole in the roof and they dropped the paralysed man down.

Jesus said to them, what are you doing? No, he didn't. Jesus said, you're healed. No, he didn't. Not straight away. What did he say? He said again, this is a sign.

[19:03] It's a picture. He used it as an example to point to something else. He said, your sins are forgiven because that is a greater reason why I have come.

We see here that actually in reality, when he says your sins are forgiven, we see that we are wearing or not wearing gospel specs.

We aren't seeing the real problem. When I left England, England was littered. We'd gone from Brexit to COVID to Ukraine, one thing after the next.

It felt like we were going from pillar to post from one disaster to the next disaster. We felt like we were being buffeted as a nation. Well, sometimes we need to put our gospel specs on and see a bigger picture.

Sometimes we need to see, yes, we may be struggling, but when we put our gospel spectacles on, we see, we see the big problem.

[20:02] We see the true illness. We see the thing that should be addressed. So when we watch the news and we see horrible, horrific things happening, we also need to ask the question, are their sins forgiven?

Because that's the greatest issue in everyone's life. I may be struggling to pay my bills at the moment, but are my sins forgiven? I may have issues with my next door neighbour and struggling with this or that relationship, but are my sins forgiven?

for suddenly Jesus gives us the bigger picture and the bigger priority. We need to sometimes not downplay our earthly troubles and our trials, but sometimes we need a bigger picture to grasp the truth of what Jesus came to come and sort out.

Jesus sees our sins and he longs for our salvation. And so when people start, as the scribes were asking, now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, why does this man speak like this?

He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? And they are right. No one can forgive sins but God alone. But of course Jesus is God.

[21 : 22] So that is the reason why he's doing it. Verse 10, so that we may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he does a sign. And he heals the paralysed man.

The paralysed man picks up his bed and goes. Wow. So can you see that these are not just two normal healings or miracles?

Can you see that these are much bigger signs that point us to greater problems that we have here on earth? Let me ask two questions as we finish.

So number one, do you know your greatest problem is sin on this earth? Sorting out sin is the thing that you need to get sorted more than anything else.

can I suggest you don't leave here without at least asking someone maybe coming and seeing Willie? If you're not assured of forgiveness the forgiveness of sins then let me invite you to come to Jesus.

[22 : 36] Find someone who will pray with you and encourage you like the four men or the people who helped the paralysed man to come to Jesus. That is our job and our joy.

What joy it is to bring others to Jesus and say he he can sort out your biggest problem. He can save you from your sin. Do you know your greatest problem and have you come to Jesus?

Secondly have you grasped the authority that we've seen so far in Mark's gospel is getting bigger and bigger and bigger and we're suddenly seeing that Jesus is the person not a distant deity not a nice teacher not a nice preacher but he's shocking.

He's turning the world upside down. What was considered something to be shunned and forced to leave the community Jesus is welcoming us in.

The outcast is being welcomed. The lamb has died in your place. Transformation is possible. Will you come to Jesus?

[23 : 42] Jesus? Will we boldly approach him? And will we be those who declare to friends and family and others around us, you need to meet this Jesus?

For he will truly tell you how you can be forgiven for your sins. And he can truly tell you and sort out your sin once and for all.

things in life is important.

Things can beitel