Who is He? Josh Short

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Date: 15 March 2014

Preacher: Sam Low

[0:00] Let me tell you a little bit about my family. So in my immediate family, there are four members. There's my father, my mother, my brother, and I. And we are a family of avid readers.

Hands up anyone here who would consider themselves a reader. Any fellow people who know my pain. Okay, we've got some good work of the Fitzpatrick and the Lau family. Good work, you guys. To give you a small picture, I consider myself the least active reader in my family.
And just recently in the last week and a bit, my only bookshelf in this country has now completely been filled. There is no space for the next year and a half of my theological textbooks that I need to buy.
And I am in trouble. And I realized that in my house back in Vancouver, there are about five boxes, medium-sized boxes, with my name on them saying Josh's Books. Far too many books for one person to reasonably have.
But the person to watch out for is my dad. He consumes books. I am amazed at his ability to read. I'm jealous of it, to be honest with you.
[1:11] He takes anything from the largest tomes of theological text to amazing fantasy fiction and just reads it all incredibly fast.

And just recently, he got very into a particular variety of Scandinavian crime mystery fiction. It's very specific, I know. But he read a lot.
As in, if it wasn't for a Kindle, our house would be overrun with novels. We'd have to have an intervention saying, Dad, please stop buying books because we can't move on our house anymore. There's too many. And the reason I'm telling you this is I think it's helpful sometimes to think about the book of Mark as a mystery novel. Not all the time, but it's helpful to think about.
We have a mystery. The major question of the book presented to us last week in chapter 1. Who is Jesus? And what is he doing?
[2:14] What has he come to do? And we have a narrator who is trying everything he can to help us understand more and more of that question. And this week in Mark chapter 2, we make some great headway into seeing who Jesus is, I think.

Seeing a glimpse of his incredible power. And so, in particular, this passage shows us, I think, Jesus' power, his right to his power, and his will with his power, what he's going to do with it.
And so, case number one. The mysterious case of the paralytic and his four destructively helpful friends. So, please, if you don't have your Bibles open, get them open to Mark chapter 2, verse 1 to 12 at the moment.
Jesus is back at Capernaum, his old stomping ground. And the word has got out that Jesus is there. Big news. Jesus, everyone, everyone and their dog has come to see him.
The entire town has just flooded his house. And I don't know about you, but if 200 people showed up at my house, so there's no room for anyone, I wouldn't be the most hospitable person.
[3:24] But Jesus is obviously better than I am and decides to preach to them. He gives them a message. It's incredible. And here enter the other characters.

Four men carrying a fifth on a mat because he is utterly paralyzed. Can't move. These five men are desperate.
Understandably so, I think. Because if you're a paralytic back in those days, your life was essentially over. All that you can do for your entire life is beg for money. You can't eat food.
You can't feed yourself. You can't go to the temple to make sacrifices. So you are permanently unclean. You can't physically clean yourself. You can't move. You can't do anything, really.
Thankfully, this particular man has four friends who are just desperate to help him. It's kind of beautiful, really.

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[4:23] And they've obviously heard of who Jesus is and what he can do and what he might do. And it's enough for them. So they get to Jesus' house, totally packed, no room.

And they decide to make some exterior design choices and make a hole in the roof and slowly lower him through mid-sermon. And I'm confident you've heard this story before.
It's quite a famous one. But for a moment, try to picture the tension of what's actually happening. You know, you have Jesus preaching to a packed room, literally.
And mid-message, a hole opens up and there's four bearded faces looking down, kind of lowering this guy on a mat in front of him. It's just, what?
Like, it's so surprising. And they put him there. And the whole room freezes. These are the kind of moments where Jesus does something and we don't know what.
[5:23] Because Jesus is Jesus, right? And someone's kind of waiting there. What's he going to do? This is going to be good, right? And he clears his throat. Verse 5. Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, Son, your legs are healed.

Nope. Son, your sins are forgiven. Excuse me? I'm sorry, what? What was that, Jesus? I'm going to pass me again because I think you missed the problem.
That is clearly the man's legs. Don't you see what needs to happen? He needs to be healed. That is his problem.
Come on, man. Nobody is thinking, man, his sins are really his problem. It's not a question for people. It's so unexpected. It's almost an anticlimax.
It's just out of left field. Can you imagine the sheer disappointment? The poor man is probably lost for words at this moment because I came all this way and my friends did all this for me for this.
[6:25] And we focus on some scribes who are sitting there, some teachers of the law and what they're thinking to themselves. I think they have not a good reaction but an understandable reaction.

Verses 6 and 7. Some of the scribes are sitting there and they're thinking to themselves, why does he speak like this? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?
Jesus has claimed to have the power to forgive sins. He has put himself on the same level as God the creator. Which, to be fair, if it wasn't true, would be entirely blasphemous.
So the reaction from the statement of Jesus from the scribes is one that we can at least understand, I think. However, Jesus is not finished working.
He's not done yet. After he's made these incredible claims, he now asks the scribes why they're thinking what they're thinking. So worrying, don't you think, to have someone tell you that he can read your mind and then tell you what you're actually thinking?
[7:38] Ah, man, I'd be so concerned at that point. Especially because they're thinking bad things about him. And he answers their private question, who can forgive sins but God alone? He has an answer for it.

9, 10, 11. What's easier to do? To say that this guy's sins are forgiven or to fix his legs and make him walk again? It doesn't really matter because Jesus has the power and the authority to do both. He heals the man. He jumps up. Dances away with his mat. And Jesus says, so that you would know that he has the authority to forgive sins is why he's done this.
Such an immense act of power I think we often overlook the entirety of. As Jesus is saying, this man's legs are healed.
He's also breaching reality as we know it. The idea of Jesus forgiving sins not only brings the future effectiveness of his crucifixion to that point, before it's happened, he also brings the reality of the last day of judgment effective at that point.
[8:57] The paralyzed man has been declared free from sin. Utterly free. Which can only happen through Jesus' power at the cross. The only way. And his status in God is secure.

Which is only evident, only truthful at the last day of judgment. It can only be true that way. And so Jesus cracks through every conception we have of this miracle.
And just explodes with power. It's incredible. It's hard to fathom. I think the crowd has an appropriate reaction when they say, we haven't seen anything like this.
But they're more correct than they realize, I think. It's an entirely unique miracle of Christ. Bringing the heavenly reality, the heavenly kingdom of God, present and powerful.
And that's just some of the power Jesus has. And it's amazing. Let's say somehow we could get permission from God that he would let some of his angels bring the paralyzed man down here today

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and we could interview him.
[10:08] Let's give him a nice Jewish name. Eli. Let's go with Eli. I had some friends called Eli back in high school. Eli. Eli. What was it like that day with Jesus?

Well, it was the most amazing day of my entire life. You know the story. I was lowered to the roof at Jesus' feet.
I was kind of nervous. And he said, your sins are forgiven. And of course, I was a little bit disappointed. Possibly a little angry. To be honest with you, I wanted to walk.
That was what I wanted. But he healed my legs as well. And I was so happy. You know, I just had to dance and jump and walk out of there. And I had a good life after that, thanks to him.
I lived for another 25 years. I had a job. I had a wife. I had some kids. I gave sacrifices at the synagogue every week. And I eventually died.
[11:05] That happens. It was a good life. And I'm thankful for Jesus for healing my legs. But here I am 2,000 years later. And I've spent all that time with God in heaven.

I've been in heaven for so long. And it's been so good. Without a moment's thought, I would take Christ forgiving my sins over healing my legs any day of the week. It's a small penalty to live paralyzed and to lose his soul.
Jesus hasn't come to iron out the problems that we have in this life. But to open the gates of the life to come. The man in the story is alive today.
I have no doubt about that. He's with Christ in heaven at this very moment. And if Eli could come down and talk to us today, he would say this. And we see some of Christ's power here.
What about his right to use this power? Verses 23 and 28. Here we have an issue of the law.
[12:16] Of the Sabbath. The fourth and longest commandment out of the ten. The best day in creation. In Genesis chapter 2. How is it okay for Jesus and his disciples to supposedly be breaking the Sabbath and still claim to be sinless and good people?

How is that okay? And the last two verses are of particular importance. I don't think we quite understand the immense importance that the Sabbath holds for Jewish people now and back then and even further back.
It's amazing. If you ever get to go to Jerusalem, my parents did. It's an incredible sight to behold what the Sabbath is. But in the Old Testament, God is emphatic with his command of the Sabbath. Often repeated is the phrase, I am the Lord or I am Yahweh and you will keep my Sabbath. It's just that simple. I am God. I am holy. And you will keep my Sabbath holy.
It's not something that God suggests should be kept. It is a requirement. It needs to happen. And so when Jesus says in verse 27, The Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath.
[13:42] He is changing the whole thing. He is just flipping it on its head. He says the Sabbath is not meant for a strict, rigid ceremony, but as a blessing.

And to be under humanity. Genesis 2 is not just about God admiring his creation, but loving what he has made for us and us loving him for it.
The New Testament, the idea of Sabbath, the idea of rest, is repurposed. It is reused to show the great rest that is to come when Jesus comes back.
The final and complete rest that he has. And it talks about his authority. Jesus likens himself to David in the Old Testament. Here's an example there from David and his starving men being at a temple, taking some of the holy food, which is only good for priests, and eating it.
Jesus is saying that like the king of Israel, when it is necessary, he also has authority over the things that are supposedly out of reach.
[14:53] Because they are made to bless rather than made to rule over humanity. It's the same authority he has over fasting, as we saw earlier. The same authority it talks about in the first bit of the chapter where he heals the man's sins.

He says, I have done this so you know that I am powerful and authoritative over everything. Sin, death, legs, everything. And because of this, Jesus offers us a place in his rest.
It's incredible to think about. Jesus' power is mind-boggling. We cannot comprehend the limits of his limitless power. And his authority is entirely unquestionable.
But I think what the most amazing thing is, because as the most powerful creator and sustainer of the universe and everything in it, he uses his power for love.
For love of us. For the sake of us. It's just incredible. The paralytic and his friends come to Jesus, because they know that he has the will to heal this man, to be merciful, and to love him.

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[16:09] And Jesus shows to us, just like the paralytic, that he sees past the immediate problem that we may have, and gets straight to the point. Straight to the disgusting, black, gooey, horrible sin, and heart problem that we all have.

And he deals with it. He says, Your sins are forgiven because I love you. Because he loves us, he wants us to be a part of the greatest Sabbath that is ever to come in the history of anything.
And because he loves us, he opens the gates for us and lets us in. His power over us, his authority over us, and his love for us, for our salvation, is what Jesus does for us.
He throws open the gates, commands sin and death, and offers us a place by his side, because of his love for us. And the only mystery left to us, I think, in the book of Mark, is how could he ever be so loving to us, when we are so horrible to him?
The only reason I can think of is because he wants to, and it's his will. And we have to love him more because of that. Jesus loves us so much that he moves heaven and earth for us, so that we can be by his side in eternity, because he loves us.
[17:31] Amen.

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