

Faithful Friends and a Forgiving Saviour

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Date: 22 September 2024

[0 : 00] Okay, let's begin our worship this morning by singing to God's praise. We're singing in Psalm 47, the Sing Psalms version, Psalm 47, page 62. We can sing the whole of this psalm together, verse 1 to 9. On nations clap your hands and shout. Let joyful cries to God ring out. How awesome is the Lord most high, great King who rules the earth throughout. We'll stand to sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise.

Let joyful cries to God ring out. How awesome is the Lord most high, great King who rules the earth throughout.

He has sung to believe and read. The nations who have been a foe. The nations who have been a foe. In blessing, Jacob, whom he loved, our heritage. The nations who have been a foe. In blessing, Jacob, whom he loved, our heritage.

of the nations who have been a foe. In blessing, Jacob, whom he loved, our heritage. of the nations who have been a foe. In blessing, Jacob, whom he loved, our heritage. in blessing, Jacob.

of the nations who have been a foe. In blessing, Jacob, whom he loved, our heritage. of the nations who have been a foe. In blessing, Jacob, whom he loved, our heritage.

[1 : 33] A heritage for us, he chose. One dance on earth with shouts of joy, the Lord now in the trampled sight.

Sing praise, sing praise to God most high, to God our King let praise abide.

For God is King of all the earth, sing sounds of praise to Him alone.

For crucifixions from on high, He sets upon His holy throne.

The victor's call, the nations come, To yield themselves to England's court.

[3 : 13] To Him belong the shields of air, Exalted with me is the Lord.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Now let us pray. Our gracious Father in heaven, we come before you with much thanksgiving today for your goodness to us and you, for every blessing that is ours in Christ, for the blessing of your word as we open it up and as we sing your praise, and the blessing that there is in learning from your word and even learning your word, as we have already mentioned about the memory verse that the young ones are learning.

We thank you that together we can learn these words and seek to understand them, the wonder of the Lord who is our shepherd and the way He shows us His goodness in bringing our wandering steps back to His way and leading us in the straight paths of righteousness and all that is to reveal and to display His great name.

We thank you that there is so much to encourage us in these words, that we have in Jesus one who is over us and one who is with us. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and yet He is also one who the Bible describes as a friend who stays closer than any brother.

And we thank you for all of these truths that we find in your word, and we pray to know it together, that as the young ones go through to the Twinnies, the Sunday school, the Bible class, that together as they learn around your word there, that they will be built up by it.

[5 : 03] Encourage us through it. Encourage those who are teaching, Lord, be with them and help them. And help us all together to be a prayerful people for all of us as a family together, from the youngest to the oldest, that you would remember us in all our different needs.

And we do thank you that you know us by name, and we pray that we will know you by name, that we will come and praise the name of Jesus and you today, and give all praise and glory to you, as we thank you for all you do for us.

And we ask all the forgiveness of our sins, in Jesus' name. Amen. Just a word to the young ones, before you go out through next door to the hall.

What a beautiful day it is today, and has been the last few days. It's so good to see the sun shining. I'm just thinking today about our names.

We all have a name. I'm sure, hands up if you have a name. Everybody's here. All your hands should go up. Everyone here has a name. And we've all got a name, and the amazing thing is that Jesus knows us all by name.

[6 : 11] He knows our names as well. I often forget people's names. I've mentioned it before. I'm hopeless at trying to remember people's names. But Jesus, he doesn't forget anybody's name.

He remembers every one of us, and he knows us all by name. And our names are very important. They're our identity. They mark us out as to who we are.

And we need our names for different things. For example, this week I was phoning a company about a bill, and they had to ask me questions so that my identity would be confirmed by them. So they asked, what's your name? And I had to give them my name. And then they asked, what's your account number? I had to give them my account number. What's the first line of your address and your postcode?

You had to go through all this process of them finding out and confirming who I am. And very often we have to do that. And there's other places we might have to do it as well.

[7 : 08] For example, you might need one of these. A passport. If you're flying away, maybe even going abroad, you need a passport. There are people at the desk.

They need to know who you are. So you have to give them your passport, and you present it. And your passport has a picture of you. Thankfully, you can't see my picture. It's too far away. But they'll look at it, and they'll confirm that it's you.

And they often say to me, that can't be you. You look far too young to be that person in the picture. But we have to identify ourselves. Or maybe if the police pull you over, and they stop you, they ask for your driver's license so they can identify who you are.

So there's all kinds of different ways we have to be identified, to tell people who we are. But when we come to Jesus, he already knows who we are.

So what do you think is more important? It's more important that we know who he is. And this morning, as we're looking in the Gospel of Mark together in the service, we're going to be thinking about the identity of Jesus, who he is, and why that's important to us.

[8 : 19] He knows us by name, every one of us. But when the day comes, a day will come when he will come back to this world, and we all have to come before him. And he'll call us by name.

But he'll ask us, well, who am I to you? There's a passage in Mark chapter 8. It mentions a question that Jesus asks of the disciples.

He says, all these people are talking about who I am. They're saying, I could be Elijah, I could be one of the prophets. But he turns to the disciples and says, but what about you? Who do you say that I am?

And it's Peter who replied, you are the Christ. You are the Christ. You are Jesus Christ. He recognized who he was. He identified with him. And that's the key for ourselves today as well. Jesus knows us. And as we have to come to him, we have to know who he is. And he speaks to us through his word. And we learn about who he is.

[9 : 20] And not just a name. He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the one who came to save us from our sins. He is the one who came because God loves us so much that he sent Jesus into this world to be our Savior.

That's who Jesus is. And may he be that to us all, that we would see that he is the Christ, that he is Jesus, the Son of God.

And that by putting our trust in him, we are identifying with him. And he loves us in that special way. And that we would love him with all our hearts.

So let's find our identity and know who Jesus is and be part of his great family. Well, we're going to say the Lord's Prayer together now.

Let's pray. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[10 : 23] Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to sing again. Our second singing is in Psalm 130 in the Scottish Psalter.

Find this on page 421. And we're going to sing the whole of this psalm. Psalm 130, page 421. A great psalm of crying out to God and finding that assurance of his presence with us and his great

redemption towards us as it's describing.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. My voice, Lord, do thou hear. And to my supplications' voice give an attentive ear. So we'll stand to sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.

[11 : 38] My voice, Lord, do thou hear. And to my soul, the nations' voice give an attentive ear.

Lord, who shall sound his love, O Lord, to smile at me with thee?

For you, O Lord, the nations' voice Give an ear and saved.

start is the Prince's guarantee. Or guarantee sounds give an lumière of this psalm and Wizard, and to hear to the of touch on elle. For Him, O Lord, above the àIL, S going into eÄld EÁ here but ye lanes in theinden, b lens thesamiel and chi the cl pertaining to succession, is in his word for God may God for glory was my courage for the Lord I sing or God may path to watch the glory might to see that Jesus I am open in the heart are within there to see he and when Jesus' redemption is event within and all All His chariotes, in His church of reading.

[14 : 27] We can turn together now to read God's word in the Gospel of Mark. Mark chapter 1, taking up our reading at verse 40. And we're reading into chapter 2.

Mark chapter 1, taking up our reading at verse 40. You'll find this around page 1009 of the church Bibles. Like I say, we're reading into chapter 2.

And chapter 2 in particular is where our focus is going to be as we see these friends bringing a paralytic friend to Jesus that he might make him well. And the wonderful blessing was that not just was he healed physically, but he was reminded of the greatest gift of all, the forgiveness of sin. We take our reading in chapter 1 at verse 40. And a leper came to him, imploring him and kneeling, said to him, If you will, you can make me clean. Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean.

And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once and said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded for a proof to them.

[15 : 50] But he went out and began to talk freely about it and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but he was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even at the door.

And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him.

And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, My son, your sins are forgiven.

Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

[16 : 58] And immediately Jesus perceived in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, Why do you question these things in your hearts?

Which is easier to say to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Rise, take up your bed, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he said to the paralytic, I say to you, Rise, pick up your bed, and go home.

And he rose and immediately picked up his bed, and went out before them all. So they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.

And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word. Well, we'll again engage in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, as we come reading your word together, we thank you for the very power that there is in your word.

We thank you that as we read there, we see Jesus gathered together with a large crowd, and he was preaching the word to them, a reminder to us of the importance of being gathered around the word of truth, and to hear what you as Lord and God are saying to us, to recognize that this is no ordinary word, no ordinary book, but this is a book that gives life, that reminds us of where life is found, and the hope that there is in Jesus Christ, hope that is there for all who will call upon him.

[18 : 39] And we thank you for the great example that we have read of, of the longing that there was to be with Jesus, of the longing that there was there to be near him. And yet, as we will see as

we read into this passage, that there are those who are so loving towards him, and yet there are others who question him and doubt him, and seek to condemn him.

And that is the world in which we live today as well. We thank you that your word is still powerful, and it is active, it is mighty to save. And we thank you for every way that is bearing fruit to all ends of the earth.

We thank you that that is a promise in your word, that as it goes out, it never returns empty or void, but accomplishes every purpose for which you send it forth.

And so we ask that blessing on your word here today, that it would go out with that same power, and that today it would return to you, accomplishing much, accompanying your word.

May your spirit be with us. May your spirit, Holy Spirit, open our hearts to receive your word, and to rejoice in it. And that even today, there would be rejoicing in heaven, over one sinner who repents.

[19 : 53] And we ask, Lord, that that would be true for us here, as it might be true for many, who gather around your word this day, throughout our town, throughout our communities, our islands, our nation, and the world.

We thank you that your word goes out to all ends of the earth. And we pray, Lord, that your kingdom will come in power. And so hear our prayers, O Lord, as we offer them up through the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that one who is the Son of God.

We thank you for what we read of our Lord Jesus in this passage, and throughout your gospel of Mark, and also throughout your whole word of truth. We thank you that it points us constantly towards our greatest need of all, that forgiveness of sin.

And so we confess our sin anew to you today, asking forgiveness for them all, for our sins that we, in our thoughts, in our words, and in our actions, and even in our inaction, the things that we omit and do not do.

Lord, pardon us, we pray. And hear us, Lord, as we cry out to you. May we come, even as the beggar at the side of the road, who cried out to Jesus, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

[21 : 10] May that be our cry today, that you would have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us as a people. Remember us, Lord, in all our different needs. We especially remember those who are mourning today, as we hear of bereavement in our own midst, as a congregation, and in our communities around us as well.

Lord, we do pray for your comfort, thankful for the Holy Spirit, who is the comforter. And may that spirit surround those who are mourning today, Lord, that they would know in their grief and in their sorrow, they would know the love of Jesus, the one who is there for them, the one who is with them. Lord, we do pray for those who are unwell in hospital, or confined to their homes, those who are going through different trials at this time, as we hear and see so many things going on around us. We think of work circumstances around us, and we see people struggling financially because of lack of employment, or uncertainty of employment.

We do pray, Lord, for a blessing upon us as a community here, to see you provide for us, Lord, to provide work, to provide for our homes and our families, to provide us with wisdom and instruction from you, to provide for those who are leaders over us, Lord, to give them wisdom, to give them help, to give them your spirit, to lead and to guide, to rule wisely, to rule our people as a nation, O Lord, with the wisdom of your word and your truth.

[22 : 40] We do pray, Lord, that there will be a turning to you in the midst of the avenues of power in Westminster and Holyrood, and a royal family as well, Lord, we pray and commit them to you as well, asking for your blessing over our king and the queen and the family as well, Lord, that they would know your blessing upon them, and that they would know what it is to rule wisely as well.

We pray that for our world too, when we see the turmoil around us, the uncertainty that surrounds us day by day, the tragedies that are so often before our eyes, there are so many things going on, when we think of the Middle East and the Ukraine and the Far East, and so much that we see in our screens, but there's so much that's hidden from us as well.

The persecution of your people, the suffering of people far and wide, and yet nothing is hidden from you. You know us by name, you know each one, and Lord, we pray, have mercy upon us, draw us close to yourself, have pity on us, and make your face to shine upon us, that we would see your blessing on us as nations of this world.

Hear our prayers, Lord, continue with us, be with us in the week ahead, and all that it entails, as we seek to honour you, and serve you, in our homes, in our families, in our workplaces, and as a

congregation of your people, and as a wider church as well.

May you lead us, and guide us, in these days, we remember our young people, as they will meet this coming Saturday, and in Renes, for the big free rally. We thank you for all the work of the camps, over the summer, and we pray for your blessing, to continue to come upon the young ones, who attended, and for a blessing on their day together, God willing, this week ahead.

[24 : 25] Watch over us, and we pray, guide us by your spirit, and hear us in all our prayers, as we ask all, in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and for his glory.

Amen. Before we turn back, to look at our passage in Mark, we'll sing again, this time in Psalm 103, the Scottish Psalter version, page 370, Psalm 103, verse 13.

We'll sing down to verse 18. Such pity as our father hath, and to his children dear, like pity shows, the Lord to such, as worship him in fear, for he remembers we are dust, and he our frame well knows, frail man, his days are like the grass, as flower in field, he grows.

We'll sing from verse 13, down to verse 18, and we stand to sing, and we stand to sing to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

[26 : 26] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen, O praise.

Well, we can turn back to our reading in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 2. We're looking at this section from verse 1 down to verse 12, where Jesus heals this man who was brought to him on a stretcher, a paralytic man brought to him by his friends.

But when we see what Jesus says to them in verse 5, it kind of leaves the people astonished, I think, in many different ways.

[28 : 40] When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, My son, your sins are forgiven. Who is Jesus?

That's the question that we start with today. Who is Jesus? How do you answer that question? Do you answer it from a personal point of view when you're able to say who he is to you?

Do you answer it in a general kind of way when maybe you've heard about Jesus and you try to explain who he is from history or from what you've heard over the years?

Well, we're thankful that God has given us his word because it is his word that answers that question for us. And in the Gospel of Mark, who is Jesus is the kind of question that you see being answered from the very beginning to the very end.

And Mark's Gospel in the first verse gives us a great answer of who Jesus is. It says there in verse 1, There is an answer of who Jesus is.

[29 : 52] He is the Son of God. Is that how we know him? Is that how the people in Mark's day knew him? Some did.

Some did. But as we see, others didn't. And others wouldn't accept Jesus for who he is. But who is Jesus to you today? Well, as you go through the Gospel of Mark, you find, as Mark is writing, he's revealing to us the identity of Jesus in amazing ways.

As from the very outset in chapter 1, you see Jesus starting to perform miracles. You see him teaching in ways that leave people astonished, astounded as to the kind of teaching that they're hearing, teaching like they've never heard before.

So there's this sense of astonishment, this sense of bewilderment about who Jesus is. You see at the end of chapter 1 that Jesus had to go out into the open places because even towns couldn't receive him because such numbers were coming.

It says they were coming from every quarter. They were hearing about the things that Jesus was doing and the miracles that he was performing and the teaching that he was giving.

[31 : 07] And they were astonished. And they wanted to know who is this Jesus. But it was more than just his miracles, more than just his teaching.

As you go through the Gospel of Mark, you see Jesus begin to say he came to suffer. He came to give his life as a ransom for many. The Son of God came to give his life on the cross.

And as you come to the end of the Gospel, that's what you see, the death of Jesus. But then on the third day, he rose again. So this is the Jesus that Mark is showing us in his Gospel.

But who is Jesus to us today? Do you see his identity? Do you see who he is? And do you identify with him?

Do you identify with him? So Mark's Gospel moves so quickly. There's a sense of just moving from one place to another so quickly. There's a lot going on.

[32 : 11] And in chapter 2, as we come to this section, you see that after being out and about, large crowds following him, he's returned to Capernaum, the place that's called home. And as he's gathered here in a home, there's a large crowd that's already started to gather.

And they're coming probably to see the kind of things that Jesus has already been doing. See more miracles. Hear more teaching.

He's there teaching the Word to them. But now he's going to reveal his identity and who he is in terms of another reason that he came into this world.

For the forgiveness of sin. He came because he has so much more to offer than just miracles and healing. He has salvation.

He has the offer of eternal life. He is the Son of God. So what does Christianity have to offer to us today?

[33 : 15] What does Christ have to offer to us today? It's more than just coming to hear words. It's more than just gathering in a fellowship together, enjoying the friendship of one another.

What would you offer to someone who you're inviting to come to church? Would you say, come and find a friendly group of people? Come and find a nice fellowship where we can have a cup of tea or a cup of coffee together.

Come and find a break for yourself in the day, a place to come. Is that all that we would have to offer? Well, you see, what Jesus shows here is the priority of his ministry.

And he shows his priority as these group of men bring a friend who is a paralytic. He's unable to walk. He'd have been shunned by society in this day, but he had friends around him.

And what they wanted was to bring their friend to Jesus. And that's the greatest thing that we have to offer here today to our people. As we gather together, as we invite others to come in, we have an invitation to come to Jesus.

[34 : 28] To Jesus. And to be friends in the same way as these ones who carried this paralytic to Jesus were. Doing anything and everything to bring our people to see Jesus.

and to hear the message of the great message of forgiveness of sin that is on offer. Is that the kind of friends and friendship that we are showing to those around us today?

Are we friends in that true sense of the word where our longing is for others to come and see the friend who is Jesus and to know him as Lord and Savior?

There was an article a number of years ago that offered a prize for the best definition of a friend. Best definition of what a friend is.

And a number of people, thousands of people sent in their answers as to what this would look like, what this was. And the winning answer was this, a friend is the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out.

[35 : 34] A friend is one who comes in when the whole world has gone out. It's someone who is there. And that's the kind of friends that this man had.

When the rest of society would so easily abandon anyone who was a burden, anyone who was a burden on them as a family or as a community, you think of the blind beggar later on in the Gospel of Mark who was outside the town begging at the side of the street.

He was shunned. And so were many who had problems, physical, mental, all these kinds of problems. They were shunned. But here you see the true beauty of friendship.

Friendship and the longing to help and to bring their friend to Jesus. And so are we these kinds of friends.

And how do we see Jesus today? How do we identify Jesus today? And how do we identify with him? So there's three things I want us to see in this passage.

[36 : 38] The first thing is the faithful friends, those who bring the paralytic in. Then we see the faithless crowd. How many of the crowd were just lacking faith and even just rejecting and shunning Jesus.

But then we see the wonder of the forgiving Savior. So the first thing is the faithful friends. Jesus has just returned from the desolate places that we see at the end of chapter one where many were coming from every quarter to hear him and to see him doing many miracles and different things. But now he's returned to Capernaum. And as he has returned, we see in verse two, many were gathered together so that there was no more room in the home.

And he was there preaching the word to them. So you can just picture this. A large crowd is gathered in this home and the house is full so that even at the door there's no room to get in. It's impossible to get in. There's just people everywhere. And into this setting come these four men carrying a paralysed friend. And they're determined to get him to Jesus.

[37 : 55] And they're looking for any way to get him to Jesus. And they're not going to give up. They're not going to stop until they can bring him to Jesus. They have this faith.

They have this faith that they know that Jesus can help. Jesus can help their friend. And so they're determined to come to Jesus.

And so they look for every opportunity to find a way in. And they're bringing him to Jesus that they might heal him. Believing that he is able to help.

And is that the belief that we have today? You know, when you know the Lord Jesus in your own heart and you're talking to someone else, inviting them to come and hear about Jesus, do you believe it?

Do you believe what you're saying? Do you believe with all your heart while you're presenting Jesus as to who he is? As to the power that he has?

[38 : 55] Still today, he has this power to forgive sins. And you notice that as these men bring their friend, the paralytic, to Jesus, and when they manage to dig down through the roof and they manage to lower him down, and Jesus sees their faith, what does he say to the paralytic?

He says in verse 5, My son, your sins are forgiven. And you might think to yourself, well, surely they're going to be disappointed.

They've brought him because he's not able to walk. And yet, this is the response that he gives. My son, your sins are forgiven. You get no hint of disappointment here.

It's like this wonder of his teaching is just awestruck. Your sins are forgiven. And this resonates in the room in different ways.

There are those who are friends of Jesus who hear this and are amazed at the offer of forgiveness of sins. But there are others, as we'll see in a moment, who just see this as an abomination.

[40 : 07] They see this as just so wrong in what he's saying. How dare he say this that he might forgive the sins of someone. But as we're inviting people to Jesus, surely that's the most important thing for us.

That they would know Jesus saying, your sins are forgiven. Because there is the greatest peace. There is the greatest blessing that anyone can receive.

It may not be that healing comes. We see here it does. But even as we're inviting people to Jesus, there may not be a physical healing. But the greatest thing they can receive is the forgiveness of sin.

That is what matters. Because that is what counts for eternity. So we are to be faithful friends inviting people to Jesus, to invite all to Jesus.

These faithful friends, Jesus sees them. And what does he see in them? He sees their faith. He sees their faith in verse 5.

[41 : 23] When Jesus saw their faith, he saw their faith, he saw their determination to come to him. How does Jesus see you?

How does he see your faith? Do you have that faith today? How does he see others around us today? The wonder of how Jesus, he doesn't condemn them for bringing this paralytic.

He doesn't condemn them later on for bringing children as many do. You see, it's so often that Jesus, he doesn't matter who comes. It doesn't matter who they are.

They all need to hear the same message. They are all precious to him. A couple of years ago, there was a very moving series of adverts put on the television about the NHS.

And they were trying to highlight the stigma of addiction and trying to break the stigma. And the adverts were powerful. They were moving. And in one of the adverts, there was a woman sitting in her room at home.

[42 : 28] Obviously she was an actor, but you can just picture this in so many people's lives. Broken by drug addiction. And the woman was just speaking about her issues.

And it was the last words that were so powerful when she was saying about how others would see her. She was saying, like, you won't feel I'm worth the time of day because I have a drug problem. That's how she would expect to be seen by others. Is that how Jesus would see her? Or would Jesus see her as someone who needs forgiveness of sin?

The way Jesus sees all of us. We all have our problems. We're all unworthy. And yet Jesus looks on us and has that longing that we would know the forgiveness of sin. these friends, they don't come wondering if Jesus can do it. They come in faith, knowing the power that Jesus has and the power that leads to the forgiveness of sin because there is the identity of Jesus that they know.

[43 : 40] The identity that we see at the beginning of the gospel in chapter 1, verse 1, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They have faith and they are faithful friends bringing their friend to Jesus who is able to forgive.

And so may we have that faith too. And may we have that faithfulness in bringing others to see the wonder of Jesus who can forgive sins.

So we are the faithful friends. Secondly, then we have the faithless crowd. There are those in the crowd who doubt who Jesus is. They don't see the identity of Jesus as the Son of God.

It says there in verse 6, some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

So they're sitting there, they're grumbling as you see it so often in the gospel as people are seeing Jesus and especially those who were in position of authority, in position of power.

[44 : 51] They saw Jesus as a threat to themselves and they were probably claiming the Old Testament scriptures, scriptures like Isaiah 43 verse 25 where God says, I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and remembers your sins.

No more that God alone is able to forgive sin. And so who is this? Who is this intruder? Who is this man Jesus who claims to be able to forgive sins?

He is blaspheming, they say. Who can forgive sin but God alone? And they are right, only God can forgive sin. But they miss the identity of who Jesus is.

That he is Jesus Christ, the son of God. He is God incarnate. He is God who has come down to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

And yet they see him as a threat. They didn't get what they wanted from him. They didn't get what he expected from him. He was taking their authority, so he saw them as a threat.

[46 : 13] And there's a number of occasions in the scriptures where you find when people didn't get what they wanted from Jesus, they turned away. If they found things too difficult, they turned away.

A great example is in the Gospel of John at the end of chapter 6, verse 60 through to verse 71. It says many of the disciples turned away because they found his teaching too difficult.

They turned away. And that's the time when Jesus turned to the disciples and said, will you also go away? And Peter had that great response to whom else can we go?

You have the words of eternal life. They knew the importance and the identity of Jesus. You alone have the words of eternal life.

The troubles of this world, they'll be there, but you have a greater purpose. You have a greater power and authority than anything else in this world. But many turned away faithless, not believing the identity of who Jesus was.

[47 : 20] And it's amazing how people can come into a church and go away because they don't get what they want. I've seen it over the years in different ways.

I remember once some people coming into a church and they were wanting to hear Gaelic singing. singing. And when they came in and asked if there was Gaelic singing, they heard that there wasn't that day, they went away.

What was important was the singing. They missed out on the gospel. Another time, some people came in looking and asking if there was going to be food served in church.

And when they heard that it was just a cup of tea and a biscuit afterwards, they went away. They didn't wait for any other service. They missed out on the gospel. gospel. What's important to them wasn't who Jesus is, it was their own needs.

And that's the danger for ourselves as well, that we put ourselves first and our own desires, our own needs first and not the needs of knowing Jesus as the Son of God.

[48 : 25] And it's amazing when you look at Capernaum here. Capernaum, a place where Jesus did so much in his earthly ministry. so much teaching. He was there preaching the word to them.

And they saw all of these things happening. And yet so many still remained hardened and unconverted. And it stands as a warning to us today.

In the gospel of Matthew, Capernaum is used as a warning. In verse 23 of chapter 11, it says, And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven?

You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you. What's he saying there? He's saying you have seen the blessings, the presence of Jesus, the preaching of Jesus, and you've turned away.

[49 : 32] So it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom. And there's a warning for us in that today as well. That passage in Matthew when there's that warning is just before it says about Jesus having all authority and saying, Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

It's to find rest in Jesus. And it's a warning to us today because of the blessing of the gospel in our midst. The gospel has been present in our island for a few generations now.

The blessing of having the word preached and yet so many will say no, not for me. It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.

That's the stark warning. that the faithless people, there's a warning there that salvation is found in Christ alone.

We need forgiveness of sins and this is found in Christ alone. Somebody once said, where God places a full stop, let no man put a question mark.

[50 : 48] And if you look at that in the context of this passage in verse five, Jesus sees this faith of these men and says to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven.

Full stop. Your sins are forgiven. But what do the scribes say in verse seven? Why does this man speak like that?

He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sin but God alone? There's a question mark. They're questioning who this Jesus is. there's a doubt there.

But if he said it, if he's able to say your sins are forgiven, that's it, full stop. People will come to church with doubts and questions and worries and fears.

We have to say there's a full stop. When you put your trust in Jesus, your sins are forgiven. They are cast into the depths of the sea.

[51 : 49] There is redemption found in Jesus. Well, there's a faithless crowd. Let's not be found in the midst of them.

But the final thing we want to see here is the forgiving Savior. As I say, Mark moves so quickly and when you come into chapter two, it's amazing how much has already happened.

Where Jesus is showing his authority already, his authority over people. In verse 16, he calls the first disciples, he says, follow me and I will make you fishers of men in verse 17.

And they leave everything and follow him. He has this power, he has this authority. And then immediately they start to see his power and authority. He heals a man with an unclean spirit. He goes on to heal many. Then he preaches in Galilee. Then he cleanses a leper. There's so much going on already here. He's showing authority in so many different ways.

[52 : 54] But now we see his greatest authority. That he is able to forgive sin. And when you look at verse nine through to verse twelve in chapter two, Jesus says, which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, rise, take up your bed and walk.

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He said to the paralytic, I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home. And they both happened together. He was able to walk and he knew forgiveness of sin. What was more important? Surely the forgiveness of sin.

sin. It's wonderful that he was healed. But the greatest gift of God is salvation in Jesus Christ. It's the most important thing that we need to hear.

And that's what Mark is showing us throughout his gospel. The identity of who Jesus is. Beginning in that first verse of chapter one, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to seeing here in verse 12, the response.

[54 : 13] They were all amazed and glorified God, saying we have never seen anything like this. In chapter four, verse 41, as they're caught in the storm and Jesus calms the storm, the disciples were filled with great fear and said to one another, in verse 41, who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

There's this identity of Jesus being revealed over time. Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him? Then you come into chapter eight and there's all this discussion going on. Who is Jesus? Some are saying Elijah or one of the prophets, but Jesus turns it on his head and says, but who do you say that I am? And that's the question today, our identity of Jesus. Who is he? Well, Peter answered in chapter eight verse 29, you are the Christ. You are the Son of God.

So this revelation is there through his word. And then you come to chapter 15, on the cross, on the crucifixion, and it's almost like it just comes full circle.

[55 : 33] Jesus revealing, Mark saying to us, this is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In chapter 15, verse 39, you have the Roman centurion looking on, and what does he say?

He says, truly, this man was the Son of God. This is who Jesus is. There's a Jewish proverb that says, a friend is one who warns you.

Well, Jesus came to warn us. He came to warn us. In chapter 1, verse 15, the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent, and believe in the gospel.

Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We don't see him, but we hear him.

He is preaching to us today. He is the one who is able to say, your sins are forgiven. He is the one who is able to make you well.

[56 : 45] But you say, I can't see him. How can I trust him? Well, he sees you, and that's what counts. There's a story told of a house that caught fire one night, and there was a young boy still in the house and he was forced to flee up to the roof.

And his father had got out of the house and he was looking up to his son, he was hearing him screaming. And he was shouting up to his son, jump, I'll catch you.

He knew the boy had to jump. He knew it was the only way to get to safety. And so he was shouting, jump, I'll catch you. But as the wee boy was looking down, all he could see was smoke and flames and darkness.

He couldn't see his father. He could hear the voice, but he couldn't see him. And he was afraid. And the father was still shouting, jump. And the boy was saying, but dad, I can't see you.

And the father replied, but I can see you. And that's all that matters. And so the boy jumped. And the father caught him.

[58 : 02] And that's the gospel. We say we can't see Jesus. How can we know he's real? We have to put ourselves into his hands to take that leap of faith, to come believing in him as the son of God, the one who is able to forgive our sins.

That is the Jesus that we see here. Do we see his identity? Do we see him as the son of God, the Christ, the Messiah, the one who came to save his people from their sins?

Do you identify with him as he identifies to you? He came for sinners.

And we are all sinners. But we are all to put our trust in him and to invite others so that as we know Christ and the forgiveness of our sins, that we would be like these men who brought their friend to Jesus, that he might be well, that we would say to others, come, come to Jesus.

He is the one who can forgive your sins and make you well. Let's identify with Jesus, the son of God, and let's have faith in him and encourage others to come and know that power of salvation in him.

[59 : 43] Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we do rejoice in your goodness to us, that you speak, you call us to yourself through your word, and even in times when we cannot see, even in times when we doubt and we seem to lack faith, that you still call us to yourself, that you are the one who is able to forgive us our sins and to make us new.

So, Lord, hear our prayers and help us to be faithful as friends to others, inviting to Jesus, that there we would find that friend who stays closer than any brother, and the one who says, you are my friends if you do as I command.

Hear our prayers and go before us in the rest of this day, pardoning our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 138.

We'll sing Psalms version, page 179. Psalm 138, we'll sing from verse 1 to verse 5.

I'll praise you, Lord, with all my heart. Before the gods, I'll sing your praise. I'll bow towards your holy place and bless your holy name always.

[61 : 04] We'll sing from verse 1 to 5 to God's praise. We stand to sing. am Evan goes to Christ. harder to be HD in music, Vern to I own power in y va ■ preventing be■ta■ who Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my right. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.