

Mark 1:16-39

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[0 : 00] I'm getting old enough that I need a large print Bible to preach from, so sorry about that. If you want to turn with me in the pew Bibles, your program actually tells you what number it is.

I don't remember. Does anyone have it? Mark chapter 1. We're looking at Mark chapter 1 tonight as our scripture reading. Mark chapter 1. We're going to begin in verse 16.

Does anyone have a page number for us from the pew Bible? 836. Thank you. 836 in the pew Bible if you're looking.

936 in the pew Bible. Mark 1 verse 16. We're going to read a series of short stories, pictures that Mark is painting.

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon's, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.

[1 : 16] And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little further, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who were in their boats, mending the nets.

And immediately he called them. And they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. And they went into Capernaum. And immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit.

And he cried out, what have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. But Jesus rebuked him, saying, be silent and come out of him.

And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, who is or what is this?

[2 : 19] A new teaching with authority? He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout the surrounding region, throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

And immediately he 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. That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons.

And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place. And there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him.

[3 : 22] And they found him and said to him, everyone is looking for you. And he said to them, let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also. For that is why I came out.

Let's pray. God, we thank you for the Bible.

We thank you that it's your word to us, that you have spoken clearly to us. And most of all, you have spoken to us about your son. Lord, thank you for this passage and what it tells us about Jesus.

We pray that you would help us see who he is tonight. And Lord, that as you work in our hearts, that we would respond to all that he is the way that you would want us to.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So I have a question for you. How do you respond when you encounter someone who's in real authority?

[4 : 24] Just put yourself in the driver's seat of your car when those red and blue lights go on behind you and you pull over and roll down the window.

What's your response? What's your heart response? Maybe you're an athlete and the coach says, Michael, after practice today, I want to see you in my office.

What's your response? Perhaps you got a phone call this week from a detective of the New Haven Police Department saying, I'd like you to come in.

We'd like to ask you a few questions. Or maybe you're delivering a paper in your department and a world-renowned academic in your field shows up and slides in the back just as you begin your presentation.

Or perhaps one of the greatest forms of authority we can imagine in our world today. Imagine the President of the United States walked in the back door and sat down.

[5 : 33] How do you respond? What happens in your heart when you meet someone who has real authority in your life? I think the reality is that we have, in fact, a love-hate relationship with authority.

Now, I don't know if that's what you felt. Because I think often, well, I'll start with the love part because I think it's important to recognize this. We actually love authority sometimes. Okay? If I'm getting mugged on the street corner and a cop pulls around the corner, I'm thinking, hallelujah, the authorities have arrived.

And I've been delivered from this circumstance. There are times when, if I'm sick and I need a doctor, I love to have an authority on my particular illness who can help me in that situation.

So there are times when we recognize that there's a goodness about authority. Something that we love about it. But we have a very much of a love-hate relationship with authority, don't we?

When we're called into the coach's office or when that academic shows up, often our response is fear. Oh, no. What are they going to do to me? How are they going to limit or critique or judge me?

[6 : 57] It's the question that I think we often ask in our hearts. And, of course, isn't this what we would know from the very beginning of the Bible? When we look back and we think the Bible begins a story of God who created a beautiful world where he provided everything in it.

And as the authority, he set the rules about how we are to live in that world. And that's what Genesis 1 and 2 are all about. And then in Genesis 3, humanity rebels against God.

It says, God, we don't want to honor you or respect your authority. We want to live independent. In fact, we want to be an authority on par with you. And there were consequences of that.

There was judgment because of that. And so, of course, we would feel this fear. Because as human beings, we all live in this uneasy relationship with authority.

Because we are a part of this human race that is in an uneasy relationship with its creator. Let me just acknowledge, too, that some of you may have a bad reaction to authority.

[8 : 10] Because you've experienced someone abusing authority in your life. That somehow you've seen someone, a parent, a teacher, a religious leader, a policeman, abuse that authority.

And it's caused deep harm for you. And so there's real reason to be wary or to be afraid of authority. Even that is an outworking.

Because those are human authorities that are not using their authority for good, but using it for evil. But all of us have this ambivalence.

This feeling two different ways about authority, don't we? This brings us to our passage tonight. Because our passage is the second part of the Gospel of Mark.

And if you were here last week, Nick laid out for us that the Gospel of Mark is telling us who Jesus is. And how we are to respond to him. And if you look back in your Bible, verses 14 and 15 of chapter 1, we see Jesus coming and saying, proclaiming, the kingdom of God is at hand.

[9 : 23] Repent and believe the good news. And so this sort of sets up the narrative of the whole story. This first section is an introduction. And it says, the kingdom is now here.

And it begs the question, what kind of kingdom is Jesus really going to bring? What kind of kingdom is Jesus talking about?

And immediately then Mark goes on. In his typical staccato narrative. Did you notice how many times I said immediately as I read this?

He's like, and immediately. And then. And then. And then. And it's just a sort of breathless account. Where he's saying, well, here's what Jesus did. And here's what Jesus did.

And here's what Jesus did. And here's what Jesus did. And one of the remarkable things about it is to look at those surprising reactions of people.

[10:20] Did you notice that? Put yourself. Maybe these stories are so familiar that you've stopped thinking about this. But put yourself in the position of these people. Look at verse 18 and verse 20. According to Mark.

Mark came along and he said, Chris, follow me. And Chris got up. And he left his entire family. He left his entire livelihood. His entire well-being.

His home. And he just got up. And he left it all to follow this man. Do you see it in 18 and in 20? You see it repeated. Why would he do that?

And then you go on and you look in verses 20 and 27. The crowds who didn't know much about Jesus at this point. Because this is the first time we're starting to see him publicly in ministry. And what do they say about him? They were astonished. They said, what is this? I've never seen anything like it. Right?

[11:23] And then, do you notice what the demon does? The demon says, what have you to do with me? Which is kind of like, get out of my house.

This is my place. What are you doing here? That's the idea that the demon is saying. And so there's this pushback by the demon. Because I know who you are and I know why you've come.

Right? He walks into Simon's house. He walks into his mother-in-law's room. And the fever fled from him.

Ran away. The healed woman stands up and immediately begins to serve him. The crowds, the sick, the needy flock to him.

It said the whole city was sitting at his door to be healed of their sickness. And freed from their spiritual oppression. Mark is telling all of these stories to help us get how surprising and how shocking this Jesus is when he shows up in the world.

[12:36] Because when, and this is an important interpretive key for the whole book of Mark as we're studying it. When you see what Jesus does, then you will understand who he is.

And that's how Mark tells us about who Jesus is. Other gospels will give you more teaching and more explanatory passages to tell you more about who Jesus is. But in Mark, he's stringing these things together because he thinks you can figure it out just by reading his stories with a good eye. You will see who Jesus is by reading these stories about what he does over and over again. And I think in this section, what Mark is saying, what he's pointing out by stringing these stories together, is he's saying when Jesus comes, he comes with an authority like no other.

What did that look like? What kind of authority did Jesus bring when he came? Well, the first one that you see so clearly is that he had the authority to call all people everywhere to follow him.

So you see it with the disciples. He just says, come, follow me. And they do. All right. Then you also see it further on when you see his ministry within the city of Capernaum had such a magnetic effect that there were people streaming to him.

[14:05] The whole city, as we just saw, gathered to him. Why would this be? Why would Jesus have the authority to call all people everywhere?

We live in a world of tolerance today where you have your religion, I have my religion, and we need to figure out how to get along. And at one level, that's perfectly right. It's not my job to kill you for what you believe.

And similarly, I hope you won't do the same to me. Right? So that's a right thing. But on a deeper level, the Jesus of the Bible expresses this authority.

How could that be? Well, there are lots of different places we could see that. One is that you see him with power over the created world in different ways.

You see him as the one who comes and is able to give life. You think about this sick woman, and he comes and he just says, oh yeah, you see that effect of the fallen world, their sickness.

[15:12] But I'm the giver of life and the creator of life. I can make that fever flee. I can raise her up so that she's healthy again. Watch me. I can do that. In doing so, he's claiming power over creation.

He's claiming the ability to overcome sickness in this. But you know, when you look through all of scripture, one of the most remarkable places where we see what is it that Jesus, where does Jesus derive this authority?

One of the great passages in all of the Bible is Acts 17. You should go read it sometime. Paul the apostle walks into Athens, and he's looking around, and there's this great myriad of statues to all

these gods.

And he sees one that is inscribed to an unknown god, and he says to the gathered people, what you worship is unknown, I now declare to you. And he goes on to talk about God, the God of the Bible.

And he says, this God is not made in temples. He doesn't live in temples made by human hands. He's not like one of us. In fact, he's transcendent. He's the one who's the giver of life. In him, we live and move and have our being.

[16:20] He's not far off. We can actually know him. And at the very end of it, Paul says, and he has now called all men, all people everywhere to repent.

Because he has appointed a day, and he has made one man qualified to come and judge the world. And he has verified that man by raising him from the dead.

And so Jesus, ultimately, in his authority, has power to call all men because he's the one who is able to give life because he alone rose from the dead.

So, Jesus calls people, all people, all men, all women, everywhere to repent, to believe, which is what he said.

And the question is tonight, what about you? Are you responding to that call? Have you heard that call of him to come and to believe?

[17:31] Everyone will respond to Jesus some way. You will curse him. You will ignore him. You will bow your knee to him. But everyone will respond one way or the other.

He lifts up this call, and he says, come, follow me. So, that's one of the kinds of authority he has. He has the authority to call people to follow him. The second thing is that he has the authority to reverse the curse on creation.

Now, for those of you who are from the Northeast, reverse the curse is a very, very sweet, sweet line if you're a Red Sox fan.

Because you know that in 1918, the Red Sox won the World Series. And two years later, they sold Babe Ruth to the Yankees. And for the next 80 years, they didn't win the World Series until 2004. Right? And it was called the curse of the Bambino. The Red Sox will never win a World Series again because they were so foolish to give up the best baseball player that's ever lived to their rivals.

[18:43] Terrible, terrible. Jesus came to reverse a much greater curse. The rebellion against God that humanity committed meant that the whole world was now out of relationship with its creator.

And so we have sickness and we have spiritual forces that are contrary to God. We have sin. We have evil in the world because of this. And we live in a world that is experiencing the effects of the curse.

Here, we see it in multiple places. Right? Here, we see it in the unclean spirit. A Jewish audience would have known an unclean spirit is a spirit that has nothing to do with God.

It is outside of God's camp, of God's reign, of God's kingdom. It is somehow in rebellion against it. The woman who is sick.

[19:50] Even the misunderstanding of the disciples about who Jesus is. All of these things are effects of sin. Because we are made to know God, but we don't, do we?

And we are made to live in a perfectly good world, but we don't, do we? Instead, we live in this world where we are constantly... In fact, I think that we have only this much knowledge of how cursed, how fallen this world is.

And the only way that I believe that this is really true is because I can taste sometimes in my soul a longing for something that's pure.

For something that's right. For something that's true. For something that's lovely. Sometimes God pierces my heart with a taste of what it would look like if there were no curse in the world.

And then the clouds come in and it never lasts. But it makes me think it's there. It's real. And if you are struggling with sickness, it's been ongoing and a trial.

[21:01] Know that this is a part of the curse. Not of your sin, but of the curse on creation. The curse that happened way back in the beginning. That we are now all reaping the consequences of.

And Jesus comes. He just says, No, I have authority over you. You, unclean spirit. Go. And like I said, the unclean spirit was like, What are you doing in my territory?

This is my field. This is my hometown. I have got dominion over this person. That's what it means when he says, What have you to do with me, Jesus of Nazareth? Then he goes on and he says, I

know who you are.

You are the holy one. You are the one sent from God. He recognized it. The demon recognized it. And he says, No, no, no.

Now that the king has come. Now that the kingdom is here. I'm going to reclaim my territory. I'm going to reverse the effects of this curse. I'm going to bring this into the world.

[22 : 09] But notice at the very end. Isn't it interesting? Jesus has the power to fix it all.

It seems. He could have snapped his fingers. He could have made every sick person well. Right? But isn't it interesting. That in his mission on earth.

Though he has this authority. He doesn't use it to simply fix those things. Do you see what he says at the very end of this passage? Verse 38.

Let us go on to the other town. So that I may preach there. For that is why I came out. This is really important. Because when we start talking about Jesus having all the authority.

To reverse the curse. And to overcome sin and evil in the world. We start to cry out. And we think, God, why not? Why have you not done it yet? Why have you not fixed all of it? Why is my life so hard, Jesus?

[23 : 10] If I believe in you. Why can't you fix this stuff? And it's not that he can't. But it's that he has a greater purpose for us.

He has a greater healing. That he wants to work. Not only in our individual lives. But in the world. And so he walks away from multitudes.

Who are clamoring for him to come heal. He says, I have to go other. To proclaim. To preach. And what is he preaching? He's preaching, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.

We'll come back to that. As we wrap this up. So he has the authority to call people. He has the authority to reverse the curse. Finally.

And very oddly. Verses 35 and 36. Mark says, oh, Jesus has all this authority. He can do anything.

[24 : 13] Like at this point, you're thinking he has the Superman cape on. And he can do anything. And then he goes out into the. Away from the crowds. Away from his disciples. To do what?

To be close to his father. To pray. Why would Superman have to pray to anybody? Well. Well. Jesus authority.

Is derived from his fellowship with God. His dependence upon God. As the second person of the Trinity.

Walked the earth. As he took on human flesh and bone. He took a position of dependence upon God. The father.

Even as he was God himself. In human flesh. And it's a remarkable thing. That makes us think. This authority is not like.

[25 : 12] What I thought it would be. Because everyone thought. That the Messiah. The king that God would raise up. The holy one that he would raise up. To come and rescue. Would be the one who would snap his fingers.

And make it all right. Throw over the Roman rule. Restore the economic. And physical prosperity of the kingdom. Expand it to the ends of the earth. And God would be worshipped.

And glorified. And wouldn't that be great? And then we have the savior who comes. And he starts showing signs of being able to do that. And then he heads off in the wilderness to pray.

And you just think. What kind of authority is this? Well. It's an authority that knows that it comes. From somewhere else. Comes from God himself. And. Therefore. It is an authority that is wielded. For God's greatest purposes.

[26 : 12] In the world. You see. Jesus came to wield his authority. Not for his own victory. And exaltation. Although he did all that.

But he wielded his authority. For the good of us. In God's purposes. God sent him. Here. With a very clear purpose. And Mark. And this is another key.

Into interpreting. The whole gospel of Mark. Is that. We will know. More about what this means. When we read the end of the book. Because the interpretive key.

To understanding. Who Jesus is. And all the significance. Of these stories. Is when we get to the end. And we see him. Die on the cross. And rise again from the dead.

And so here. We see Jesus. Wielding his authority. For the good of others.

[27 : 08] For the greatest good of others. In John 10. 18. Jesus says this. I have the authority. To lay down my life. And to take it up.

Again. You know. It's an amazing thing. Because. No one else in the world. Has ever had that authority.

We don't have that authority. We might have the authority. To lay down our life. We don't have the authority. To pick it up again. That's why.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ. Changes everything. Because. It is in that. That we see the fullness. Of his authority. And the purposes. For which he did it.

You see. When he went to the cross. The one who had all authority. To reverse the curse. Said. I will use my authority. To free you. Ultimately. From the curse.

[28 : 07] Of judgment. Upon your sin. And judgment. Upon your rebellion. Against God. Your desire. In all of those moments.

To rebel against. The human authorities. That are over you. Are just little. Indications. Of how your heart. Is constantly. Straying.

Towards. Rebelling. Against your creator. Himself. And Jesus says. I'm going to come. And use my authority. To lay down my life. So that you don't have to bear.

The consequences. And the judgment. Of God. Against your rebellion. I will be treated. As a rebel. Even though I was. Perfectly dependent.

And perfectly submitted. To the father. I will take my. Authority. And lay it down. For you. The rebel.

[29 : 02] So that you can come back. And be forgiven. Of that rebellion. So that you can be restored. To a relationship. With God. So that you can be freed. From the curse.

In all of its effects. So that spiritual oppression. Has no more power over you. So that sickness. Will not be the last word. In your life. In death.

But in fact. Death will be overcome. And swallowed up. In victory. This is the authority. Of Jesus Christ. This surprising.

I can do everything. And yet I will. Humble myself. And lay myself down. For you. That's not the kind of authority.

That we usually wield. In the world. Is it? But it's the kind of authority. That comes. In the Savior. And it characterizes. The kingdom of God.

[29 : 56] As it comes. Is it with power. And glory. Yes. But a power and glory. Like no other in the world. The power and the glory.

Of sacrifice. Of love. Of dying. In our place. And rising from the dead. So that we might have life. So this is the call.

Come believe in this one. Come follow this one. God. And if you're here tonight. And you're exploring Christianity.

I hope you'll keep hearing this call. And I hope you'll keep exploring this Jesus. And see how remarkable. How glorious he is.

And if you're a believer here tonight. If you've already decided. Responded to that call. And said yes. I will follow you. I want to remind you. Of one other great passage.

[31 : 02] In the scriptures. That we see inherent in here. When he called the disciples. He said come. Follow me. And I will make you. Become fishers of men. And it reminded me.

Of what Jesus last words. In the gospel of Matthew were. He says all authority. On heaven and earth. Is given to me. I am the resurrected savior. I have all authority.

So go. And as you go. Into the world. Make disciples. Of all nations.

Baptizing them. And teaching them. All that I have commanded you. And lo. I. I who have all authority in the world. I am with you. In this endeavor. To the end of the age.

This is the call of the church. To continue Jesus' mission. There are more places. For us to go. And tell others. About the glory of Christ. About what an incredible savior he is.

[32 : 00] About one who used his authority. Not for his own. Self-exaltation. But for our good. In suffering. So that he might be exalted. Through winning us.

So this is the call. This is the end. That Jesus called us to. To. Will you respond. Let's pray.

And ask the Holy Spirit. To help us. As the music team comes up. God we. We hear your call. In our lives. Jesus even tonight.

You were calling us. Calling us to repent. And believe. Calling us to come. And follow you. Calling us to take up. The calling of being.

Fishers of men. To others. Lord. None of these things. Would make any sense. None of these things. Would be possible. If it were not for you.

[33 : 01] And for the glory. Of who you are. The authority. That you wield. In this world. And the way. That you have wielded it. By laying down. Your life for us.

God. We ask. Tonight. By your spirit. Lord. Open our hearts. To hear your call. And enable us. To respond. In faith. Repentance.

Belief. And obedience. We pray this. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.