

Sin is what we need healing for

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[0 : 00] a basic series, a basic in terms of going back to the bedrock of the gospel. And these early sections in the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are our key accounts to explain to us just the central point of, of the central reason for Jesus and the central points to his message.

I wanted, over these evenings, to bring lessons on providence, but I'm thinking that we might do that later in the year, being concerned with how God is involved in our lives every day.

But I thought that it's important to go back to the bedrock of the gospel and the foundation. So this is Mark chapter 2, beginning at verse 1, and we'll read through to verse 17.

So Mark chapter 1, sorry, chapter 2, beginning at verse 1. Now hear God's word. 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 bearing to him, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.

[1 : 35] And when they could not get near 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? And immediately Jesus, perceiving 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 that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.

[2 : 56] He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, Follow me.

And he rose and followed him. And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.

For there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, Why does he eat with sinners and tax collectors?

And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, Those who are well have no need of a physician. But those who are sick, I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Well, let's pray now, and we'll pray. Father God, we do thank you so much for Alistair and Karen. And at one stage, we were playing.

[4 : 15] Well, please, if you have your Bible with you, turn again to Mark chapter 2. And as I said, this is the second in the series of Christian basics.

So we're going to start with something really basic, and this is it. Mark knows Jesus. Mark knows Jesus, and he wants you to know Jesus.

And the way that Mark is going to introduce you to Jesus is by telling you who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, what Jesus has spoken. And the way that we get to know Jesus is by listening to what Mark has said.

Now, Mark writes his gospel under the divine inspiration of God. So Mark's words are words guided by God, written by Mark, you know, spoken by Mark, but given by God.

So the reader gets to know who Jesus is, like Mark gets to know who Jesus is, in exactly the same way, by listening to Jesus, by learning about Jesus.

[5 : 27] The other thing to notice here is that many people in the gospel of Mark, as in the gospel of Matthew, Luke, and John, benefit from coming into contact with Jesus without ever really understanding who Jesus is.

You know, you think of the blind man in particular, whose only testimony was, I have no idea who he was, but what I do know to be true is that once I was blind, and now I see.

Okay, in other words, he's healed by Jesus. He has come under the clear blessing of coming into contact with Jesus, but he has no idea who Jesus is.

All he knows is, once I was blind, and now I see. And in many ways, Jesus heals people throughout the gospels, and the first thing that he has to say to many of them after he has healed them is what?

Don't tell anyone. Why not? Because there isn't much they can tell about Jesus, just like the blind man, again, who could only say, I don't know, but I know I was blind, and now I could see.

[6 : 33] That doesn't tell you anything about Jesus, other than the fact that Jesus did this for me. And that's quite important to understand, that it's true to be able to come into the presence of like-minded believers, and to enjoy the many benefits of Christ without ever knowing Christ yourself.

The issue here is that you must come to know Christ for yourself. So Jesus here is introduced to us by Mark with a clear purpose.

God causes us to see who Jesus is by what Jesus says. Okay? In other words, God knows that we learn how to see by listening.

Okay? We learn how to see by listening. Not everything can be seen with our eyes. We see what God wants us to see by listening to Jesus.

God wants us to know, and he wants us to understand. And the only way that can happen is if we listen to Jesus. Mark knows that for you to listen to Jesus is the most important thing.

[7 : 46] The most important thing. So, this also requires us that those who are going to listen to Jesus are going to have to believe that what he says is true.

But Jesus here, in Mark 2 in particular, goes to the extreme, or not necessarily the extreme, or the extent of showing, not just saying he has authority, but showing that he has authority.

He proves his own words by the actions that he is about to do. But Mark is very clear that Jesus is about one thing, preaching the gospel.

You'll notice in verse 14, in chapter 1, verse 14, that after John is arrested, Jesus came out and he is preaching the gospel, proclaiming the gospel of God in Galilee.

He's saying the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel. Then in verse 27, the disciples get the idea that Jesus has set up shop, a clinic to heal people.

[8 : 49] And Jesus has to put them right, saying, that's not what I have come for, verse 27. I have come, sorry, verse 27 says, they recognize that Jesus has a new authority.

He is teaching with a new authority. And then further down, in Mark 1, verse 38, after he's been healing so many people, he has to remind his disciples that he's not here for that reason.

That the reason he is here is to preach the gospel. And he said to them, verse 38, let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also, for that is what I have come for.

So all the way through chapter 1, the first thing you learn about Jesus, or the reason why Jesus has come, is for you to listen to him.

Jesus is preaching the gospel. There are people being brought to be healed by Jesus, and Jesus is saying, I'm not here for that. What people need, more than anything else, more than physical healing, is actually to listen to the words that are coming out of my mouth.

[10 : 03] Preaching takes priority over healing. Preaching takes priority over healing. Why? Well, because of what needs to change.

Jesus is not actually all that concerned with your physical body as much as he is with something else. The thing that needs to change is what you believe.

Not even what you feel, not even your physical condition, but what you believe. Preaching is given to us by God to change what we believe.

Repentance, if you go back to the Greek word, metanoia, simply means to change your mind. Metanoia. Change mind. To change it.

So when Jesus is preaching the kingdom of God and then he says, repent and believe, he's saying, turn away from what you think you know to be true and believe what I am telling you.

[11 : 03] Okay? Jesus' focus here is on you listening to what he is preaching. That's really important, especially as we come into chapter two, because as we come into chapter two, what do we find that he is doing?

He again is in the house and he is teaching. He is preaching the word of God, chapter two, verse two, to them. And so this lesson of the word of God being the most important thing for people to hear is actually set in the context of a man who's brought to him because he is paralyzed by four other men.

So the lesson that the word is more important than healing is actually taught through someone being healed. Now that may sound on the surface quite contradictory until we get to understand why Jesus does what he does.

Jesus heals this man for a very specific reason. And the reason is to teach us who he is. So chapter two, verse two. Mark's in the house.

Jesus is in the house and he is preaching the word of God to the people. Why? Because as we've already learned, that's what he's here for. That's what he has come to do.

[12 : 21] What is he saying to them? Well, repent and believe in the gospel for the kingdom of God is at hand. In other words, listen to me, turn away from what you believe to be true to what I'm saying and trust and follow me.

Now while all of this is going on, they bring a paralyzed man to where Jesus is. Why? Well, for what other reason? Jesus has got a reputation of healing people.

And so because Jesus has got a reputation of healing people, if someone is unwell, what are you going to do? You go to Jesus. You go to Jesus. But this shows where people are at and where Jesus is at.

Jesus understands the real need and people are focusing on needs that are not as great as listening to the word of God. People are more concerned with themselves physically than what they are with themselves spiritually.

And that is the same to true. That's the same thing today. People are more concerned with the material and the physical than they are with the spiritual.

[13 : 25] Well, these men can't get into the house and so they decide to lower him down through the roof. And they go to this extent. Again, remember the motivation here because he's a paralyzed man.

And they bring him to Jesus and one of the things that we should notice is just before this happens, Jesus has healed a leper and told him to say nothing to anyone.

And I've already indicated why he would say that and that's because it interferes with the priority of Jesus. It interferes with the very mission of Jesus.

In other words, if people understand that I'm going to heal everyone who comes, I'm never going to be able to do anything else. Rather, he's setting out his store. He's setting out what is the most important.

What is the priority? Some things, Jesus says, are more important than others. Preaching the gospel is one of them. Why?

[14 : 25] Because what does it accomplish? That's what Jesus wants you to understand. Physical healing does not accomplish what the gospel accomplishes.

The gospel accomplishes you being right and ready for the kingdom of God. The gospel focuses on a future, on your life beyond your present life.

Not just your present life, but your life beyond your present life here. That's the focus of Jesus.

Healing is simply a focus on this present life.

It's not wrong, it's just it's not the priority. Okay? Jesus isn't saying that it's wrong and these people shouldn't be healed. He's simply saying it doesn't come first in the order of things.

The most important thing is for people to be saved. The most important thing is for people to have their sins forgiven. Nothing is more important than that.

[15 : 22] And so when this man is lowered down through the roof, it does say that Jesus saw their faith and what he saw was that he recognized in them that they believed Jesus could help.

They believed Jesus could heal this man. They believed that Jesus could do something for him that they couldn't do for themselves. Jesus recognizes that when he sees their faith.

But then, Jesus doesn't respond to that. He looks at the man and says, my son, your sins are forgiven. Well, that's great, but that's not what I've come for.

I can speak of a few people that I know personally who have come to Jesus to fulfill their own motives and have gone away having their sins forgiven.

They know that that's not what they came for, but they're not upset at what they've received. This man did not come to have his sins forgiven.

[16:26] Why? Because it's not his priority. His priority is to walk. Jesus looks at the man and sees something far more important. Far more important than physical healing is that this man is forgiven by God.

Far more important than this man being able to walk is that this man has been able to enter into the kingdom of God. So the reason why this man needs to hear the gospel, as everybody else needs to hear the gospel, is because some things are more important than others.

forgiveness is more important than healing. That's important. So we come then to the second section and this is something we need to learn clearly that sin and forgiveness are two things that are found together.

We hear the gospel and what we hear is God is going to forgive you. God does forgive you in Jesus. We all need the forgiveness of sin.

That's the most important thing. Now there are many things perhaps, you know, physically, especially when you're not well, that you want God to sort out.

[17:36] And God graciously does it. Sometimes. Not always. But it's also the case that the thing that God works on all the time is making us more like his son.

His son is without sin. His son is perfect. perfect. Jesus knows that the most important thing is not how we're feeling but what we believe.

What do you believe? Don't tell me how you're feeling. Tell me what you believe. Okay? Don't tell me how you feel about your Christian life.

Tell me what you believe. That's the priority of the gospel. That's the thing that shapes us. Why? Because the real illness the real illness is not physical.

The real illness is spiritual. The real illness is sin. The deeper issue goes deeper than the surface of the skin. Much deeper. And it's the very thing that keeps us from God.

[18:39] That's the thing that we need our eyes open up to. And we only get to see it when we hear the word of God. Well let me put it this way to you. How many sins do you think a paralyzed man could commit?

Could he rob a bank? Steal a car? Break into your house? There's not many. See, people have great difficulty here because if you think of sin as committing wrong actions, how are you going to think about this man who couldn't commit many of those actions?

Okay, what Jesus is saying here to the paralyzed man is, you know, bearing in mind that the paralyzed man cannot commit many of the sins that could be committed in this day and age is that sin is much deeper than those wrong actions.

So how many sins do you think this paralyzed man had or committed? It doesn't matter. What matters is he has it and more importantly, Jesus forgives it.

That's the essence of what we're learning here. That Jesus looks at a man who is a sinner and forgives him for all the sins he has committed, whatever they may be.

[20:05] Now, because of this, this causes a stir in the house and a bit of reaction because there are people in the house questioning in their hearts with a questioning spirit who can forgive sins but God alone.

No one can forgive sins but God alone. And so here we have Jesus saying to this man, my son, your sins are forgiven. And they're absolutely right. Those who question Jesus that no one can forgive sins but God alone are right.

No one can forgive sins but God alone. So who's Jesus? Right? Mark is trying to get you to understand who Jesus is and the way that he does it is by setting up an example to explain who Jesus is by what he has done.

No one can forgive sins but God alone. That's true. Jesus forgives sins. Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? So Jesus, having understood that they've questioned him in his heart, have a question all of his own.

And the question begins with, which is easier? Which is easier? To say to the paralyzed man, your sins are forgiven or to say, rise, pick up your bed and walk.

[21 : 18] And as I said last Sunday evening, both of these type of things can be said really easily. I can say to you, sat here this evening, your sins are forgiven. It's not difficult.

I can also say to you, if you're paralyzed, rise, pick up your bed and walk home. It's not difficult to say. Okay? But they understand that that's not the issue.

The issue is not whether or not you can say it. The issue is whether or not you have any authority for it to actually happen. Now, this is the reason why Jesus heals the man.

Jesus is using the man, the visible sign, to prove that he can do the invisible healing. The reason why Jesus heals the paralyzed man, physically, is to prove that he has the authority to heal of man spiritually.

So, what we notice here is the issue is one of authority. Does Jesus have authority to do what he says he can do? So, Jesus says, verse 10, but that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

[22 : 27] This is the issue. You don't know it and you need to know it and so that you will know it, verse 10, so that you will know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, which is something that you cannot see happening.

He says to the paralyzed man, pick up your bed and go home. And he did. And he did. Jesus does the visible healing to show that he has the authority to do the invisible healing.

Okay? This is what's going on here. The issue here is not actually healing. The issue is a demonstration of authority. Jesus does the physical thing that people can see with their eyes so that, as a demonstration of his authority over being able to do the invisible thing, which is forgiving the man's sins.

sins. They're all amazed. They're all taken back. Why? Because only God can forgive sins. Only God can forgive sins.

So who are they with? They've never seen anything like this. Well, of course they haven't because only God can forgive sins. So who is in their present? This is the issue that Mark is trying to drive home.

[23 : 48] This is Mark's point. Understand who's in the house with you. Understand why these things are possible. The reason you've never seen anything like this is because nobody else can do it other than Jesus Christ, God the Son.

Only God can forgive sins. Mark is saying, so what should that tell you about Jesus? And he's proven to you that he can forgive sins invisibly, which you can't actually see because they are any words.

by proving to you physically, by getting a paralyzed man to pick up his bed and walk home. Jesus does the visible sign to prove that he can do the invisible sign.

This issue here, again, it's not about healing. It's about, does Jesus have the authority to forgive you? And he does.

And moving on then, and this is where we're sort of coming towards the end, Jesus, verse 13, is teaching again. sticking to the priority.

[24 : 58] Why? Because what needs to change is what people believe. That's the priority. What needs to change is what people believe. And so Jesus is teaching them.

He then calls Levi to follow him. Many other people follow him. They turn and follow him. And Jesus is now having table fellowship with a bunch of tax collectors and sinners.

Now, it doesn't finish there because Jesus does explain why some people gravitate towards Jesus and why some people are opposed to Jesus. And it has everything to do with what you think about yourself.

Okay? The reason why some people get close to Jesus and why others don't has not anything to do with what you think about Jesus. It has everything to do with what you think about yourself.

And that's the point that Jesus is about to make. We think the issue is we need to make Jesus clearer. Well, we do need to make Jesus clear, but the issue that keeps people away from Jesus is not Jesus, it's themselves.

[26 : 07] And that's the point that Jesus is about to make here. He says, verse 17, those who are well have no need for a physician, but those who are sick.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. The point that Jesus is making is twofold, and that is some people know that they're sinners and some people don't.

And the person who knows that they are receives Jesus. And the person who doesn't is opposed to Jesus. The issue is not what you think about Jesus, the issue is what do you think about yourself? The issue is not what you know about Jesus, but rather what you know about yourself. And Jesus hits the nail on the head here. So, he is not saying that some are sinners and some are righteous. Rather, he's saying that some people know that they're sinners, and other people just consider themselves to be righteous. In fact, the biggest barrier to receiving Jesus Christ is actually self-righteousness.

[27 : 15] You know, I have a nan that I love very much, and she's getting increasingly older. And I don't know how many times I've actually told her the gospel, and because she's my nan, she says, oh, Danny, she calls me Danny for some reason.

There's a number of family members who call me Danny. And she sort of palms me off, and because she's my nan, it's a bit like softly, softly, gently, gently. And I'm thinking, man, here's a lady who's really quite hard, and I'm tiptoeing around.

When am I going to? So, you know, we had several conversations. Here's the issue. I've done nothing wrong. I've been good to you.

I've been good to your mom. I've been good to my neighbors. Why would God want to keep me out? And however much I love my nan, that is nothing more than self-righteousness.

However much I love her, you know, and want to say, come on, let's get an ice cream together or something like that. You know, let's look at the seagulls walking up and down the road. She likes doing that because they walk as if they own the place.

[28 : 30] I have to say that, you know, your goodness is not good enough. And Jesus had something to say about that. You see, the issue is not what you think about Jesus.

The issue is always, what do you think about yourself? Jesus hasn't come to call the righteous because the righteous aren't sinners. They're righteous.

Jesus is saying, you must judge for yourself who you think you are. Judge for yourself who you are. Do you really believe yourself to be a person without sin? Without any sin? Or are you going to be honest with yourself and say, yeah, there may be one, but one's enough.

It's a starting point. The issue is not what do you think about Jesus? But as Jesus says, it's what you think about yourself. It's not the well.

[29 : 34] Those who are well have no need for a doctor, but those who are sick. You judge for yourself who you think you are. Here's a few considerations then as we finish.

Most importantly is listening to Jesus. Why? Because what needs to change is what we believe. That's the most important thing here.

The second thing here that we are to understand is that Jesus will always prioritize. He will always put things in their natural and biblical order. And preaching the word of God is the order that it comes in and everything else follows.

Why? Because the issue is the kingdom of God. Jesus wants you in there. He's not concerned how you get in there, whether you get in there in a wheelchair, or whether you get in there with one leg or two legs, or whether you get in there with cancer, or whether you get in there with anything else that you might have.

The issue is getting you in there. And the way that he gets you in there is by forgiving you. And the way that he forgives you is by you hearing the word, repenting, and believing, and trusting in Jesus.

[30 : 51] It is really that simple. He does everything. You come, as we have sung this evening, just as you are. And Jesus does the rest.

Now, one other thing for us to finish on. Jesus does have the authority to forgive sins. But you will notice that the issue here is authority, and which is easier to say.

Jesus understands very clearly that not everything can be done with words. Not everything can be done with words. And you know that, and I know that.

Words can do so much, but words cannot do everything. And so, Mark explains the gospel in two halves. And the first half is Jesus preaches, and Jesus dies.

Jesus preaches and Jesus dies. Why? Because we need to be separated from the sin. Okay?

Jesus has the authority to forgive sin, but how does he do it?

[31 : 54] He does it by dying. Because words alone, okay, tell us what Jesus is going to do, but his actions prove it. In the same way he heals the paralyzed man, okay, physically, actions, Jesus preaches the gospel and then dies.

Jesus says if you believe in him, you will live. If you don't believe in him, you will die in your sins. But for all those who do trust, who do believe, and do follow, then not only will you share in a death like his, but you also share in a resurrection like his.

It is a non-negotiable. All sinners have to die. The beauty of dying in Christ, the beauty of dying when you belong to Jesus is that you have the resurrection to look forward to.

That's the beauty. So remember the lesson that Jesus leaves us with, or rather that Mark leaves us with. Listening to Jesus is important because what needs to change is what you believe.

And what do you believe about yourself? What do you believe about yourself? It's not just about who you think Jesus is. It's about who you think you are as well.

[33 : 10] Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.