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Who Jesus Is & Why He Matters?

4 Stories, 10 Truths

Mark 1:29-45

Introduction

There are a few questions that are so important to ask that if we did not seek out their answers we could miss what is most important in life. One of those questions, the one I think is most important is the question, "Who is Jesus?" If He is who the Bible says He is, if He is who Christians believe Him to be, then anyone who does not thoroughly answer this question will have missed the most important truth in life, really in all of eternity. So who is Jesus?

We have begun a series of messages taking a careful look at who one of the Gospel writers says He is. There are 4 gospels in the Christian Bible: the gospel according to Mathew, the gospel according to Mark, the one according to Luke, and finally the gospel according to John. They comprise the first four book of the New Testament and they each tell the story of Jesus from a different perspective.

We are studying the gospel of Mark. It is the shortest and most concise of the gospels and was most likely written to non Jewish people in and around Rome, the ruling empire at the time of Jesus.

Mark is a follower of Jesus and close associate of Simon Peter who is most likely the one who furnished Mark with many of the details in this gospel.

We are only in Chapter 1 and yet we have discovered much about who Jesus is. We have seen that He was part of God's plan from the very beginning, that He is the Son of God in whom God is well pleased; that He is mightier and more worthy than John the Baptist who God had sent to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. We have seen that he would baptize people with the Holy Spirit and that he came preaching the gospel of God which He said was that, "the time is fulfilled, and the KOG is at hand."

Today, Mark gives us 4 short stories from which we can glean 10 more truths about Jesus that will help us understand who He is. We are going to read each of these stories separately so let me pray for God's help and we'll jump in.

Holy Spirit, be our teacher...

First Story: Mark 1:29-31

- 29 And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.
- 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her.
- 31 And **He came** to her and **raised her up**, taking her by the hand, and **the fever left** her, and she waited on them.

1. Jesus is the **“raiser”** of those laid low. I'd like to look at this story as it touches down on the different parties involved.

The story in relation to the friends and relatives of the sick

I can not help but appreciate Simon Peter. He went to bat for his mother-in-law. There are more than a few men who would not have bothered Jesus with this concern.

Also, I can not help, but be encouraged by this to speak with Jesus about the sick I know of, even my own mother-in-law.

We can speak with Jesus about those we love who are sick by coming to him in prayer. We need not come in eloquence or by way of some formula, we just need to speak with Him about the sick.

The story in relation to Jesus

Mark does not comment on any special words Jesus spoke to Simon's mother-in-law, he simply says Jesus came to her and raised her up, taking her by then hand. It is really quite a dear picture isn't it? Humble (coming to her), strong (raised her up) gentle and respectful (taking her by the hand), and effective (the fever left her).

Who is Jesus? He is King of the KOG and as such He has authority over sickness. He is the healer of the sick!

The story in relation to the one healed

This is such a completely endearing story on all fronts: First Simon goes to bat for his mother-in-law, the Jesus heals her, and now take note of mom – she uses her new health to serve Jesus and his disciples.

Two Points of Application jump out:

- Let us not grow weary of brining our sick to the Lord.
- We who have been raised up, should return the goodness and serve our Lord and His disciples.

TRANS: This story resonates with me as **the way it should be!** Most of all, I believe Mark would have us see here that Jesus has authority over sickness. When He “comes” the fever “leaves.” In His coming the KOG is at hand, and whatever He exerts his authority over – even sickness, must yield to His will.

Second Story: Mark 1:32-34

- 32 When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed.
- 33 And the whole city had gathered at the door.
- 34 And **He healed** many who were ill with various diseases, and **cast out** many demons; and He was **not permitting the demons to speak**, because they knew who He was.

I'm spurred on by Jesus' example here. He had just finished a day of ministry which included healing Simon's mother-in-law and now when evening had come the whole city was at His door and Jesus did not lock it tight turn on the TV and unwind, but rather He continued His ministry on into the night. He was hard core. He did ministry as a lifestyle.

2. Jesus is the **healer** of the ill.
Verse 34 makes it clear that Jesus' healing of Simon's mother-in-law was not some isolated or privileged deal only for those with a hook-up on the inside, but "many with various diseases" were given the same blessing of healing. Who is Jesus? He is the healer of many ill.
3. Jesus is the **exorcist** of the demons.
The second part of v. 34 continues with the account of Jesus casting out many demons. 1:23-26 showed Jesus casting out an unclean spirit He had encountered while teaching in the synagogue, and here again we see that this was not a one time occurrence under special circumstances but rather we see here Jesus casting "many" demons out when the "whole city had gathered at the door." Who is Jesus? He is the King of the KOG exerting His authority over the demons from the kingdom of darkness.
4. Jesus can and did exert His **authority** over demons.
Not only is Jesus the exorcist of the demons, kicking them out of people, but he is also able to prevent them from speaking. In particular the text indicates that Jesus did not want them to speak because, "they knew who He was." I take this to mean that Jesus does not want just anyone telling others who He is. I guess I wouldn't want demons being the spokesmen for myself or Stone Harbor Church. It strikes me that Jesus did not first and foremost have a communication problem that He was trying to solve. Hey guys let's get this message out any way we can, disciples, demons, whoever, just get the word out that I am here. The messenger matters and the KOG is not served by demonic heralds, no matter how eager they are to talk about it. Later Jesus will call His disciples to proclaim the Gospel, may we do it with a sense of privilege, accurately speaking Christ's words after Him representing him well. I had to chuckle this past week as I thought how ironic that the demons had to be silenced and we disciples have to be prodded to speak of who Jesus is.

TRANS. So here we see Jesus as Healer, Exorcist and the One with authority over demons. Let's look at the next story in Mark 1:35-39.

Third Story: Mark 1:35-39

- 35 In the early morning, while it was still dark,
Jesus **got up**, **left** the house, and **went away** to a secluded place,
and was **praying** there.
- 36 Simon and his companions searched for Him;
37 they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."
38 He said to them, "**Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby,**
so that I may preach there also;
for that is what I came for."
- 39 And He **went** into their synagogues throughout all Galilee,
preaching and casting out the demons.

5. Jesus is the model for our **devotion**.

I both love this verse and hate it at the same time. Let me tell you **why I hate it** first. I hate it because it says exactly the opposite of what I would like to have heard about Jesus' morning routine. I would have liked to hear, "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus rolled over and snuggled under His comfortable covers and caught an extra few hours of sleep, wonderful sleep." I hate that it doesn't say that.

I love it because it models devotion to God. It calls me away from the desires of my flesh and teaches me how to exercise my devotion to God. Early in the morning, let me define early, while it was still dark, He 1) got up, 2) left the house, 3) went away, let me define away, to a secluded place, I mean He was hidden so well that v. 36 says His companions had to search for Him, my Bible reads, they had to hunt for Him; and 4) was praying. If you find your devotions to God crowded out by not enough time, or by distractions from the home front, follow the example of Jesus and make v. 35 your pattern. You'll be following the example of Jesus, which is hard to argue with. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the model for our devotion.

6. Jesus sets His own **agenda**.

His disciples did find them. The hunt was successful. They said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." I hear, "There are lots more sick people that would like to be healed and folks who are possessed by demons who would like to be delivered. Come on back to the house, Simon's mom has been cooking up a storm, they are calling for You..." Now had it been me, I might have been tempted to say, "they want me, I can help them, I'll be there!" But, Jesus had a different set of priorities, indeed, Jesus sets His own agenda and is not easily swayed from His purpose. The disciples, well intentioned as they were, did not yet have the mind of Christ. They thought of course Jesus would want to come back and heal and deliver many more. We have it in us to do the same thing, to misread the purposes of God. The only defense I can see in order to avoid filling our lives with activity not of the Lord's purpose is to

daily pay careful attention to Jesus, and let Him set the agenda instead of assuming we know Him well enough, He has the power to heal and deliver, He has done it in the past, I'm sure He wants to do it again.

When we think we have God's will all figured out so well that we just have to get up and go about doing it with out checking with Him, we are poised to be busy but not productive in doing the will of God. Let Jesus set the agenda, even if your ideas seem good to you. How do we do this? Do what Jesus did, get up early, get yourself away from the house to a deserted place and pray: Lord, what is on Your agenda today? Listen, yield, subordinate your to-do list to His will.

Who is Jesus? He is the King of the KOG which is at hand and therefore **He** sets the agenda. If we don't check in with Him we'll be back in Capernaum, with the sick and demon possessed when Jesus would have had us in another city doing something else.

Let's look at v. 38 and see what Jesus gave priority to on His agenda.

7. Jesus is first and foremost was the **preacher** of the **gospel**. He pushed away the opportunity for popularity with the crowd which was looking for healing and deliverance, in order to pursue preaching because, in Jesus words, "that is what I came for." Jesus came from heaven to earth for the purpose of preaching the gospel which Jesus has said so far is the fact that "the time is fulfilled, the KOG is at hand." Again from last week we saw that the KOG is the place of God's rule. In the coming of Jesus, the KOG came to earth. The good news is that we have a God-king and His name is Jesus. The human response we saw that Jesus called for was a change of mind, a repentance, from not believing we live in the KOG to believing we do, believing of the type that causes us to acknowledge His rule in our lives. The KOG is at hand and that makes me either a subject or a rebel. The truth of the matter is that most Christians are probably subjects who are more aware of their citizenship in the USA, than they are of their identity as subjects in the KOG. To the degree this is true of you, Christian, shake yourself out of your slumber and embrace your role in the KOG, hopefully that of a loyal subject of the best King ever.

Who is Jesus? This verse calls us to recognize that first and foremost He is a preacher of the Gospel that the time is fulfilled, the KOG is at hand. What do we do about this reality of Jesus? I pray that we would do as v. 15 says, "repent and believe in the gospel."

TRANS. One more story, three more points about Jesus.

Mark 1:40-45

- 40 And a leper came to Jesus,
beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him,
and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."
41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him,
and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."
42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.
43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away,
44 and He 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,
as a testimony to them."
45 But he went out
and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around,
to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city,
but stayed out in unpopulated areas;
and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

8. Jesus is the cleanser of the leper.

This story is so loaded with meaning which you have to mine out that we might miss the important easy observation: Jesus has the ability and demonstrated desire to cleanse the leper who came to Him in humble genuine pleading. Jesus is the cleanser of the leper. This Guy, Jesus, has power. Can you do that? Father Damien a believer in Jesus Christ in the Hawaiian Islands, prayed for healing for the lepers in Hawaii, but when not all were healed he established a leper colony for them, Kalaupapa, on the North coast of the island of Molokai. This shirt, as a matter of fact, was designed in his honor and in that of the lepers of Kalaupapa.

But there is even more going on here than Jesus doing another healing. Leprosy was an interesting disease in the OT. More than other diseases, it was associated with sin. God sometimes brought punishment on people who sinned by afflicting them with the disease. Leprosy thus became a symbol for sin. And if one were to be cleansed from it he or she would not only have to be cleansed from the disease but also from their sin. This was the case with Miriam and King Uzziah (see, Num 12:15; 2 Chron 26:21; Lev 14:4-7).

What is the implication. When Jesus cleanses the man from his leprosy, and does so effectively, the Jews, especially the priests, would have seen Jesus as not only healer able to restore health to the sick, but as One able to deal with the problem of man's sin, One able to bring wholeness to the broken relationship between man and God.

The Jews have always rightly believed that sin separates sinner from God. We have in Jesus the fulfillment of what Isaiah the prophet pictured when he said, "but the Lord's hand is not so short that He can not save." (Is 59:2 and 1) Jesus in this text is brought to us as God's hand reaching out to man, solving the problem of sin.

Who is Jesus? He is the cleanser of the leper, physically in relation to disease, and spiritually in relation to sin.

By the way, that hand of Jesus which reached out and touched the leper? That hand has also reached out to me, and touched me in my sin, cleansing me. Restoring a relationship that was so badly broken, I was not even aware that it existed. That same hand has cleansed all of you who have come to Him seeking cleansing – forgiveness from your sins. That hand is ready to reach out to anyone here who is distanced from God because of your sin, a leper in a spiritual sense. If you need His touch, simply raise your hand and we will pray for you right now and introduce you to the same Jesus that has touched us and cleansed us.

9. Jesus wanted to **show** His authority to the **priests**.

Verses 43-44 indicate that Jesus wanted to show His authority to cleanse from leprosy to the priests. This would have stirred up a bunch of interest. The self righteous might have taken issue with Jesus. He was a carpenter, not a priest, by what authority was he cleansing the leper. That is our job. The more thoughtful might have wondered who is this man who can cleanse a leper. I have never been able to do so, nor have I heard of another able to do that. Could he be a priest with more authority than me? Who is this Jesus?

I believe Jesus wanted the religious leaders to know that He is the one with the authority to cleanse. I am a priest of sorts, and I am made small in comparison to Jesus. Often I am made aware of my inability to effect cleansing. I pray for you and yet many of you still live in brokenness. I pray for your marriages and yet many are still stressed. I have prayed for many of you to be healed, yet you still carry the infirmity that I have asked to be removed. My weakness is especially made manifest next to Jesus' greatness.

Who is Jesus? He is the One who wants to show His authority to the priests of yesterday and those of today. He is the true the highest the most effective priest, and we are his under shepherds, who must ever keep before us our limits so that we can acknowledge and rely on the unlimited power of God.

One more point from our last verse – verse 45.

10. Jesus chose **not** to force the hand of him He cleansed.

Jesus commanded him not to tell anyone, and he told everyone. It was a blatant act of disobedience. Sure it was understandable, the guy was excited, he was cleansed. How could anything be wrong with telling people that Jesus cleansed you? We'd like to cut this guy some slack here because we kind of relate to him. If I were cleansed of Leprosy, I'd want to tell everyone too.

But it hindered Jesus ministry prevented him from going into the cities and it relegated Him to the unpopulated areas. Oops!

The cleansed played the rebel and Jesus let him. Jesus who could control the speech of the demons choose not to do the same with those He cleansed.

I am cleansed yet I have the ability to play the rebel, and my doing so could work against the ministry of Jesus.

My disobedience has negative consequences in the KOG. My disobedience works against Jesus who is the very one who touched me in my leprosy and made me clean. Oh how I wish it were not so. I do not want to work against the One who has worked so hard for me.

God has given me breath, forgiveness, eternal life in a good and restored relationship with Him. And I can still inflict harm on my Lord Jesus just by doing what I want instead of what He has commanded. Oh how I love and how I hate that free will which He has given to me.

We have a God with ultimate power who does not choose to use that power to force our hand.

May this spur us to follow Him and His commands for us all the more carefully and intentionally. May it never be true of anyone here that you receive the touch of Jesus and then choose to disobey Him. May it be true that you receive the touch of Jesus and then follow Him all the days of your life.

Who is Jesus? He is our king who cleanses us and then calls us to obedience.

Conclusion

Who am I? Rebel or loyal subject? Who are you? Let us pray!