

Jesus Came To Preach

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Date: 06 April 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you could turn with me to Mark chapter 1. So we're going to spend the next few minutes. Mark chapter 1, we'll read from verse 29 to verse 45, even though I'm going to focus on 29 to 39.

So Mark chapter 1, we'll read from verse 29. That's roughly page 837, I think, in the church Bibles. And immediately he, that is Jesus, left the synagogue and entered this 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 sunset 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 and 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.

[1 : 1 2] And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, Everyone is looking for you. And he said to them, Let us go to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is what I came for.

And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. 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.

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 was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

May God bless his word. Well, this evening we're going to look at just this portion of Mark's gospel. If you're not familiar with Mark's gospel, Mark begins with these words, The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

[2 : 2 9] That's like his title statement. And what he's telling us is that Christianity, following Jesus, is not about keeping a set of rules, it's not about a certain list of doctrines, that fundamentally at the heart of Christianity, is a person, Jesus Christ.

And what matters is how we respond to him. And that's Mark's big claim, and throughout chapter one he backs us up with Old Testament prophecy, and the words of God the Father speaking from heaven, that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah come into the world, that he's God's forever king, come to save God's people, that he's the Son of God stepping into the world.

And these are massive claims, that he's come to bring God's kingdom on earth. But Mark doesn't just say, let me tell you, he says, let me show you. If you were to be reading through chapter one, the passage that comes immediately before this, shows us Jesus' authority, as first of all he calls his disciples, the fishermen, to come follow him, and immediately they drop everything, and follow him.

Then he's speaking in the synagogue, and people say, we've never heard anything like this. He speaks with words of authority, not like the scribes have. And then he casts out a demon in the midst, from a demon-possessed man, in the midst of this.

And our passages come straight, after that, verse 29, we're told immediately he left the synagogue, and entered the house of Simon and Andrew. And what follows is a 24-hour window, as it were, into Jesus' life.

[4 : 01] And in it, I want us to see three things. What we see, and this is quite key in Mark's gospel, we see the desperate need that faces Jesus. This isn't just an account we'll see of Jesus, a bunch of random healings.

We see the desperate need that Jesus faces, and it still faces us today. But in the midst of that, we see what Jesus' priority is. It clarifies for us, what Jesus has come to do.

And we see Jesus' heart, in the midst of that. That heart, that priority we'll see are things, that we need to share as well. So first of all, let's see, what do we see the desperate need?

We see that we're in desperate need of healing. Verse 30, we're told, now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her.

So Jesus only just healed this demon-possessed man. He's been teaching at the synagogue. He goes back into Simon, goes into Simon's house, and he's barely in through the door before Simon says, tells him about his mother-in-law, who's unwell.

[5 : 07] And she's clearly very unwell, because that's the first thing the brothers tell him. And so Jesus takes her by the hand, verse 31, and lifts her up. The fever left her, and she began to serve them.

Now her getting up and serving them, that's not a comment about the role of women. That's not a comment about her significance. It's telling us this is miraculous healing. One minute she was close to death, the next minute she's busying around, probably preparing a meal.

And it's interesting, this is one of the less exceptional miracles of Jesus, isn't it? We might think of the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus walking on water, I don't know, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, that kind of thing.

But the gospel is personal. Mark is probably writing, with Peter standing behind him, his eyewitness accounts. So this is Simon Peter saying, look, this is important, when Jesus healed my mother-in-law.

Remember to include that. And while it might seem a humble miracle, we see that it becomes the first of many. That evening, verse 32, we're told, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons.

[6 : 17] And the whole city was gathered together at the door, and he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons, and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Now that detail, at evening at sunset, that isn't just a narrative detail, to say that, oh, everyone was having a nice look at the sunset, maybe it was like this kind of weather. Rather, it's reminding us of what time in the week it is.

Since verse 21, it's been the Jewish Sabbath day, which begins on Friday, at sunset, and ends at Saturday, at sunset. And so people in the synagogue have seen that Jesus has the power to heal demons, and that's got them thinking, well, maybe he will heal something else.

Maybe he'll heal my loved one. Maybe he'll heal me. But they know that you can't do any work on the Sabbath, and they count bringing someone to be healed, or they mistakenly thought that bringing someone to be healed might count as that.

So Mark wants us to imagine that as the sun is setting, people are at their doors. Maybe it's Simon Peter's house. I imagine it's like in the square or something. People have got one eye on the sunset, one eye on Simon Peter's door.

[7 : 22] They're limbering up. They're getting ready to hobble, race over to the door, get first in the queue, get healed, picking up, putting their relative onto a stretcher, getting ready to carry their loved one to the Simon Peter's makeshift hospital house.

Everyone's got one eye on the horizon, one eye on the competition outside on the other side of the street, and they're getting ready to that mad rush for the door. And we see it really is everyone.

We're told the whole city was gathered together at the door. All who were sick or oppressed by demons were there. People on crutches, dragging themselves along, blind being led by the hand, others carried, parents carrying children, maybe children carrying parents, people supporting one another.

Everyone is there. And I don't need to describe it for you. You can just imagine whether it's Stornoway or, I don't know, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. Imagine that you were told that at 7 p.m. today that you could turn up in the hospital and the top consultant will see you immediately and that you'll get all the scans.

You'll get everything that you need right away. There'll be no more waiting lists. Even without being promised that you'd get healing or anything, that you'll be healed.

[8 : 39] Imagine all of us would straight away be out this door and getting ready to get first in line, getting ready to see this amazing consultant. Because we live in a world that is broken.

We live in a world that is in desperate need of healing. We all of us, either maybe we're struggling ourselves with something, maybe we're caring for a loved one.

Week by week, we hear of things that are facing, that people are going through. And some people, maybe they're just trying to hide it with that brave face.

But when you ask them, really, and you press, how are you doing? A lot of people are really struggling and they're suffering and they're struggling to cope. I don't think we can criticize, really, people, the people who listen to Jesus in the synagogue that their first thing that they thought of was, I want to get healed like that demon-possessed man.

We're in a world that is in desperate need of healing. That would have been us at the door. And I think one of the most compelling things about the Bible is that it's a book about real life.

[9 : 49] When we hold the Bible up to the world, it not only fits with what we see, but it makes sense with what we see. You can turn to different world religions, different ideologies.

They all have their take on suffering. Buddhism will tell you that suffering is an illusion. Hinduism will tell you that suffering comes from karma, something you've done in the old life and that's in your paying for your sins in your past life.

If you believe that there's no God, well then, suffering is just the way it is. But we all see that this is an illusion. We all see that this is not just the way it is.

We know that it shouldn't be this way. Deep down. We're distressed by suffering, rightly. And we're desperate for healing. There's so much more we could say on that topic.

But the important thing is that the Bible gives a different perspective. Cutting through all these other voices. In the first pages of the Bible, we're told that this world, the world we see now isn't how it was created to be.

[10 : 54] The world was created good and it was spoiled. It was spoiled because humanity cut themselves off from God. They pushed Him away as a result of our sin.

Our sin cuts us off from God. We had lots of wonderful wedding bouquets at Kirsten and David's wedding. But those flowers are dying. The moment a flower is cut from the stem, it's just slowly dying.

It's just on its way. It's going to be wilting at some point. And just like a flower cut and placed in a bouquet, we were created with beauty.

And we still retain some of that created beauty, but we're all wilting. Our bodies are decaying. We're experiencing the suffering of being cut off from the source of life that we're meant to be joined to.

And so our world longs for healing. It longs for life. And of course, the good news of the gospel is that Jesus has come to bring healing. When Jesus announces that with His coming, the kingdom of God is at hand, you could say the kingdom of God is that promise of God's people in God's place under God's rule, under the rule of the King Jesus, the Messiah.

[12 : 06] And it's that promise of the kingdom of God is a promise of new creation where evil is going to be in this world will be cast out. Isaiah will go on. He spoke a bit about it in chapter 55.

And he'll go on to speak about that the kingdom of God is a place where there's no more the sound of weeping or distress. And in Mark's gospel, we're getting, in this day of the life of Jesus, we're getting a glimpse of what the kingdom of God will be like when Jesus one day comes again.

Jesus healed many who are sick and cast out demons. This is a trailer of the full healing. The full healing of this world and of our bodies, of the complete and forever casting out of all evil when the kingdom of God comes in its fullness when Christ returns.

So this first glimpse in the day of the life of Jesus, we see that we're in desperate need of healing. But Mark says, good news, Jesus has come. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Jesus gives hope of healing to come. But that isn't Jesus' priority. We see that shortly after all of these healings have taken place.

[13:18] We're on our second point. Now Jesus has come to preach to our greatest need. After an evening full of healing, Jesus, we're told, gets up very early in the morning. I wonder how many of us could do that.

But he gets up very early. Verse 35, we're told Jesus rises early in the morning while it's still dark, maybe so that other people didn't mob him immediately. And he goes into the desert to pray in solitude.

And what we need to understand right now is that there's a crisis that Jesus is facing. Not because he's imperfect in any way, but every time he prays in Mark's gospel, we're told of him praying three times.

That doesn't mean Jesus only prayed three times, but Mark records these times of Jesus going out and praying at key junctures in his life. The first one is here.

The second one is chapter 6 when the question is who is Jesus going to reveal himself to, the disciples or everyone? And the third one is in Gethsemane before the cross. And the crisis that Jesus is facing is here, is this.

[14:23] As he is confronted by this uncalculable catalog of human suffering, is he going to be a traveling healer or a traveling preacher?

What's going to be his priority? What's the purpose of his mission? Meanwhile, before we hear the answer, Jesus' disciples are wondering where he is. When it says they're searching for him, they're literally hunting him down.

This is a manhunt for Jesus because Simon Peter's hospital house is fit to bursting, but the doctor's not there. And he goes out and he says, where are you? Everyone is looking for you.

Where are you, Jesus? This is your job, isn't it? Making people well? I wonder if some of us think that sometimes. We look around at the world or people ask us when we talk about Jesus and they say, well, surely, where is God?

How can God exist? You see all this suffering in the world. Isn't that his job to fix it? In verse 38, Jesus replies, let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also, for that is what I came for.

[15:30] There's only three times in Mark's gospel where Jesus gives us a purpose statement of why he came. The first is here. He says, I've come to preach, not to heal.

And the second is chapter 2, verse 17. He says, I've come to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And the third is in chapter 10, verse 45. I've come not to be served, but to serve and give my life as a ransom for many.

And these three purpose statements aren't conflicting. They're all converging around the same thing. Jesus preaches. When Jesus preaches, he's not just telling us stuff like reciting a dictionary. He's not just imparting information. Jesus' words carry authority, the authority of God. He rules by his word as the king.

His words have the power of God. The same words that breathe creation into existence, made everything from nothing. Those are the same words as Jesus speaks as he preaches.

[16:33] When Jesus says, my priority is to preach the gospel, we shouldn't be surprised. He came in the first words in Mark's gospel that he says, the time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the good news. Jesus has come to preach. He's come to speak the good news of the gospel. If the kingdom of God is God's people in God's place under the rule and blessing of the Messiah, if it's a place where suffering and evil are cast out, well then actually the question that we should be thinking is, how can sinful people like you and me be part of that?

How can people who have naturally rejected God and pushed the king away be part of God's kingdom? And that's why Jesus' priority is to preach.

There's no point in healing people if they're left outside of God's kingdom. Our greatest need is spiritual healing. And as you see on in, if you were to read on in chapter two, that's when Jesus heals the paralyzed man, the first thing he does is forgive his sins, not get rid of his paralysis.

We might think that the kindest thing that Jesus could do is to, at this point when Simon meets him, is to go back to Capernaum and heal all those people. But there's a sense in which if he did that, he would just be like pouring flower food in a vase of cut flowers.

[17:56] I don't really know what that stuff is and how it works, but it makes the flowers last longer. But that's all Jesus would be doing. people would be healed from their sickness, they'd live a bit longer, they'd be suffering a bit less, but ultimately they'd still be outside the kingdom of God.

Why is that Jesus says, I've come to preach because he's come to meet people's greatest need because only when our sins are forgiven can we be reattached to the God that we were made for, be reattached from the God we are cut off for naturally by our sin.

Jesus has come to preach because he's come to give lasting whole body healing by first attaching us back into God. He says, in John's gospel, I am the vine, you are the branches.

If we belong to Jesus, we are grafted into him. That's what needs to happen. We need lasting whole body healing. Our greatest need is spiritual.

Now we'll come on to applying this in a second. I've just got a few implications. And clearly, one of our priorities, one of our applications must be for us to share Jesus' priority.

[19:10] But you might be looking at these verses and thinking, okay, Jesus says his priority is to preach, but then you glance down at the end of chapter 1 and Jesus heals a leper. And then chapter 2, he goes and heals a paralytic.

And then chapter 3, he heals a man with a withered hand. And you'd be right to ask, well, for someone whose priority is preaching, he does an awful lot of healing.

Why does Jesus keep healing people then? Well, just briefly, our third point, Jesus is filled with compassion. And this is really just a brief point for clarity.

Jesus keeps healing people because he is compassionate. We cannot detach the mission of God from the character of God. Jesus isn't some heartless robot that has one task and he just goes on doing that, pushing crowds out of the way, trampling over people.

Yes, his primary mission, his priority is to preach so that people have their sins forgiven. But he doesn't, he sees the people who are around him.

[20:13] Again and again on the way to the cross, Jesus is stopped by people with all kinds of needs. You think of Jairus who says, my daughter is dying. And on the way to that, there's the woman who's been bleeding for 12 years and Jesus stops for them both and he heals them.

We have a compassionate God. That's just, that's not just the Jesus in the New Testament. That's the character of God that we see throughout the Bible. The verses that are quoted most within the Old Testament are God's statement about himself when he says, the Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

That's who our God is. And so when Jesus sees this need around them, he's not just going to ignore them. The creator doesn't ignore the cries of his suffering creatures.

We see the priority of Jesus to preach and that compassion really coming together in chapter two with the paralytic where Jesus heals the paralyzed man.

The first thing he does though is he says, son, your sins are forgiven. And then he addresses his physical need and says, rise, take up your mat and walk.

[21:31] Jesus both sees the priority of sins needing forgiven and he has compassion on our needs. Well, our first real main application as we've seen is seeing the character of our Savior, seeing his priority, seeing his compassion, but a couple of implications for us because Jesus is to be an example for us and for us as individuals and us as a church.

First implication, social concern is important but it shouldn't be our priority. It's important but it's not primary. Day to day as we walk through this world, we're going to see lots of needs.

We're going to hear lots of needs. Our lives will be full of people in desperate need of physical healing. That might be us, that might be our loved ones. And later on in Mark 12, Jesus will say that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second, to love our neighbors as ourselves.

There is, we have, it's right to love and to care for those who are around us who are our neighbors, which Jesus says is everyone in a parable.

and we see the suffering around us, mental health, difficult family situations. There's all kinds of people will be suffering with addictions, there'll be poverty, all the things that come from that and we need to be aware of that.

[22:57] We need to, we also live in a world of global connections. You just, with a flick of the button, a scroll on your phone, you'll see the earthquake in Myanmar, what's been happening in Gaza, in Ukraine, in Sudan.

So we must share Jesus' compassion as we see these needs. We don't deal with people isolated and isolated from those needs. But like Jesus, we could spend all day meeting those needs.

I mean, Jesus could have spent all his time just healing people in the years he was on earth. So like Jesus though, we mustn't let those things distract us, we mustn't let those things take our time away

from what should be our primary concern, which should be speaking Jesus' words.

Like Jesus, our priority needs to be speaking his words. Even though Jesus isn't physically present with us, he continues to speak with authority from his word, the Bible. The power is in his word. By his spirit, he speaks. He gives life as we speak his words, as we encourage people in their faith, as we tell people about Jesus and people come to faith.

[24 : 09] Jesus uses his words to bring people from death to life, just like as Ezekiel spoke to the dry bones and flesh was put on them and they walked and talked. So God uses, so God speaks through his word, through the words of Christ, by his spirit to give life and to grow people.

So our priority as individuals needs to be speaking Jesus' words. when you speak to your friend, when you speak to your colleague, your family member, their greatest need isn't to be physically healed.

Their greatest need is to hear Jesus' words because Jesus' words give life. Their greatest need is to hear the voice of their Savior, the voice that created this world, the voice that knit them together in their mother's wombs, the God who knows them, the God who loves them.

And that's the greatest need we have for each other as believers, as those who are Christians and followers of Jesus. The most helpful thing that we can do for one another, the most helpful things that we can pray for isn't to pray for each other's physical healing.

Those things are important. If the prayer meeting is just taken up by that, though, we're missing a trick. Paul's letters throughout the New Testament, they're primarily filled with Him encouraging people and praying for them to grow spiritually, for them to grow more like Jesus.

[25 : 35] That's our priority is to be speaking Jesus' words, encouraging people in their faith in that way. Maybe we can resolve to make Jesus' priority our priority as individuals, but also as a church.

What would it look like if as a church our priority was, Jesus' priority, was to put the words of Jesus in people's laps, was to make sure that the thing that we were most praying for people was for them to come to know Jesus.

The thing that we most, the thing that we were trying to do most is encouraging them from God's Word. I mean, I know some of you have, you phone the same person at 2 p.m. on a, I don't know, on a Tuesday every single week.

Why not fold into that, encouraging them from something that you've read in the Bible? Why not text them something that you've been learning? Why not use the time after church, use the time over tea and coffee or over a meal on a Sunday to tell people to share and encourage each other from God's Word?

These are words of life. Jesus' priority is to speak words of life. It's worth thinking, what does that mean? Those of you who are elders and deacons, what does that mean in terms of the priorities of the church, what the church focuses its time and its efforts and its energy on?

[27 : 04] Those of you who have children or grandchildren, it's worth thinking, what do we pray for our children and our grandchildren? Is our greatest desire that they would be happy and successful and comfortable or whatever else?

What is our greatest desire that they would know Jesus? That they would grow in knowing Him? They would grow to love Him and love His Word? That they would feed on His Word which are words of life?

As a church, we think, how should Jesus' priorities shape our priorities? Jesus says, I've come, He says, let them go to the next towns that I may preach there also for that is what I came for. just to close then. We need, at every level, we need a voice and a heart like Jesus. We need our hearts to beat with the same compassion that Christ had for those who are around Him.

And we need voices to speak Jesus' words because people's greatest need is to hear His voice, to hear the words of life so they might be saved and grow in their faith.

[28 : 12] Let's pray. Let's pray.