

Power to Forgive

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. It's great to see you again. And we're going to continue this series, the news we need, in Mark this morning, because it is certainly the news we need.

We get a lot of news throughout the week. We're all connected in some way to the things that are going on in our world. And I think with coronavirus, we pay even closer attention to the news. But this, what we get for like less than an hour on Sunday morning, this is the real important stuff we need to know.

And this is the stuff that's going to change lives. This is the stuff that's going to change the world. And so this is the news we need. Well, quite a while ago now, there was a movie that came out called Bruce Almighty.

I don't know if any of you saw that movie starring Jim Carrey, funny man. And the premise of the movie, it's a silly movie. I'm not recommending you watch it.

You're certainly not going to learn any theology from it. But the premise of the movie was that this guy, this ordinary guy, gets God's power for a week. And you can see what he does with it.

[1:03] As I say, it's not the greatest movie. But it is an interesting premise, isn't it, if you think about it? What would happen if you had God's power for a week?

What would you do with it? It's quite amazing to think. A person, a person that has God's power, that can do unlimited things. What would you do with God's power if you had it for a week?

I want you to think about that for a second. Okay? From now, you're told, from this afternoon, you get to exercise God's authority on earth until next Sunday afternoon.

What would your week look like? What would you do with that power? Well, I imagine you would, okay, no, actually. A lot of you would probably get up to a lot of mischief with it. But I imagine you would probably start to do things that are going to fix the world in some way.

You would probably start with helping your friends and family who have chronic illnesses. You would go and fix them. And then maybe you would think further afield and maybe give our treasury more money.

[2:11] But before you do that, you're going to have to replace a lot of the cabinet members. And you'd probably do that. Maybe further afield, you'd go and disarm the Taliban. Maybe you would end coronavirus.

I mean, think of all the things you could do if you had God's power for a week. Well, the amazing thing is that we don't have to imagine, because there was a man who walked this earth who had God's power, who had God's authority.

And he, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, walked this world and exercised God's power here on this planet. And he did a lot of those things we would have done with it.

He healed people. He did some amazing things with God's power. But he did one thing, the most outrageous thing he did with God's power that I don't think any of us thought of.

You know what he did? He forgave people of their sins. And that, in some ways, is the biggest thing he did with God's power when he was on earth.

[3:14] He used it to forgive people. This story that we have in front of us in Mark 2, early on in Mark, makes that point that the main thing Jesus came to do with God's power when he came to earth 2,000 years ago was not to cure diseases or to heal people's infirmities or to defeat evil armies.

He could have done any of that, but the main thing he came to use God's power to do was to forgive people. Because what we learn here is that that's really what this world needs more than anything else.

And that's what this miracle that we read in front of us and this thing that Mark chose to record here, this amazing account, that's what it's here to prove to us.

The climax of the story, really, is verse 10. And that's really the main piece of news that we get. If there was a newspaper released in that area, in Galilee, the next day, if people understood what had happened here, it wouldn't have said, Jesus heals a man who was crippled.

It would have said verse 10, I think. That's the point that this miracle made. That's the big outrageous thing that he said. Verse 10, but so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

[4 : 40] That's the thing that made everybody gasp. And that's what the whole miracle proves. That's what the whole point of healing this paralyzed man is here to prove. So the way he proves it is he uses this occasion.

So if you weren't listening earlier, or just to remind you of the story, Jesus is teaching in a small house in Capernaum, and it's packed, as you would imagine, after Jesus has been healing for a number of days and showing God's power.

These people are just swarming to him. And he's teaching them, because what we learned last week is that he's actually, he says, no, no, no, more than heal you, I've got to teach you some important things. And so he's teaching them, and there's crowds there.

And then four guys bring their paralyzed friend. We don't know how he was paralyzed, whether it was an injury or whether he was born like that. The story doesn't tell us. But they bring his paralyzed friend.

They get to the house. It's full. They can't get in the door. So they're standing outside, and they're going, what do we do? You know, do we turn back? Do we go back home? No, we can't.

[5 : 43] This is our one opportunity, that our friend can maybe be healed. And so one of them, why don't we go to the roof? Come on. The roof.

Jesus is inside. He's not on the roof. What good is that? No, no, no, no, no. I mean dig a hole through. What? Dig a hole through. That's not a bad idea, actually.

And I suppose there's no other way we can reach him. Now, in Middle Eastern homes, the roof would have been an area where it has some stairs going up to you, not like our roofs. And you can kind of walk around in it.

People often slept there on cool nights. And I would have been able to support the weight of them. And so you can imagine the scene, right? You're sitting, you're inside this house.

You're learning from Jesus. And then you hear footsteps on the roof above you. And then stuff starts to fall from the roof. Dirt starts to fall from the roof. Nobody's listening to Jesus anymore.

[6 : 40] They're looking up. Imagine that happened here at St. Mark's. I mean, talk about a sermon interruption. You think it's bad when a baby cries. I mean, what about people digging a hole in the roof, right? But that's what happened.

There was this interruption. And then suddenly light breaks through. And everybody looks up and you see these four expectant faces looking down. And then a guy starts to get lowered right in front of Jesus.

And instead of Jesus saying, hey, get these guys away, he looks at this guy. He looks up at these four faithful faces. And then he forgives this man's sins.

And he heals him eventually. But before he heals him, very importantly, he forgives his sins. And he knows what reaction that's going to get. Some of the scribes, the teachers of the religious law are sitting there.

And immediately they perk up. And they go, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. He can't do that. He can't forgive sins. Who does this guy think he is? And so they accuse him of blasphemy.

[7 : 40] And that's when Jesus drops the bomb. The truth bomb in verse 10. To make one point, and that's the point, the reason he did all this. It's the reason he started by forgiving this guy.

Knowing the reaction it's going to get, he says these words. So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. And then he healed this guy and he got up and walked out in full view of all of them.

To prove that he has that authority. To prove that he has the power of God and he can use it to do whatever he wants. Including forgive this guy's sins. That's the point he's trying to make here.

And what I want us to do the rest of this morning is just focus on that one verse. And from that verse understand the point of the story. Verse 10. The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

I want us to just spend time thinking about that phrase. And just unpacking what it really means. The Son of Man, firstly. The Son of Man.

[8 : 40] And that title. It's the first time in Mark that Jesus uses that phrase to refer to himself. And it's a very important phrase. It's the main way Jesus refers to himself in the Gospels.

As the Son of Man. Not the Messiah. Not the Christ. Not the Son of God. Even though he is all those things, he uses this phrase. Now, at its most basic, it means a human being.

That phrase would have been used to refer to someone who is a human. Who is flesh and blood. And so, one of the things he wants to remind us of over and over again is he's not some mystical, spiritual effigy.

He's a real flesh and blood person. He's a Son of Man. But more than that, anybody who knew their Old Testament would have known that there's much more meaning to that title, Son of Man.

Because what it refers to is a mysterious figure who was prophesied in Daniel chapter 7. And unless we understand what Daniel, this prophet, speaks about the Son of Man, we won't really get the full import of what Jesus is saying.

[9 : 47] So, turn with me to Daniel chapter 7 in your Bible. And this is the prophecy of this mysterious figure, the Son of Man, and what he will do. And it's part of Daniel's prophecy where Daniel has already prophesied about the kingdoms of the world, the beasts.

Very revelation language, by the way, in Daniel. Who will come and try to rule and try to overcome God's plans for the world, and yet God won't allow it. And now we get to the part in Daniel where God is going to judge.

He's going to bring justice to this world that it so desperately needs. And we pick it up from Daniel chapter 7, verse 9. As I kept watching, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days, that's God, took His seat.

His clothing was white like snow, and the hair of His head was whitest wool. His throne was flaming fire. Its wheels were blazing fire. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from His presence.

Thousands upon thousands served Him. And ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was convened. And the books were opened. I watched them because of the sound of the arrogant words the horn was speaking.

[11 : 05] As I continued watching, the beast was killed. And its body destroyed and given over to burning fire. As for the rest of the beasts, these are the kingdoms of the world, right? The governments of the world.

As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was removed. But an extension of life was granted to them for a certain period of time. I continued watching in the night visions.

And suddenly, one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before Him.

He was given dominion and glory and a kingdom so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away.

And His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed. And so here, this prophet prophesies about a human being, the Son of Man, a human being, one like a Son of Man, who is going to come on this earth and he will be given God's complete authority to fix everything.

[12 : 19] Okay? That's what the prophet was looking forward to. This man, this flesh and blood human who will be endowed with all of God's power to enable Him to fix everything in society and in our world.

Imagine that. Imagine a world that is actually fixed. I mean, we can't imagine it because we've never seen it. But that's what is depicted here.

That's what the Son of Man is going to bring. Justice, real justice to societies. Right rule of law. No crime. All wickedness is done away with.

Destroyed. The world is fixed. Things work properly. Imagine a society like that for a second. Well, that is the society that the Son of Man is prophesied.

This figure who's going to come and bring God's authority to earth, he's going to do that. He's going to fix this world. But 2,000 years ago, Jesus came and what he's saying here to these people by referring to himself as the Son of Man is he is that person.

[13 : 25] He is that human being who has been appointed to bring God's power to earth, to fix things. But what he's come to do with that power, first, before he does what we read about in Daniel, is to forgive people.

The Son of Man has authority to forgive sins. That's what he's saying. Not just authority to rule governments and take out the wicked, which he will do.

But first, he says here in Mark, the Son of Man has been given authority not just to do all those things, but to forgive sins as well. And that is needed before he does all the other things.

Sins need to be forgiven before he can fix the rest of the societies and the rest of the world. Now, that shouldn't have been a surprise to anyone who knew the story of the Old Testament and shouldn't be a surprise to us.

Because the story of the Old Testament, in brief summary, is that Israel, who God had chosen out of the world to be a light to the nations and a blessing to the world, had dismally failed to be that.

[14:34] God's people had failed to be the people that he had saved them to be. A blessing to the nations. And the reason is because of the sin that was inside them, the sin they couldn't get rid of.

And it's the same for all of us. As we read the story of Israel in the Old Testament, we should be reflecting that the same is true of all of us.

We can't be a blessing to others and to the world around us. And we can't fix this world because of the sin inside us. And so before anything in this world can be fixed, before your life can be fixed and work properly, your sins need to be forgiven.

Before anything else. Do you see why that was such a priority for Jesus when he came? Do you realize that about your own life, by the way? You need to realize that.

You need to realize. The world doesn't like to hear about sin. But we need to know that the problems that we face in this life, all the problems in your life are a result of sin.

[15:44] Every single one of them, in some way or another, is a result of sin. All the things that you are frustrated with, all the problems that you have in life, all your deficiencies, all your thoughts that mess up the way you live, are all a result of sin.

Even the external things that affect you, that you have no control over, are a result of the broken world that we live in. And the sin of humanity. The root of all that you struggle with and suffer from in your life, is sin.

Lots of it is a direct result of your own sin, and a lot of it is the result of sin of other people, outside of you. But you need to realize this morning, your life will never work properly, unless your sin is dealt with.

Okay? Life will never work properly. This world will never work properly, unless sin is first dealt with. The sins out there that affect you, the brokenness of this world, that causes you to be maybe a victim of crime, causes you to get sick, those sins need to be dealt with, the sins in the world, and the Son of Man will come to do that.

The prophet Daniel tells us, he's going to come and he's going to deal with all of that stuff that messes up your life, outside. And that's why, by the way, politics can never fix the world. No government, no government system, no matter how ingenious it is, can fix the world, because no government, no politics can fix sin.

[17:18] And so the world will never be fixed until the Son of Man comes. But before he does that, before he fixes the sins out there, he needs to fix the sins in here.

You know, we often look to Jesus to heal the symptoms of sin, don't we? I think we spend most of our time praying when we pray to Jesus to heal the effects of sin.

But often not the sin itself. Jesus, please help me at work. This person I've got difficulty with, or this promotion, please help me to get it.

Please fix my marriage. Please heal my sickness. We so often look to Jesus to heal the symptoms, and yet how often are we praying for him to heal the cause of many of those symptoms?

It's like going to the doctor. Imagine you've got these horrible sores that appear all over your skin, and you go to the doctor, and you say, Doctor, I need some plasters or some cream to help me with these sores.

[18:23] They're really itchy, and they're really sore. Can you please give me some bandages or some cream? And he says, Well, you know what? The reason you've got them is because of a disease you have, and I've actually got the cure for that disease.

No, no, no. I'm not interested. I just want the plasters. You know, that's often how we treat Jesus.

Just give me patches to patch over these effects of sin, and yet he's saying, No, but I've come.

Like he wants this man to know who comes to him to heal his legs. He wants him to know, No, I can fix the cause of that. I have authority not just to fix your paralysis, but to fix the thing that has caused

it, which is sin in this world.

And yet, we are so much more interested in Jesus fixing our lives than fixing our hearts, aren't we? How often are we praying for him to work on our sinful temptations and our sinful thoughts? Is that the priority? I don't think that's the priority of the things we pray for. We've got to learn to pray for the cause rather than just the symptoms. And just as Jesus wanted that man and his friends to know that he can actually do far more than they ever expected when they brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus.

[19 : 35] He can fix the cause. He wants you to know, whoever you are, no matter how deep that disease of sin goes and no matter how much it's messed up your life, he came to earth with God's authority to forgive your sins.

He wants you to know that this morning. The Son of Man has authority to forgive sins. But notice he said something else when he said that.

He said the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He deliberately said that. Why did he include that?

Why did he say the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins? Because he's saying he has authority to forgive your sins not in heaven in the future but now here today. People often think that forgiveness is something about the future.

When we stand before God and the books are opened after we die, that's when we need forgiveness. That's when we need to think about and get forgiveness. But Jesus is showing that he has God's authority to forgive sins right here, right now.

[20 : 40] Not sometime in the future. And him restoring you, him fixing you, is not something that happens in heaven but here on earth.

And it starts with the forgiveness of your sins. On earth. Now. Because only when that happens on earth now can everything else start to be restored and start to be fixed.

And when you're forgiven, only when you know that you're forgiven before God can you be sure that everything else will be restored in your life because the root of your suffering has been severed when you are forgiven by God.

Then the root of all the other problems is cut and you are reconciled with God. And you can know for the first time when you know you're forgiven then you can know that God's plans to restore you and make you who he designed you to be and give you eternal life have started the moment you are forgiven and that happens here on earth.

Now. The son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Jesus has the power to restore you and forgive your sins here and now.

[22 : 10] And all you need to do is do what this crippled man did and have faith in him to do that. Simple uncomplicated faith.

Notice this crippled man wasn't healed and forgiven because of his well developed theology and he certainly wasn't forgiven because of his religious works.

It wasn't because he had a well developed understanding of Jesus but it was for one reason alone it's because he looked to Jesus as the only one who is sufficient for him and able to fix him.

And that is the kind of faith that saves at its root. You know theology is important getting a right understanding of God is vital especially as we develop and grow as Christians but the faith that saves is not some complex theology theology.

It's merely a faith that ignores the other things in this world that promise to fix you and improve your life and it looks only to Jesus and it digs through the roof of distractions and busy schedules so that you can get to Jesus and in him alone find forgiveness in life.

[23 : 37] That is the kind of faith that saves a faith that causes you to be determined to get to Jesus as much as you can and to just move away everything else in life that stops you from doing that and sees Jesus as sufficient for you and trust that he is able to save you completely.

the forgiveness of your sins the restoration of your body and the restoration of this world that he is the Christ that he is the son of man that he is the Messiah that has authority God's authority on earth to fix everything and to forgive your sins it's faith in that that saves you.

But I think there's one more lesson we can learn about faith here before we finish and I think that as Christians especially we need to take a lesson from the faith of this man's friends they're often overlooked in the story but I think their faith is as important as the faith of this man who was forgiven and healed.

Look at verse 5 again in Mark 2 look at what it says when this man was loaded in through the roof Jesus sees him he looks up at these four expectant faces looking down in this hole and verse 5 seeing their faith you notice that not just his faith seeing their faith Jesus told the paralytic sons your sinners are forgiven just as much as this man needed his own faith in Jesus and his own reliance on Jesus in order to be forgiven his friends needed to have faith in order for him to get to Jesus and their faith was that if they merely got him to Jesus he would be healed and they made that the center of their faith and they put aside every obstacle and they dug through the roof in order to get in there because of their faith in Jesus and we need that kind of faith for other people as Christians if our lost friends and family members are ever going to find forgiveness in Jesus we need faith that merely bringing them to him is enough that he has the power to save them that he has the power on earth through his word to change them if we merely dig through all the obstacles and bring them to him we need to have that faith we need to have the faith of the friends that if we just bring them to him he does have power to save them no matter how far gone we think they are imagine this guy his friends looked at him and he's like we hear the rabbi who can heal people is in town come on you've been paralyzed your whole life come on he's too far gone how can we expect Jesus to heal him maybe

Peter's mother-in-law she had fever but this guy nah he's too far gone we should never think that about our friends and family who are not saved and yet I think we often do if the friends had thought this about their friend they would have never brought him to Jesus if we think that about our friends and family members who are lost who are not yet saved we won't make the effort and dig through the roofs we need to bring them to Jesus we need the faith of these friends as well and so what roofs are you willing to dig through what conventions are you willing to break what conversations are you willing to have to bring the people you know in need of forgiveness to the one person who has authority on earth to forgive sins let's pray Lord we do pray that you would help us to have the faith of these friends that you would help us to realize the deepest need of our world is forgiveness the deepest need of the people we know is to have their sins forgiven and help us to be like these friends that we would dig through roofs in order to get those people here to church hearing your word that saves

[27 : 53] Lord thank you that it was only through a word that you healed and forgave this man and Lord to you it's nothing to both heal and restore and to forgive people of their sins help us to remember that so that we will bring people to you the son of man who has authority on earth to forgive sins thank you Lord that through simple faith we can know that our sins are forgiven and our restoration has started Lord please help us to point others to you in Jesus name Amen■■■