

This Jesus: Who? Why? What?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 April 2016

Preacher: Luke Giles

[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning everybody. It's lovely to be with you. Thank you for the invitation. Not that you probably had anything to do with it, but it's good nonetheless to be here. I trust it's been a good Easter time.

I've just come back from a few days with my sons, 9 and 11. We went for a fishing trip, just the boys, which meant we didn't shower for the week, which was great. We had a great time. Fortunately, we fished every day. We fished for about 4 or 5 hours every day.

Fortunately, there was a spa just down the road because we could not have survived the five days on what we caught. Nonetheless, I love fishing. Any opportunity I can get, I can go.

So Mark 1, I love the story because it's a story of fishermen. In Mark 1, we meet a crowd of fishermen standing on the side of the lake. I hope they have better luck fishing than I do.

But they're here. They're fishermen by trade. That's their family business. They're friends. They've been doing it for many years. And suddenly this man, Jesus, walks up to them and says, Come follow me, and I'll make you fishers of men.

[1 : 0 2] In an instant, they drop their fishing tackle. They leave everything behind. They follow him. We're told just a few verses later he went to another group. He said exactly the same thing to another bunch of fishermen and said, Drop everything. Come follow me.

And they did. It's a great shock in Mark's gospel that they follow. It's a surprise, actually. Especially when you consider the way they did it. They did it obediently.

Jesus called and they came. They didn't seek clarification. They didn't ask for a job description. They didn't ask what they'll be doing. He said, Come follow me. And they did.

They did it immediately. We're told in verse 18, at once they came. We're told in verse 20, without delay. They didn't pull out their cell phones and check their calendars and their diaries. They didn't ponder their five-year strategic plan.

They simply left everything and went with Jesus. They followed sacrificially. Did you see that? Verse 18, they left their nets. I take it that means they're leaving their business behind.

[2 : 0 2] Nets, fishing rods, fishing tackle, that's the tools of the trade if you're a fisherman. Notice verse 19, some of them left their father. Here is a picture of sacrificial commitment.

Following Jesus was costly for them. Costly in financial terms. Costly in family terms. And as we read this for maybe the first time, the question we're asking ourselves is, Are they idiots?

That's actually the question we've got to wrestle with. Are these guys fools? What kind of person drops everything to follow Jesus? What were they thinking?

Of course, they know something about Jesus that you and I might not know. And Mark, in Mark's gospel, starts to reveal that to us.

Layer by layer, he shows you and me why they are not fools to follow Jesus. He paints a picture for us of Jesus that shows they are 100% correct in following him.

- [3 : 03] And in the rest of Mark chapter 1, layer upon layer, he wants you and me to see that it's right to follow Jesus because Jesus has authority. He has great authority, in fact.
- Layer upon layer, Mark wants us to see that. He wants us to see that Jesus has great authority when he teaches. Have a look at chapter 1, verse 22. The people were amazed at his teaching. He taught them as one who had authority.
- Not as the teachers of the law. See, there was a group of religious people that called the teachers of the law. They were the chrit kukudurah of the day. And they thought they had authority. But Mark says Jesus has got more.
- We read this story that Jesus has authority over demons. I know for us living in the West, living in the modern world, to hear about demons and exorcisms, it seems very strange.
- It seems very shocking. Of course, we have to remember that in many places, even today, the reality of demons and demon deliverance is very prominent. And Mark wants us to know that Jesus' authority is an authority that extends even over that world, too.
- [4 : 12] And so we read verse 27 that the people were amazed. They asked each other, what is this? A new teaching and with authority. He gives orders to evil spirits. And they obey him.
- But we see another story where Jesus shows that he has authority over sickness. He just reaches out his hand. He heals. He speaks. He touches. And the person is healed. Particularly Simon Peter's mother-in-law.
- Jesus took her hand, verse 31 said, and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. Here is a picture of Jesus' authority that brings about complete and comprehensive healing.
- Do you see what Mark is trying to show you and me today? He's trying to let us see that Jesus has authority like we've never seen before. It's an authority that's never been experienced before.
- It's an authority that, to some extent, is not even understood in the context of the day. They keep saying, what is this? How can this be? Of course, when you've got such authority, you become very popular.
- [5 : 15] Everybody actually wants to talk to you. Everybody. I have that problem. You know when you're cool and popular? Maybe Nick's got that. See, when you are popular, when you have this authority, the crowds flock.
- And Mark wants us to see that everybody's flocking towards Jesus in Mark chapter 1. They want to be amazed. They want to be healed. They want to be delivered. They want to be cured. Verse 36, everyone is looking for Jesus.
- They can't wait to be with him. Here's the second shock. Jesus says, but that's not why I've come. That's not why I've come. I've not actually come so you can be amazed at my teaching or be amazed at my healings or be amazed at my exorcisms.
- That's not why Jesus wants to be followed. The interesting thing of this passage is that Jesus doesn't come to be a healer or a miracle worker. That's not why he came.
- He came, he tells us, to proclaim God's kingdom. See, that's the very first thing he does. When he starts his ministry, he says, repent and believe for the kingdom of God is at hand.
- [6 : 24] He didn't come to announce his power. He came to announce salvation. He didn't come to amaze the ignorant or heal the sick or deliver the demon possessed.
- No, Jesus came into this world to save sinners. I think Jesus knows that his miracles are amazing. And I think he knows that they reveal his authority. But he also knows that they won't actually lead people to repentance and faith.
- I mean, Jesus implies something very shocking in this chapter. He says people don't get saved because they see a miracle. It's worth thinking about that, isn't it?

Because a lot of us have probably got family and friends who say, if only I saw a miracle, I'd believe. Interestingly, that's not what Jesus thinks. Jesus doesn't think you'll believe because you see a miracle.

People don't get saved through miracles. People get saved by trusting a savior. That's why Jesus withdraws from the crowds. That's why he leaves constantly. That's why he keeps on saying to them, don't talk about me.

[7 : 28] See, he doesn't want them to be talking about a miracle worker. He doesn't want them to be talking about a healer. See, he knows as a miracle worker, all that will happen is they'll be amazed. But it's as he preaches the good news, as he proclaims the gospel, as he announces the kingdom, that's how he will bring salvation.

And he tells us in chapter 1, verse 38, that's why he's come. See, he has come with authority to bring about salvation, which makes the very next chapter and the next story very, very important.

If you've got your Bibles, turn into Mark chapter 2. It's another authority account. This time we see that Jesus not just has authority, but Jesus has authority to forgive sins.

See, that's what his authority is for. He's come for something specific. As you turn to Mark chapter 2, it's a well-known story. Some of you will probably know it. It's the story of this famous healer, Jesus, who's arrived in a town.

And in the midst of that town, there are some friends who lovingly say, you know, we've got this mate of ours who's paralyzed. He hasn't been able to walk. Why don't we take him to the miracle worker? Why don't we take him to the guy who now has a reputation that precedes him, that he can heal, he can cure the sick, he can restore?

[8 : 48] And so they decide to take their friend. They put him on a stretcher, they lug him across. As they get closer, they discover, well, chutz. There are so many people at the house where Jesus is, they can't even see Jesus, let alone get close enough to take their friend.

What will they do? These guys are obviously engineers in the making. They come up with a plan. They climb onto the roof. That's quite clever, I think. They get to the center of the roof.

They make a hole in it. And then they lower their friend down right in front of Jesus. It's a brilliant plan, isn't it? Unless, of course, you own the roof. Then you're not so happy.

But anyway, in the story, it's a great plan. They've got incredible faith that Jesus can heal their friend. And Jesus recognizes that. He recognizes that and he says to the son, you can see it, he looks down at him.

There's tenderness in his eyes. There's compassion. And he turns to the young man. Have a look at chapter 2 and verse 5. And he says, when he saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, son, your sins are forgiven.

[10 : 00] No, no, Jesus, apparently you weren't listening. We've brought him for healing. We've brought him to be restored. We've brought him because we want him to walk again. You know, like you cured that old lady over there.

You know how you cured that person there. You know how you did that over there. Now, we've brought him to be cured. We've brought him to be healed. We want him to walk.

It's almost offensive, isn't it? After all they've done, after the fact that this poor guy is lying there with his hopes up, with his expectations coming, and Jesus turns around to him and says, son, your sins are forgiven.

It's almost offensive. It's almost insulting. To the young man, it lacks sensitivity. To the friends, it tastes of betrayal and disappointment.

And yet, interestingly, the teachers of the law are incredibly offended. They are offended, we're told. It seems they are the most offended.

[11 : 04] So in verse 7, they say, why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sin but God alone? And of course, they're right.

They're right. Who can forgive sin but God alone? Jesus knows exactly what they're thinking. He says to them, tell me, which is harder? Is it harder to forgive somebody or harder to heal somebody?

From Jesus' perspective, he thinks it's harder to forgive. From their perspective, they think it's harder to heal. You see, they can't see if sins have been forgiven.

They can see whether a person has been healed. From their perspective, it's harder because there's immediate empirical evidence. They can watch and see. They can't see if a person's sins are forgiven.

But they can work out whether this guy can walk. And so Jesus uses their own logic. And he says to them, fine, I'll do what you think is harder so that you will know the fundamental truth.

[12 : 04] Remember they said only God can forgive sins? Well, look at what Jesus says in verse 10. He says, I will do this for you so that you will know that the Son of Man, that God has authority on earth to forgive sin.

And so he turns to the man lying there. And he says to him, get up. Take up your mat and go home. And with that, the man got up, took his mat, and walked out.

Do you see what Jesus has done for us? He has shown us empirically that he is who he claims to be.

That he is God in flesh. That he is the one who has authority not just to heal, not just to cast out demons, not just to teach. No, he is the one who has authority to forgive sins.

This man is the walking proof of that authority. Of course, you and I will remember from last weekend, won't we? We celebrated Easter. You and I will be able to articulate why it is that Jesus has the authority to forgive sins because he died on a cross to pay for our sins.

[13 : 16] But so far in Mark's gospel, it's enough that Jesus has demonstrated. He's got the authority. And as he demonstrates his authority here in Mark chapter 1, he also at the same time identifies your most fundamental need and my most fundamental need.

See, he reminds us that more important than any physical healing is the need for spiritual healing. More important than the need to walk is the need to be right with God. More important than anything else is the need for you and me to be forgiven.

Our greatest need is to be right before God, which means sin is our biggest problem. See, sin is what separates us from God.

Sin is what messes up our relationship with God. Interestingly, our biggest problem is not stupidity requiring more teaching. Our biggest problem is not sickness requiring more healing.

Our biggest problem is not struggle in this world requiring deliverance. Our biggest problem is our slavery to sin requiring forgiveness.

[14 : 28] Now let me just please pause for a moment. That's not to say that our sicknesses and our struggles are not real. And it's not to say that our sicknesses and our struggles are not a genuine burden in this world.

Please don't hear me say that for a moment. I do not want to minimize the reality of struggle that many are going through. I've got family members facing cancer at the moment. We've had heartache upon heartache in our local church.

I know that struggles are very real in this world. And I don't want to minimize them. And I don't want to dismiss them. But I think what Jesus is saying to us is that although those are big problems, although those are significant to us, theologically, from God's perspective, they are not our biggest issue.

It's no good if we are healthy but go to hell. It's no good if we are happy but go to hell. You see, our greatest need is not our physical well-being in this world.

Our greatest need is where will we spend eternity. And therefore the biggest problem is the thing that stops us from spending eternity with God. And that is sin. And what Mark chapter 1 and 2 says is that Jesus has the authority to teach and he has the authority to heal and he has the authority to deliver because he has the greater authority to forgive you and me of our sins.

[15 : 58] He can do the lesser as it was because he actually has the authority to do the greater. He can deal with all our small problems from his perspective because he's got the authority to deal with our biggest problem.

I know it's hard for us to get that because our greatest need is often one that we can't see. See, our greatest need is the state of our heart. The greatest need is our broken relationship with God.

And yes, I know we see its effects. I know we see the impact of it in our world. But the truth is we don't often see it in ourselves, do we? We don't always identify that our problem is a sinful heart.

Can I suggest to you it's why the gospel that we preach at Easter is such good news? Because Jesus tells us he's got the authority to fix that.

He's got the authority to bring forgiveness. The king has arrived. His authority is here and it is an authority to forgive sin.

[17 : 01] Do you see what Mark has done for us? He's painted a picture of who Jesus is. He's painted a picture of the one with authority to forgive.

And as he does that in these verses, he leaves us pondering how should we respond to this? What should we be thinking? How do we deal with this?

Let me, as I start to land, as I begin the descent as it were, let me point out three very important truths if Jesus has authority and particularly authority to forgive sins.

The first thing I want to point out to you is that it's not folly to follow Jesus. It's not folly. Remember where we started? Those fishermen dropping everything to follow Jesus?

Remember we thought, well, maybe they were crazy, maybe they were stupid. Now when they left everything to follow Jesus, that is not foolishness. It's not foolishness. It can never be folly to leave everything you have to follow the one who has authority over all things.

[18 : 07] It can never be folly to follow the king of the universe. Even if some of your family and friends might think it is.

To follow the one who has authority. To follow the one who rules all things. To follow the one who holds forgiveness in his hands. Friends, that is not wisdom.

That is not folly. That is wisdom. It's wisdom. See, it might be that sometimes you are made to feel a bit doff. Do you really believe that stuff?

Is that what your friends say to you? Do you really go to church? Really? Do you buy all of that? Do you ever get the sense they're trying to belittle you? They're trying to make out that maybe you are crazy?

Can I tell you, Mark chapter 1 says you're not. You're not crazy to be here this morning. You're not crazy to be discovering who Jesus is. You're not crazy to be leaving stuff behind in order to follow him.

[19 : 06] That's the greatest thing you could ever do. Mark chapter 1 tells us. And can I say to you that Jesus, I think, still turns to his people and says to them, come follow me.

I think he tells that to you today. He says to you, wherever you are, come follow him. And therefore the question, how you'll respond to this, is will you follow? Will you follow him?

Will you follow him obediently? Will you submit to his word and to his rule? See, it might be that you claim to be his follower today. Well, the mark of that is, are you listening to him?

Are you doing what he wants you to do? Are you living the way God wants you to live? In accordance with his word? Will you follow not just obediently? Will you follow immediately? Will you follow him without delay?

I deal with young people and young adults. And sometimes you hear this kind of comment. Well, Luke, you know, that's fine. I'll follow later. Later. You know, when I'm old like you, Luke, and stodgy, then I'll follow.

[20 : 07] See, we put it off, don't we? We delay it. We think now while I'm cool, hip and happening, we shouldn't follow Jesus. But later when I'm dull and boring, it'll be okay then. Well, that's not the passage here. The passage here tells no, no, immediate.

Of course, what many people need to realize is sometimes there isn't a tomorrow. Sometimes there is only a today. I buried a 25-year-old girl last year. She didn't have a tomorrow.

She had a today. The question is today, will you follow without delay? Will you fit into his schedule, not your schedule? Of course, will you follow sacrificially? Will you give up those things of the world that we're so desperate to hold on to?

See, the world says gather, gather, gather, gather, doesn't it? Get as much stuff. And Jesus says, will you leave it all behind? Will you give it all up? Notice he talks about it financially.

Will you give up your business if need be? I mean, that's a big ask, isn't it? I mean, if he called you today to go into a mission somewhere around the world, would you give it up? Would you give up your job today to go and do that?

[21 : 08] Interestingly, the example he cites is of people who leave their family behind. I'm aware the cost sometimes is high, isn't it? Sometimes family might say, look, you must choose between Jesus and us.

That's a hard thing to choose, isn't it? Will you follow Jesus? One of my favorite quotes is of the missionary, Jim Elliot, who wrote, He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

He gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose. Friends, following Jesus, can I assure you today, following Jesus is not foolishness.

It's the wisest choice you've ever made. The wisest decision you've ever made. And friend, if you haven't made it, well, let me tell you the second thing. See, the second thing I want you to know from these verses is that it's not folly to follow Jesus.

And those who follow Jesus find forgiveness. Those who follow Jesus find forgiveness. See, forgiveness comes from him.

[22 : 16] And so if you are a follower today, then you are a forgiven follower. Don't be confused with my words now. Well, that's not to say you're a perfect follower.

There's a big difference, isn't there, between being perfect and being forgiven. My children think I'm perfect. Their mother knows much better. I'm not perfect.

But I am forgiven. There's a big difference. To be a Christian is to be forgiven. Forgiveness means that my sin won't be counted against me.

It won't be held to my account because Jesus has already settled it. He dealt with my sin. That's what we celebrated last week, didn't we? As we celebrated Easter. We remind ourselves that he went to a cross to pay for sin.

He settled the debt. He made payment so that I can be forgiven. So that I can, think of Mark 2, I can get up, stand, and walk in the presence of God.

[23 : 19] So that my greatest need is forever dealt with. And friend, if you are following Jesus today, then nothing in your past, your present, or your future will be counted against you in the kingdom.

There is complete forgiveness. There is comprehensive forgiveness. Friends, that is liberating, isn't it? It means you and I do not need to carry the burden of guilt and the burden of shame because we are forgiven.

See, it might be that you're carrying your past with you. It might be that it's weighing you down. And the good news of Mark chapter 1 and 2 is Jesus comes to forgive you.

I don't have to carry it with me anymore. It's been to... If I've turned to Jesus, if I'm trusting Jesus, then I am forgiven. I have two little boys and I have three little nieces in my life.

We're quite close as a family. We spend a lot of time together. And therefore, the truth is, I know far more about Frozen than any self-respecting man my age should know. Do you know the movie Frozen? Do you know the movie Frozen?

[24 : 32] Little girls, Disney thing? Oh, yeah. I tell you, I've had that watched so many times in my house, it's frightening. But there's a song that Elsa sings. Remember the song that Elsa sings?

At a particular point, she... I won't sing it, don't worry. But she throws her hands up and says, Let it go. Let it go. See, that's the great news of the gospel.

Jesus looks to us and he says, Let it go. What are you carrying that burden for? I settled it. I paid it. It's over. What are you carrying it for? Let it go. Let it go.

Now, don't misunderstand me. This is neither a license to continue in sin, nor is it a denial of the consequence of sin.

Okay? I'm not saying either of those things. I'm not giving you permission to carry on sinning. And I'm not saying that you won't have to carry the consequences of some of your sin. But I am saying that the gospel sets us free from the burden of guilt.

[25 : 30] From the burden of shame. We can lay it at the foot of the cross and leave it there. But of course, what do we do? We lay it at the foot of the cross. And next week, we come back and we pick it up and we put it on our shoulders and go home.

And he's saying, You don't need to do that. You are forgiven. You are forgiven, dear friend. I hope you know that today. Just think of the things you did this past week.

Think of that thing that you're hoping and praying Nick never finds out about you. That thing in the closet. Because you've said to yourself, You know, if Nick finds out about that, he'll probably excommunicate me.

If the person sitting next to me finds out about it, they'll move seats next week. No, no. Jesus knows about it. And he's dealt with it.

And can I say to you, his opinion is the only opinion that matters. And he says, if you trust him, he says, you are forgiven.

[26 : 32] You are forgiven. Maybe you're carrying it still. Maybe it's still a burden. Because the truth is, you haven't yet come to the king. Maybe it's still a burden.

Because you haven't actually laid it at the cross. And maybe that's what you need to do today. Maybe you need to come to the one who has authority to forgive sin.

You need to come to the one who has authority to deal with it in your life. And maybe you need to do it today decisively. Once and for all. Maybe today you need to do it so that you can leave it there and not pick it up ever again.

Those who follow Jesus are not fools. Because those who follow Jesus find forgiveness. And one last application. Those who follow Jesus, those who find forgiveness, they fish.

They fish. That's what they do. You see, to follow Jesus, let's come back to the very beginning. But when he said to those disciples, come follow me. What did he say to them? Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

[27 : 44] To follow Jesus is to become a fisher of people. It is to proclaim the good news that salvation is here. It is to announce to the world under the condemnation of sin that forgiveness is available.

It's to let them know that Jesus died on a cross so that they can be saved. To be a fisher of people is to be concerned for the lost. It's to be concerned that they are found.

It's to be concerned that for those who are weighed down by sin, that they have the hope of forgiveness. I find it particularly interesting that of all the ways Jesus could describe what it means to be a disciple.

He could have described it in terms of preaching, in terms of teaching, in terms of serving. In terms of a whole bunch of ways. He chose to describe it in terms of evangelism.

In terms of fishing for people. In Jesus' mind, those two things, discipleship and evangelism, are inseparable. You see, to follow Jesus is to call others to follow Jesus too.

[28 : 50] To be a disciple is to be a disciple maker. And it's the challenge that we must answer about our discipleship today. Is have we grown complacent in our concern for the lost?

Have we become comfortable and complacent in our churches and in our lives and in our families? Or do we recognize that people's greatest need is to be right with God through the forgiveness of their sins?

And do we understand that Jesus has come to deal with that? And so are we working together so that others can follow him? Are we being deliberate and intentional to build relationships that we can win people to Jesus?

That we can earn the right to speak about forgiveness and salvation? Who are you meeting with? Who are you engaging with? Is it a neighbor maybe?

Is it a colleague? Is it somebody you know from the shops or from the sports club? Is there somebody in your life that you can say, you know, I'm actually spending time giving into their lives because I want them to hear about Jesus.

[30 : 01] I know that I can't just dump it on them in the first day. And so I'm taking the time to introduce them slowly. To show them Jesus. To show them his love as they watch me.

So that one day I can tell them about the king who died for them. My two sons are very different when we go fishing. One of them likes to dance and play on the boat.

The other one is a fisherman. And so when we were away, the older one had the opportunity to go and play with his friends back on the shore. It was a tough call because he really did want to catch some fish.

But he really did want to play with his mates. And we had this little nine-year-old voice pipe up. Well, Joshua, you can't catch a fish if you don't have a line in the water.

No doubt he's heard that from his father at some stage. You can't catch a fish if you don't have a line in the water. Dear friends, where's your line?

[31 : 12] Who are you fishing with? You see, if we claim today to love Jesus, if we claim today to be forgiven, if we claim today to be following, then the mark of our following is we're seeking the lost.

We're fishing. Dear friends, Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. He has the authority to teach and to heal and to deliver.

Father, most of all, he has the authority to forgive. The question is, will we come to him? Will we submit to him?

Will we follow him? And will we fish for him? Let's pray. Father, we thank you this morning for Jesus. Thank you for who he is and what he's done for us.

We thank you that he has authority. But most of all, we thank you that he has the authority to forgive sin because he paid for it on a cross. Help us, Lord, to see the wisdom of following him.

[32 : 16] Help us, Lord, to understand what it means to be forgiven by him. And then empower us, Lord, that we might call others to follow him too as we become fishers of people.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.