

Meet Jesus: As his word seems incomprehensible

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[0 : 00] So you might like to open your Bibles in Mark's Gospel. We've, well I've been going through Mark's Gospel, it seems about two years or something. And every now and again when I get a month to speak I just carry on going through Mark's Gospel.

The good thing with that is that Mark sets the agenda. And we're meeting Jesus as he's been ordained in Scripture. We're in chapter 9 at the moment, Mark chapter 9.

And you'll find that on page 845. Mark chapter 9 from verses 30 to 32.

It's quite a wee little passage. They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he, that is Jesus, did not want anyone to know.

For he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. And they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.

[1 : 05] But they did not understand the saying and were afraid to ask him. Well it's shocking news, isn't it that? And the disciples are afraid to ask Jesus.

Just imagine them. Just think about these disciples. I guess the mouths were wide open, their eyes popping out. Shocked at what Jesus had just said to them.

You know, they might be thinking, Has he led us up the garden path? You know, we expected the overthrow of the Roman Empire. And the introduction of a Christian world order.

Those sorts of questions might be running through their mind. And now, well, Jesus is talking as if he's a criminal. And so it's denial.

They're afraid to ask him, verse 32. You know, they don't want any more of that talk about murder. So it's silence, isn't it?

[2 : 10] On the road through Galilee. Silence. But is it shell shock? Could be shell shock, couldn't it? But not when we look at the next two passages, where the disciples are arguing over who is the greatest.

So it's not shell shock, but denial. The facts are there. Jesus is going to be executed. But the old understanding.

Well, that was more comfortable. And they got used to it, really. They were comfortable with it. If I could sketch this scene, I'd sketch 12 ostriches with their heads in the sand.

And which one of us here has never ignored God's word? You know, when it comes to the impact of his word on our lives, which one of us has never, at times, not acknowledged that it's true?

You know, in this or that area of our lives, we've not acknowledged that God's way is the best way to live on planet Earth. It's called denial, isn't it?

[3 : 18] Denial. After I was married last year, I soon put on around about a stone in weight. Very short time, about a month I'd put it on.

And when I went into the bathroom in the morning, I didn't want to stand on the scales. In fact, I'd avert my gaze and look anywhere but the scales.

I didn't want them to be in the bathroom. I didn't want them to be in the bathroom. I didn't want them to be in the bathroom. Denial. And perhaps for a time last month, it was Mervyn King, the governor of the Bank of England, with all that fiasco over Northern Rock.

It's the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. You know, he denies that the Holocaust took place. It's an alcoholic.

Apparently, the 12-step recovery program has addressing denial at its core. Denial.

[4 : 18] Listen to a professional analysis of denial. The American Heart Association cites denial as a principal reason why treatment for heart disease is often delayed.

The same is true for cancer. Doctors MS Boss and JC De Heis from the Department of Psychiatry at the Bronovo Hospital in The Hague, the Netherlands, recently pointed out that, take a deep

breath, from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, denial is a pathological, ineffective defense mechanism. On the other hand, according to the stress and the coping model, denial can be seen as an adaptive strategy to protect against overwhelming events and feelings like coming across the scales in the morning in the bathroom.

Therein is the appeal of denial to humans. Denial allows someone to keep going unchanged, despite reality. Denial is the path of psychological and moral least resistance.

So at this point, the disciples just keep going, don't they? Despite reality. Might go away, they might have thought to themselves. And here is Christianity. Being confronted, friends, with reality.

[5 : 41] Things that quite often we would want to deny. It's being confronted. You know, we'd prefer to keep it under wraps. Did God really say? And the disciples shrug their shoulders, don't they?

And shuffle along on the road through Galilee. The folly of the cross. Jews demand miraculous signs. Greeks look for wisdom. But Paul says, we preach Christ crucified.

1 Corinthians chapter 1. And so, well, what Jesus has just said to them, it seems complete folly, doesn't it? Daft! It's your colleague at work. It's a friend.

It's the family member you have, who will do anything but to talk about issues that touch upon the soul. And it's why, friends, Christmas is often difficult. Do you ever have that with your own family?

You know, talking about the things of God. Yes, they've got the Christmas cards off. They sit at table, a nice roast turkey, roast potatoes, Brussels sprouts, and the Christmas crackers.

[6 : 45] They've got all those things. But there's awkward silences. A sister walks off to do the dishes. A brother takes the dog for a walk. And you know, it's Glasgow, but it's like the road through Galilee.

And Paul says, the world colludes, Romans chapter 1, in the suppression of truth. And here, friends, is the anthem of a world in denial.

Imagine, imagine there's no hell below us, above us, only sky. So Jesus has dropped this bombshell, hasn't he, into the first century world.

He shattered concepts of religion. And even Peter's quiet. Last time, Peter had put his oar in, hadn't he? But he's quiet this time. He knows better. And so the twelve, walk along, past Galilee, and it's silence across the board.

And someone today, deep in your heart, the silence, as you think upon the things of God, and meditate on what is done for you.

[7 : 52] So we move now, to the passage. And I'd like us to think about three things, three shocking things in this passage, three shocking concepts.

Each one of them, or to arrest our attention, and snatch us, from the triviality of a life without Jesus. So number one, the Son of Man is to be killed.

Number two, is to rise from the dead. Number three, it's all God's plan. So this is the second passion prediction in Mark's Gospel, of three of them.

They're easy to remember, chapter 8, chapter 9, chapter 10, and they're all around about verse 30, in each of those chapters. They each have death and resurrection.

But Jesus gives us more detail, more information on each occasion. And we'll pick up Jesus' emphasis with this one. So number one, the Son of Man is to be killed.

[8 : 56] Just look with me there, at verse 31. For he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will what? They will kill him.

Well, as much that we could think about here, in that verse. But I want us to sort of consider a contrast.

A contrast. And here it is. Son of Man, from verse 31, Son of Man, hands of men. I want us to think about how those two are fused together, as nails are hammered into the wrists of Jesus.

You know, as nails penetrate, as, listen, the one perfect human being is executed by humanity.

So, Son of Man, hands of men. Of course, well, we like to think we're disconnected from it all. Don't we? You know? Isolated by time.

[9 : 59] We say, well, it wasn't me. We have no part of it. It is the 21st century today. But the Bible, friends, insists that our humanness is what?

It's derived. We're part of a pool of humanity stretching from Adam to ourselves here, 25 Bath Street. And we can't escape our humanity.

So we suddenly feel that we've got a hand in it all. You know, it is the human race, our human family who orchestrated his death. Mark uses the Greek word, hand it over, hand it over, hand it

over.

Judas hands Jesus over to the chief priests. Chapter 14, verses 10 and 44. The chief priests then hand Jesus over to Pilate.

Chapter 15, verses 1 and 10. And then Pilate hands Jesus over to the soldiers. Chapter 15, verse 15. And it seems like all of humanity are gathered around.

[11:07] Jew and Gentile handing him over, pushing him towards the cross. And secondly, in this point, as we ask, friends, as you and I ask for the forgiveness of our sins, we're participating, aren't we?

participating in a more intimate way. He came to bear our sin and its consequences. Yes, the awfulness of it all, it has our name on it.

It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished. Friends, forgiveness isn't cheap. This isn't one of the world's made up religions.

And so I'd like us to feel connected to Jesus, connected to him through our humanity. And for those of us who have asked him to bear our sin, connected in that intimate way of sin bearing.

And suddenly, being human is not insignificant, is it? we've gone and killed the creator. The son of man is going to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him.

[12:21] Number two, good news, he will rise from the dead. And in each of these passion predictions in Mark's gospel, Jesus talks about the resurrection.

And for the disciples, well, if his death was incomprehensible, so is his resurrection. Death is so powerful, isn't it? Have you found that, friends, in life? I have.

You know, 2,000 years of medical advances since the first century, another 4% in the NHS budget yesterday, but still 100% of us die, am I right?

No advances in 2,000 years with that statistic. It's simply waiting, isn't it? And we're all slowly sliding into it. People sometimes think they've made a success of life.

Have you ever come across anybody like that? But what, friends? But one day, death looks at its diary and makes a visit, a visit to a hospital bed, a journey in a car, or maybe one morning it just sort of slips in under the sheets.

[13:30] But Lazarus, well, Lazarus, walks from his tomb, doesn't he? A little girl's eyes open and death, friends, is losing its grip as the creator of the universe strides his planet.

And now, on the road through Galilee, death's days are numbered. Suddenly, listen, with Jesus, life is your ultimate environment.

Isn't that good news? Paul says, where, oh death, is your victory? Where, oh death, is your sting? 1842. Murray McShane, he knew a little boy.

The little boy had a terminal illness, but he knew the Lord Jesus Christ. And Murray McShane was with him through this illness and watched him die with his family.

Later, he conducted his funeral. And afterwards, he wrote this poem. I little thought when last we met thy son on earth was nearly set.

[14:33] I said, what I can ne'er forget. Dear boy, we'll meet again. Though thou wert tossed upon thy bed and sometimes criedst, my head, my head, yet still the smile came back, I said, fair boy, we'll meet again.

No hope thy weeping mother had. Thy sister's face was pale and sad, but thine was always bright and glad. Dear boy, we'll meet again. I stood beside thy silent bed.

Thy marble brow was cold and dead. Thy gentle soul was fled, was fled. Dear boy, we'll meet again. I saw thee in thy narrow rest.

The clods upon thy coffin pressed. The clouds dropped tears. Yet in my breast, God said, we'll meet again. The precious dust beneath it lies shall at the call of Jesus rise.

The bridegroom in the skies. That day we'll meet again. So McShane writes a poem after the death of this little boy and Paul says we're not to grieve like those with no hope.

[15:49] Number three, it's all planned and just look at the certainty of Jesus' vocabulary there in verse 31. 31, yes.

For he was teaching his disciples saying to them, what? The Son of Man is, is going to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him. Jesus is certain, isn't he, here, present tense.

And when he is killed, there's even a timetable of his resurrection, do you see, after three days. Jesus has complete control, absolute certainty.

It's like he's playing an organ. Paul's of Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, stop out, the devil defeated. To Samuel, chapter 7, an eternal kingdom, you see, no death, he's beaten, overpowered death, victory.

Psalms 22, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Isaiah 53, pierced for my transgressions, for our transgressions. In fact, he's playing the whole Old Testament, isn't he, Jesus?

[16:56] He is the Christ. And it's the tune, isn't it, friends? Think about it, of his father's unfolding plan. And so, the wood of the cross was made from a tree that Jesus grew.

The precision and power of the soldiers hammer blows. It's a world that belongs to God, where everything slots into place, where, friend, your own life has purpose and meaning in God's plan for this world.

And it's all too much to take in on the road to Galilee for these disciples, disciples. But in Acts chapter 2, you might just like to turn it up as we finish. Acts chapter 2, Peter stands up.

It's on page 910. Peter stands up in Acts chapter 2 and it's no longer silent. It's verse 22. It's not page 910.

Peter stands up. Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

[18:06] As you yourselves know, you see, he says, you can't deny the evidence. This is reality we're talking about. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, losing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Do you see? Peter's no longer silent, is he? What a transformation. And think about this. Peter's words here in Acts chapter 2, well, they're Jesus' words, aren't they?

On the road. Through Galilee. Hands of men. It's all there. Murder. Resurrection. God's plan. And it's no longer silence, but proclamation.

No longer silence, but proclamation. And those around listening, they say, what shall we do? And Peter speaks to us today. One verse.

[19:12] Verse 40, and with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation. So here it is, friends, the road through Galilee.

And Mark wants us to ask ourselves, if our lives reflect the magnitude of what Jesus has done for us. Shall we pray?

dear Heavenly Father, we want to express our gratitude for sending us your Son. Please forgive our sin and forgive us for the times that we've trivialised sin.

Our prayer is that you would enable and help us to live lives in keeping with the scale of what you have done for us. and therefore, Father, the scale and dignity of what it is to be your image bearers. Perhaps there's one decision that we each need to make and to implement. Help us, we pray, Father, for your glory.

[20:24] and to that end, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us this day and forevermore.

Amen.