

Jesus, The Doctor Who Give Us What We Need

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to a reading this morning, which is taken from Mark's Gospel, which you will find in page 837, Mark's Gospel.

We're going to pick up in verse 40 of chapter 1, reading through to chapter 2, verse 17. Page 837 of the Pew Bible.

Let us hear the word of God. And a leper came to him, that is, Jesus. A leper came to Jesus, imploring him and kneeling, said to him, If you will, you can make me clean.

Moved with pity, Jesus 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.

[1 : 18] But the leper 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. And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported he was at home. And many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even at the door.

And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him.

And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, My son, your sins are forgiven.

Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit, that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, Why do you question these things in your hearts?

[2 : 38] Which is easier to say to the paralytic? Your sins are forgiven? Or to say, Rise, take up your bed and walk. But that you may know, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

He said to the paralytic, I say to you, Rise, pick up your bed and go home. And he rose, and immediately picked up his bed, and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.

He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth.

And Jesus said to him, Follow me. And he rose, and followed him. And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus, and his disciples.

For there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

[3 : 54] And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, Those who are well, have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Amen. And may God add his blessing to this, the reading of his word. I invite you to take your Bibles, and to turn with me again to Mark chapter 1, which you will find in page 837 of the Pew Bible.

Mark chapter 1. And as you turn up that page, let's have a moment of prayer. Make the book live to us, O Lord.

Show us yourself within thy word. Show us ourselves, and show us our Savior. And make the book live to us.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Those who are well, have no need of a doctor. But those who are sick.

[5 : 06] We have more than our fair share of doctors, and those in the medical profession, here at the Tron. If you became unwell, while you're at the church today, I can guarantee you, there would be a queue of doctors, queuing up to come to your aid.

Not that I'm anticipating anyone, becoming unwell this morning. But you can now relax, knowing that if you do become unwell, there'll be a doctor in hand. I wonder what your experience of going to the doctor is like.

No one wants to have to go to the doctors. But when you go to the doctors, do you find the doctor to be helpful? Do you find them to be understanding? I know many people who don't like their doctors. And do you know the reason why? Because their doctor won't give them what they want. They don't like their doctor, because the doctor won't give them what they want.

I wonder if you have this attitude when you go to the doctors. You want the doctor to give you just what you want. And there are many doctors, who do just give people what they want. But if a doctor is any good, they will be of the mind, to give people what they need, rather than what they want.

[6 : 21] A good doctor will always give people what they need. The first day of Jesus' public ministry has just been witnessed in chapter 1, verse 16 to 39.

And what has been witnessed are things of stunning power and compassion. Jesus healing all who came to him. Those with diseases, disabilities, sickness, terminal illnesses.

And he also drives out unclean spirits, demons. And as the demons come out, they scream, Have you come to destroy us, Jesus?

It's a good question, isn't it? Why have you come, Jesus? And you will notice that that question hasn't yet been answered. It is left hanging there. In verses 37 to 39, Jesus' mission is in danger. And this time, from his disciples. Jesus has become a victim of his own success. The word is out that he can heal, and he can heal anything.

[7 : 23] And the people flood in from everywhere. But Jesus, Jesus takes himself off to a solitary place. The disciples, well, the disciples think they have won the lottery.

Because here in Jesus, they have a religious leader who can actually do some practical good for a change. So they go looking for him. And when they find him, they say, Get back to town, Jesus. But Jesus says, No. No, I'm not going back to town. I'm going on to other towns to preach. Because that is much more important. Really, Jesus?

Are you having a laugh? Is preaching much more important than long life and good health? Now, with that context in mind, we come to our three stories for today.

And we will see in our stories that what Jesus is doing is infinitely more compassionate and infinitely more powerful. Because Jesus is the doctor who gives us not what we want, but he gives us what we need.

[8 : 32] Jesus has come to deal with something that most people don't even recognize as an issue. The problem of sin. And he hasn't come just to deal with the symptoms. No.

He has come to deal with the root of the disease. And not just in a temporary way, but forever. By bringing a full cure. So we get three snapshots or three pictures that shows why Jesus has come. Three pictures that finish with Jesus' statement. Those who are well have no need of a doctor, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Each story contains unbearable human suffering and the impossible grace of Jesus. Well, our first snapshot, our first picture, is in verses 40 to 45.

And the leper. The leper. It doesn't take much imagination, doesn't it? This fellow was a leper. He was basically the living dead.

[9 : 35] Dressed as a corpse. Bannished from his village. Not allowed to enter the synagogue. All contact with his family would be lost. Indeed, all human contact would be cut off.

For he was not allowed to enter towns. For the deadly fear of him passing it on. I suppose it was a wee bit like the outbreak of the AIDS virus back in the 80s.

Do you remember? There was horrible stigma surrounding the AIDS virus at first because folks wondered how you contracted it. How do you pass it on? Can you get it through touching hands, sharing a cup? There was the same sort of a stigma surrounding leprosy because people didn't know how it was passed on.

This leper had been robbed of everything. Robbed of his family name. Robbed of his family. Robbed of his community. Robbed of his place of worship. Robbed of his reputation. Mark doesn't even mention his name. He is now defined by his disease. A leper. And if anyone ever passed by the leper, the leper was to shout out unclean, unclean to make them aware he was a leper.

[10:47] Leprosy was infectious. It was disfiguring. It was unbearable. It was incurable. It was said that only God himself could cleanse a leper and that it was easier to raise the dead than to cleanse leprosy.

And indeed for the leper having this condition he experienced a living death. And the leper, well, he's deeply aware of his own condition, his own need. He comes to Jesus begging, if you will, you can make me clean.

Now friends, when we go to the doctor, we believe the doctor is willing to help us. The question that we have when we go to the doctor is the doctor able to help us.

But no, not here. The leper believes Jesus is able to help him. But he doesn't know if Jesus is willing to help him. He doesn't doubt Jesus' ability. But he does doubt Jesus' desire.

Does Jesus want to help? Does Jesus even care? He's been a leper long enough to know that nobody really cares. Not really. Well, verse 41.

[12:02] Moved with pity or moved with compassion or what it literally means is moved with anger, moved with fury. Jesus 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. It's absolutely breathtaking. These are words of deep emotion, moved with compassion, moved with anger, moved with fury.

Not fury with the leper or because of the leper's doubts, but fury with the ravages of this disease and with all human suffering.

Leprosy encapsulates all that is evil. It encapsulates the death that we will all one day have to face as a result of sin. And Jesus is angry.

He reaches out his hand and he touches the leper. I wonder how long it had been since the leper had felt the touch of another human being. But Jesus reaches out his hand and touches him and says, I am more than willing.

[13:10] Be clean. Before our very eyes, the disease leaves him. The physical disfigurement leaves him. It's like a scene out of a movie. Nerve endings that were dead have been made alive.

Muscles and digits that were damaged are made whole. Every symptom, we are told, every symptom left him immediately. Not over time. All the meds in the world couldn't do that.

He is made whole. He is made clean completely. He moves from death to life. It's a new creation. It's a restoration.

What is unbearable leaves and what is impossible enters in. I wonder if you notice, friends, that Jesus' touch works in reverse.

When Jesus touches the unclean, he doesn't become unclean. They become completely clean. he absorbs their unclean condition. And so he says to the leper, now you need to go and you need to see the priest and you need to offer the sacrifices for your cleansing that Moses commanded.

[14:21] You need to go and obey the law and the priest will pronounce you clean so that you can re-enter society. But keep your mouth shut. But the leper can't help himself.

And who could blame him? Verse 45. 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. He spoke about it freely so that Jesus could no longer openly enter towns. The leper was back in society but Jesus was now outside in desolate places.

And so we see that Jesus is a different kind of doctor. The leper and Jesus have swapped places. The leper was outside but now through the healing Jesus is outside and the leper is received back into society.

It's the first snapshot of Dr. Jesus and he hasn't come just to see a list of patients. No. He has come to take what is unbearable and to give what is impossible.

[15:37] And he does that by changing places with us. And this story begins to cast the shadow of the cross on Jesus. That's the first picture.

The second picture is in chapter 2 verses 1-12. The man who is paralysed. And this is a great story. One of the fundamental stories of the Christian faith.

Here we go deeper into the heart of why Jesus came and deeper into what it is he is doing. So again someone comes to Jesus in fact they are brought to Jesus.

This man can't do anything for himself. For he is a paralytic. I remember when I first ever read this story I thought the man was incredibly drunk. Because paralytic in Glasgow means to be absolutely steaming drunk.

But he wasn't drunk. This fellow is paralytic. He cannot move. And his four friends have obviously heard about Jesus and healing abilities.

[16:43] And they love their friends who is completely paralysed. His life is basically over. And so they grab his stretcher and they come to the house where Jesus is preaching.

And whenever Jesus is preaching there is always a great crowd. Unlike here the place is so packed they can't get in the doors. But the four friends they won't be put off.

Such is their strength of faith in Jesus. They won't stop. They won't let anything put them off. They will not be stopped. And by the way is this not a great picture of what Christians ought to be doing? Bringing our friends grabbing their stretchers bringing them to Jesus and not let anything stop us. These fellows won't let anything stop them.

They can't get into the house by way of the front door so they go up onto the roof and it's a flat roofed house and the house has stairs up the side onto the roof and so they go up and they get up onto the roof.

[17:48] The roofs were usually made of straw and wood and mud and timber and they listened for where Jesus is preaching and then they start dismantling the roof above him.

Extreme measures yes maybe but their friend is not just a stretcher case his life is over and the only hope he has the only hope he has is if this healer can see him and heal him.

It's a wonderful moment. The crowd are packed in Jesus is preaching and these four guys are on the roof pulling it apart. Now I've had some distracting things happening when I've been preaching. A child constantly crying and the parent won't take them out. Folks constantly speaking to each other during the sermon. I even had a fella snoring once.

Okay it was more than once. But I've never had anyone pull the roof apart above me. I think that must be the mother of all distractions.

[18:55] But the roof is pulled apart and then down comes the stretcher containing the paralyzed man lowered down by his friends. What does Jesus do? Look with me at verse 5.

And when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic my son your sins are forgiven.

You can just imagine the four guys on the roof. Hold on a minute. That's not why we brought our friend to you Jesus. That's not why we brought him. It's his legs.

You don't have to be a brain surgeon to work that one out Jesus. It's blazingly obvious. This guy is paralyzed. Will you not heal him Jesus? He had not come to have his sins forgiven.

There is no evidence that this fellow was even aware of any sins. Isn't Dr. Jesus just being a wee bit impractical? Well before we get an answer things become even more disturbing.

[19:59] Jesus just can't see into the heart of the paralyzed man. He can see into the hearts of the clergy who are there watching him. They haven't said a word in verse 69 but Jesus knows what they are thinking.

And they are thinking that no one can forgive sins but God alone. And so therefore this is a blasphemous thing for Jesus to say. Which is true in a way.

No one can forgive sins but God alone. But now next what Jesus does is what Jesus often does with controversial and uncomfortable questions. questions. He brings them out into the open.

He says I know this is what you are thinking. And then he puts a question to them. Verse 8 and 9 And immediately Jesus perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves.

He said to them Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralytic? Your sins are forgiven? Or to say rise take up your bed and walk?

[21:00] Well it's probably easier to say your sins are forgiven because you can't actually see whether it's whether it's true or not.

But both are impossible. But Jesus goes on verse 10 but that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

He said to the paralytic I say to you rise take up your bed and go home. And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all so that they were all amazed and glorified God saying we never saw anything like this.

Again it's absolutely instantaneous this man's body is healed. We don't know how long he was paralysed for. But muscles that had wasted away tendons and sinews that had forgotten how to work are made whole.

He doesn't need any help getting up. He doesn't need crutches going out. He's not given appointments to go to the physio for a year. No. He rose.

[22 : 08] He picked up his mat and he walked out a new man. He moves from death to life it's a recreation it's a restoration what is unbearable leaves and what is impossible enters in.

Friends we have two miracles here for the price of one. There are two miracles happening. The forgiveness of sins that we can't see and the healing of a paralyzed body that we can't see. From Jesus' point of view this man has two problems not just one. So he first forgives his sins and then he demonstrates the power and the reality of his forgiving words and restores his body two separate miracles.

It's not that he was paralyzed because he had committed some great evil and needed an encouraging word. If that was the case when Jesus forgave his sins then he would have got up and he would have walked but he doesn't that's not it.

The physical healing is a second thing. It is an outward and physical demonstration of what Jesus has done inwardly and when Jesus says my son your sins are forgiven Jesus isn't announcing that he is forgiven Jesus is actually forgiving him and Jesus tells us why in verse 10 why he heals the man's body so that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins friends that is why he has come the healing of his body wow absolutely wonderful but the forgiving of his sins infinitely more wonderful I was down in a church in New Milms in Earthshire and I came across this lady who had recently completed a Christianity Explode course and this lady had a 12 year old son who was paraplegic he was paralyzed from the neck down and he had never walked a step in his whole life and he spent his whole life in a wheelchair and this this thing that he used in his mouth to control things and this lady had recently come to faith through a

[24 : 29] Christianity Explode course but when she was going through the course when they came to this passage in Mark the group leader asked the question why do you think Jesus dealt with the man's sin first and as quick as a flash she put her hand up and she said because his sin was crippling him more than his legs his sin was crippling him more than his legs paralysis is a picture of death the paralyzed man is lowered into the house the way a dead body would be lowered down into a grave the only difference is when the paralyzed man gets to the bottom he doesn't meet death no he meets life in the person of Jesus Christ and in his forgiving word twice Jesus uses the word rise in verse nine and verse eleven this is a resurrection word twice Jesus uses the word rise and he rose verse twelve it's a picture of this wonderful new life he has received through the forgiveness of his sins now that he has been physically healed he could go and live a full and normal life he could get himself a job he could get married have children contribute to society and and to his community but as wonderful as all these things are what we are meant to see that there is something far more wonderful infinitely more wonderful and that is healing meant he could rise to a new life but the forgiving of his sins meant that on that day the day of judgment he would rise to eternal life and this is one of the great truths of the

Bible God doesn't treat us according to our sins he doesn't deal with us as we deserve he deals with us as we don't deserve forgiveness is a massive power but let's be clear about what it means it's not just wiping the slate clean it's not just forget about yesterday no it's about being raised from death to life about being given a new life Jesus says that he has the power to forgive sins here on earth now that's startling because forgiveness of sins is the verdict that the Bible says will be given on the last day the day of judgment but Jesus says I bring that verdict of the last day and pronounce it now I bring it into time space history it's not something you need to work towards you can know that your sins are forgiven and forgiven completely you don't have to go through life wondering doubting lacking assurance you can have a verdict now

Jesus has the power and the authority to remove every barrier of sin between us and God he offers new life restoration this is the authority of Jesus and it comes into our lives now it's not just to fix up our lives so we can live 70 80 90 happy years now no it's to bring us back to God to give his life for all eternity that's picture number two and now we have picture number three of Levi the tax collector and it's the picture of a wonderful meal and it shows the result of forgiveness verse 14 Jesus passes by the tax booth and there is Levi son of Alphaeus who is a tax collector and Jesus says follow me and we read that Levi rose and followed

Jesus I probably don't need to tell you that tax collectors were hated you will remember at the time Israel were an occupied nation under the control of Rome the Romans ruled Israel and many other countries and in order to fund their great world empire the Romans levied heavy taxes on all those nations under their control the tax collectors were Jewish but they collected tax for Rome so they were seen as absolute traitors turncoats because they worked for the enemy and also because they were becoming rich on the misery that they were heaping upon their fellow countrymen and to top it all off it was very well known that the tax collectors were cheats taking more tax from the people than they were authorized to do so they were seen as real scumbags they had sold out their people they had sold out their nation they had sold out their God even if they wanted to change and reform they would never be accepted back into the community amongst the people they would always be seen as scabs it's hard to imagine how reviled tax collectors were we often think oh tax collectors oh nobody likes to pay taxes and we all laugh but this wasn't about money there was real hatred towards the tax collectors for the reasons that

I've already outlined a modern day equivalent of how hated and reviled tax collectors were would have to be pedophiles child abusers how our nation feels towards those who harm children would bring you close to how Levi and all the other tax collectors were hated but as much as an outcast as he was as hated and reviled as he was it was to one like this that Jesus calls follow me and notice Jesus doesn't say clean up your act leave tax collecting business behind prove yourself and then you can follow me no Jesus says or Jesus commands follow me it's the same authority that said to the leper be clean it's the same authority that said to the paralyzed man you're forgiven get up and walk and now the same authority says to

[31 : 18] Levi follow me and Levi rose it's resurrection language again he becomes a new man he leaves the tax collecting business behind him and begins a new life following Jesus he moves from death to life it's a recreation it's a restoration what's unbearable leaves and what is impossible enters in and what is impossible becomes the focus of the passage because what happens next as we go into this beautiful meal which is a picture of the restoration that Jesus brings verse 15 and as he reclined at table in his house many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples for there were many who followed him this is a big meal and you see Levi does what everyone does who begins to follow Jesus he takes what he has and he serves

Jesus all he has is money and a whole load of friends who are shady characters all he has is a load of friends who are shady characters and money and so he brings these two things together with Jesus it's absolutely wonderful but the religious guys well they're horrified verse 16 and the scribes of the Pharisees when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors they said to his disciples why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners they're absolutely horrified eating with someone was a very big deal it demonstrated acceptance it demonstrated identification for a man like Jesus to eat with these guys would make them unclean in their eyes but this is what forgiveness does it opens the door to a very different kind of community and acceptance not a community based on our success or failure not a community based on our moral standing or rightness or wrongness not a community based on outward beauty or ugliness true forgiveness leads to feasting this is the kingdom of

God to follow Jesus is to be made clean by him and those who have been forgiven by Jesus they long to be together that's one of the reasons we gather Sunday by Sunday it's a foretaste of the great feast of the kingdom that's why Jesus has come verse 17 and when Jesus heard that he said to them those who are well have no need of a physician or a doctor but those who are sick I came not to call the righteous but sinners Jesus hasn't come for those who are confident in their own goodness or their own spirituality or their own moral uprightness no listen to Jesus I've come for sinners you may be like the leper you may be sitting here this morning thinking I'm just too unclean and the uncleanness goes well it just goes too deep you may feel like an outsider like the leper Jesus wouldn't be interested in someone like me would he want someone like me would he be willing to cleanse someone like me well I urge you friend go to him ask him if he's willing and I guarantee you that Jesus will say I came for you maybe you're like the paralyzed man you may not even know that sin is an issue for you your life is full of all sorts of outward crippling problems but the most important thing you need to hear is Jesus word of forgiveness listen to his word of forgiveness it will give you life or maybe you're someone who's morally corrupted morally compromised you've maybe came by things like the tax collector and in a moral way cheating robbing stealing you hear

Jesus calling to you follow him rise up to new life and follow him maybe you've been a Christian for a long time but you feel like you've messed things up in fact you have messed things up go back to Jesus receive his forgiveness forgiveness for forgiveness forgiveness is not something we get at the start of our Christian lives forgiveness is ongoing throughout our lives now just for a moment I want us to imagine that we could maybe interview these three guys 2000 years after they first met Jesus what would they say well firstly to the leper you know what I could have pretended to be clean I could have stolen some clothes and tried to cover up my condition I want to tell you I was really tempted to but that would have just dealt with the symptoms what Jesus did was to give me his purity that day and over these last 2000 years that

[36 : 59] I've been with him that purity has been a growing delight to me next to paralyzed man the day Jesus came to me or in fact the day that I was brought to Jesus and he healed me it was absolutely brilliant my life was amazing afterwards it was totally transformed I got married I had a family I went on to live a full and productive life but do you know now that I've been with him these 2000 years I realized that the forgiveness he gave me that day was far more important than those 50 years what about Levi I wasn't looking for Jesus I wasn't looking for any kind of religious experience I wasn't looking for any kind of religious experience Jesus just came out of nowhere he entered my life and he called me but I just want to say following Jesus wasn't easy in the end people killed me for following him but those early meals but those early meals with him those early meals with him and my friends they were a foretaste of what it's like to be with him now forgiveness is such a power it is stronger than all our uncleanness stronger than all our weakness stronger than all of our sin without forgiveness we can't make ourselves really clean all the religious activities can't do it all our good works they just can't do it without forgiveness we can't get to really get to the root of who we are for we will never see the new life that comes from forgiveness forgiveness restores us to God it's not something that we can earn nor is it something we deserve but you can have that verdict here today forgiven not through me not through a priest not through anything or anyone else but through Jesus Christ forgiveness can be found in Christ Jesus and in Christ Jesus alone he has the authority to forgive sins here on earth because on earth on the cross he died for sin and you can have that verdict here today forgiven let us pray father we thank you for the lord Jesus Christ who came to deal with the unbearable weight of our sin and bestow on us his amazing grace of forgiveness we pray that you would convict all of us here this morning of our sin and lead us to the cross of the lord Jesus Christ where we can find complete forgiveness in Jesus name amen