

Jesus, The Doctor Who Gives Us What We Need

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Date: 12 June 2022

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our reading for this morning, and we are in Mark's Gospel. So please turn to Mark and chapter 1.

Mark chapter 1, and we are reading from verse 40 and through to chapter 2 and verse 17.

So Mark chapter 1, verse 40, hear the word of the Lord. And 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 : 24] But he went out and began to talk freely about it and to spread the news so that Jesus could no longer open the enter of 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 that 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 made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven.

Now, some of the scribes are sitting there questioning in their hearts, why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

[2 : 33] 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? 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 he 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.

[3 : 46] 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, said to his disciples, Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

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. May God bless to us his word this morning.

I invite you to take your Bibles and to turn with me again to Mark chapter 1.

And as you turn those verses up, let me just read some verses from Ephesians 2, which I think will be a help to us as we come to study Mark chapter 1. The Apostle Paul writes, And you were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

[5 : 13] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ.

By grace, you have been saved. Now just a brief prayer. Make the book live to us, O Lord. Show us thyself within thy word.

Show us ourselves, and show us our saviour. And make the book live to us, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now at risk of offending some of our medics here this morning, I wonder what your experience of going to the doctors is like.

What is it like when you visit your GP? Now no one wants to ever have to go to the doctors, but when you go to the doctors, do you find them to be helpful?

Do you find them to be understanding? Over the years in my line of work, I have known many people that don't like going to their doctors, and in fact have changed their doctors.

[6 : 25] And do you know the reason why? Because the doctor will not give them what they want. I wonder if you have this attitude when you visit your GP.

You want them to give you what you want. And there are many doctors who will just give people what they want. Sick lines to declare them unfit for work, and prescriptions for all sorts of medication.

But if a doctor is any good, they will be of the mind to give people what they need, rather than what they want. A good doctor will always give people what they need.

Well, 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 great compassion.

The Lord Jesus healing all those who came to him, those with diseases, disabilities, sicknesses, terminal illnesses. And he also drives out the unclean spirits.

[7 : 28] He also has power over the 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 the question hasn't yet been answered. It's sort of a left hanging there. Well, in verses 37 to 39, Jesus' mission is in danger again.

But this time it's from his own disciples. Jesus has become a victim of his own success. The word is out that Jesus can heal, and he can heal anything.

And people flood in from everywhere on trains, buses, and taxis. But the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus takes himself off to a solitary place. Well, the disciples, well, they think they've won the lottery.

Why? Because here in Jesus, they have a religious leader who can actually do some practical good for a change. And so they go looking for him. And when they find him, they say, Jesus, get yourself back to town.

[8 : 35] Your popularity is on the rise. But Jesus says, No. No, I need to go on to the other towns. I need to go on there to preach. Because that is much more important.

Really, Jesus? Preaching is much more important than good health and long life. Now, with this context in mind, we come to our three stories for today.

And we will see today 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 what we need.

Jesus has come to deal with something that most of us don't even recognize as an issue. The problem of our sin. And he hasn't come 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.

[9 : 37] So we get these three pictures that show us 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 picture you will find in verses 40 to 45. The leper. The leper. It doesn't take much imagination.

This fellow was a leper. He was basically the living dead. Dressed as a corpse. Banished from his village. Not allowed to enter the synagogue. All contact with his family would be lost.

And indeed, all human contact would be cut off. For they were not allowed to enter towns for the deadly fear of passing it on. Maybe a wee bit like the outbreak of the AIDS virus for us who are old enough to remember that back in the 80s.

[10 : 42] Remember, because folks didn't know how you caught it. How do you pass it on? How was it transmitted? Or as we have seen recently, maybe in the past couple of years, with COVID. Well, the leper, he's been robbed of everything.

Robbed of his family. Robbed of his community. Robbed of his place of worship. Robbed of his reputation. Robbed even of his family name. He was now defined by his disease. Mark doesn't even mention his name. Only his condition. And if anyone passed by, the leper was to shout out, unclean, unclean, to make them aware he was a leper. Leprosy was infectious. It was disfiguring. It was unbearable. It was incurable. Only God could cleanse leprosy. And the rabbis, well, they had a saying. They had a saying saying, it was easier to raise the dead than to cleanse leprosy. And that saying was very fitting. As the sufferer did experience a living death.

[11 : 48] Leprosy was not just a sickness. It was also a sentence. A death sentence. And the leper, well, he's deeply aware of his own condition, his own need.

And he comes to Jesus begging. If you will, you can make me clean. Or as we sang earlier, wash me, Savior, or I die.

Now, when we go to the doctor, we believe the doctor is willing to help us. The question we have when we turn up at the doctor's surgery is not as, does the doctor want to help us?

Is the doctor able to help us? But no, not here. The leper believes that 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? Because he has been a leper long enough to know that nobody cares.

[12 : 47] Well, not really. Verse 41. 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. 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 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.

[13 : 53] And again, these past couple of years, we have had a window into what that can be like. Don't touch. Stay safe. Stay two meters apart.

Wash your hands. Don't touch. Maybe only being able to see aging, dying family members through care home windows, not being able to embrace, which has been to the detriment of the mental health of our nation.

Because human touch is part of what makes us human. Part of our development. Part of our socialization. And the Lord Jesus, well, he knows all that this man needs.

Yes, he needs to be cleansed. But this man also needs to be made feel human again. And we wouldn't have to go far in this city to find people for whom this is true.

And so the Lord Jesus reaches out his hand and touches him and says, I am more than willing. Be clean. Before our very eyes, the disease leaves him.

[14 : 59] 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 or maybe had fallen off altogether are made whole.

Every symptom, we are told, every symptom left him immediately. Not over time. All the medication in the world couldn't achieve 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. And you will see here that Jesus' touch works in reverse when Jesus touches the unclean.

When he touches the unclean, he doesn't become unclean. They become clean. It's as if Jesus absorbs their unclean condition. And so he says to the leper, now you need to go.

[16 : 04] You need to go and you need to see the priest. And you need to offer the sacrifices for your cleansing that Moses commanded. You need to go. You need to go and obey the law. And the

priest will pronounce you clean.

And then you can re-enter back into society. But make sure you keep your mouth shut. But the leper, well, he can't help himself. I mean, and who could blame him?

Verse 45. He spoke freely about it so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the towns. The leper was back in society. But Jesus is 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, the leper is received back into society. But Jesus is out in desolate places. He is outside, just like Adam and Eve. Remember? Banished from the garden.

[17:12] Under the judgment of God. Outside the garden. It's the first picture 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. And he does that by changing places with us. And even here in Mark chapter 1, this story begins to cast the shadow of the cross over the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, that's the first picture. The second picture we will find in chapters 2, verse 1 to 12. And the man who is paralyzed. And this is a great story.

This is 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're brought to Jesus. This man, he can't do anything for himself because he's a paralytic. I remember when I first became a Christian reading through Mark's gospel.

[18:18] I thought that this guy was absolutely steaming drunk because being paralytic in Glasgow means, you know, you're that drunk, you can't even stand up. And I used to think, man, that must have been some size I carry out.

Four guys had to carry him. But no, he's a paralytic. He can't even move. And his four friends, well, they've obviously heard about Jesus and his ability to heal.

And they love their friend who is completely paralyzed. 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 this morning where there's plenty of space, the place is so packed in, you couldn't even get anybody in, no even with a shoehorn.

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 that thing put them off. They will not be stopped. And friends, this is a great picture of what Christians ought to be doing.

[19:21] Bringing our friends, grabbing their stretchers, bringing them to Jesus, inviting them to church, inviting them to read the Bible together, inviting them to Christianity explored. No letting anything stop us.

And so these fellas, they kind of get into the house by way of the front door. So they go up onto the roof. It's a flat roofed house. There's stairs at the side of the house to enable you to get up onto the roof.

And so they get up onto the roof. The roof is made of straw, wood, mud and timber. And they begin to listen out 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. He is dead. His life is basically over. And the only hope he has, the only hope he has, is if Jesus can see him and heal him.

It's a wonderful moment. And if any of you have seen the Mark drama, the Mark drama captures this moment brilliantly. The crowd are all packed in. Jesus is preaching.

[20:25] And these four guys are pulling the roof apart above him. Now I've had some distracting things happen when I've been preaching. The Wayne that's constantly greeting. And the ma or the da won't take them out.

Folks constantly speaking to each other in the front row because I'm that engaging. I've even had people falling asleep and snoring. But I've never had anybody pull a roof apart above me.

Well, the roof is pulled apart and then comes down the stretcher containing the paralyzed man lured by his four friends. And what does Jesus do? Well, 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.

What? Sins? Did he say sins there? Ah, he said sins. Hold on a minute. That's not why we brought him to you, Jesus. That's not why we didn't bring him. It's his legs.

[21 : 21] He's paralyzed. Will you no heal him, Jesus? Yes. He hasn't come to have his sins forgiven. There is no evidence that this fellow is even aware of any sins.

Has Jesus no just been a wee bit over spiritual and a wee bit impractical? Well, before we get an answer, things become even more disturbing. Jesus can't just see into the heart of the paralyzed man.

He can read the hearts of the clergy who are watching him. They haven't said a word in verses 6 to 9, 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. Now, what Jesus does is what Jesus often does with controversial and uncomfortable questions.

He brings them out into the open. And he says to them, I know this is what you are thinking. And he puts a question to them in verse 8 and 9. Why do you question these things in your hearts?

[22 : 32] Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven? Or to say, rise, take up your bed, and walk?

Well, it is probably easier to say, your sins are forgiven. Because you can't actually see whether that's true or not. But both things are impossible.

But Jesus carries on verse 10. But so 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.

Again, it's absolutely instantaneous. This man's body is healed. We do not know how long he was paralyzed for, but muscles that had wasted a weight, tendons and sinews that had forgotten how to work, are made whole.

[23 : 40] He doesn't need any help getting up. He doesn't need any crutches going out. He's not given appointments to go for a year of intense physio, which is just as well, as he'd probably wait about five years for a face-to-face appointment these days.

Well, that's unless he knew Ross Grant or Biggie and Constable. But he rose. 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.

And friends, we have two miracles here for the price of one. There are two miracles happening here. The forgiveness of sins that we can't see, and the healing of a paralyzed body that we can see.

From Jesus' point of view, this man has two problems, not just the one. So firstly, he forgives his sins, and then demonstrates the power and the reality of his forgiving word, and restores his body.

[24 : 48] 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, he would have got up and walked.

He doesn't. That's not it. The physical healing is a second thing. It's an outward and physical demonstration of what Jesus has done inwardly.

And when Jesus said, My son, your sins are forgiven, Jesus isn't announcing that he is forgiven. Jesus, in that moment, 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.

This is why he has come. The healing of the body, wow, absolutely wonderful. But the forgiving of his sins, infinitely more wonderful.

[25 : 54] I remember visiting a church a number of years ago down in Earthshire. And there was this lady who had come to faith and had just come about the church. And she had this wee boy who was 12 years old and he was paralyzed from the neck down.

He had never walked a step in his life. And he got about in one of those kind of a big wheelchairs that was operated with a wee control thing that kind of went into his mouth. And this lady had come to faith doing the Christianity Explored course.

And one night at the Christianity Explored course, you know how it always begins with a wee bit of Bible and we look at a passage. And they were looking at this passage. And the leader of the group posed a question to the group.

And the question was this, why do you think Jesus forgave the man's sin first before he healed his legs? And this woman that had a wee boy who'd never walked a step in his life, she answered as quick as a flash.

And she said, because his sin was killing him and crippling him more than his legs. His sin was killing him and crippling him more than his legs.

[27 : 06] You see, friends, just like the leper before, paralysis is a picture of death. The paralyzed man is lowered into the house that way a dead body would be lowered into a grave.

The only difference is that when he gets to the bottom, he doesn't meet death. No. He meets life in the person of Jesus Christ and in his word of forgiveness.

Jesus uses the word twice in these verses. You'll see firstly in verse 9 and then again in verse 11.

This is a resurrection word. Twice Jesus uses the word rise and then we read in verse 12.

And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all. It's a picture of this wonderful new life that he has received through the forgiveness of his sins.

He speaks and listening to his voice new life the dead receive. Now that he had been physically healed, he could go and live a full and normal life.

[28 : 12] He could get a job, get married, have children, contribute to society and to his community. But as wonderful as all this is, what we are meant to see that there is something far more wonderful, infinitely more wonderful, and that is the forgiving of his sin.

Being healed physically meant he could rise to a new life. But the forgiveness of his sins means that on that day, the day of judgment, he could rise to eternal life.

And friends, 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 friends, let's be absolutely clear about what this means. It's not just wiping the slate clean.

Not just forget about yesterday. It's not about turning over a new leaf. It's about being given a new life. It's about being raised from death to life.

[29 : 22] That's why I read Ephesians 2. For contained in those verses is the testimony of every Christian believer there has ever been.

We have to be absolutely clear about what has happened to us in the gospel. If we think that our behavior being modified and changed is what the gospel has achieved in us, then friends, we have it all wrong.

If someone were to ask us, what has being a Christian done for you? And you were to answer, oh, you know, I used to be a drug addict. I was a terrible alcoholic. But, you know, I don't do that anymore.

Or, you know, I was really sexually immoral. You know, I would have went with anybody. I slept around a lot. Or, you know, you should have heard the mouth that was in me. Every second word that came out my mouth was a swear word.

Or I used to go to Celtic Park or Ibrox. And you should have heard the bigoted sectarian bile that came from my mouth. Or maybe I was so in love with money or my career or sports or politics or so in love with myself.

[30 : 33] But I have all these things in their rightful place now. I now know about these things and the things that should take their rightful priority in my life.

Well, friends, all that stuff is well and good. But these things are symptoms of the gospel at work in our lives. See, don't actually tell us what the gospel has done in our lives.

The apostle Paul spells it out for us in Ephesians 2. And you were dead. But God, through Jesus Christ, has made you alive.

I've often had people say to me, Do you know, Terry, I wish I had a dramatic testimony like you.

You know, you used to be a drug addict and you lived a wild life. But now look at you.

I wonder, do you often think that? Do you often wish that you had a dramatic testimony? Well, friend, let me tell you, if you are a Christian believer here this morning, you already have a very dramatic testimony indeed.

[31 : 38] It doesn't get any more dramatic than being dead. What has happened to us in the gospel is not rehabilitation. Neither is it resuscitation.

You know, like some folks say, you know, oh, I had a spiritual awakening. as if you were asleep and you just needed woken up. No, not resuscitation. No, you were dead.

And what has happened to us is resurrection. We were dead and we have been made alive by God through Christ. And we were made alive through the forgiveness of our sins.

And friends, the Lord Jesus says that he has the power to forgive sins here on earth. And that's absolutely startling because the forgiveness of sins is the verdict that the Bible says will be given on the last day, the day of judgment.

But the Lord Jesus says, I bring that verdict, the verdict of the last day, and I pronounce it now. I bring it into time, space, and history.

[32 : 47] It's not something we 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 that verdict now. Jesus has the authority and the power to remove every barrier of sin between us and God.

He offers new life. He offers resurrection. This is the authority of Jesus. And it comes into our lives now.

Not just to fix our lives up so that we can live 50, 60, 70, 80 happy years. No. It's to bring us back to God. To give us life for all eternity.

Well, that's picture number two. Thirdly and lastly, we have we have picture number three. And it's a picture of a wonderful meal. And this wonderful meal shows the result of forgiveness.

[33 : 53] 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 follow Jesus. I probably don't need to tell you that tax collectors were hated. You will remember Israel at the time in their history were an occupied nation under the control of Rome.

And the Romans ruled Israel. And in order to fund their great world empire, the Romans levied heavy taxes and all the 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 were working for the enemy and becoming rich on the misery 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 from the people than they were authorized to take. They were seen as real scumbags.

[35 : 04] They had sold out their people. They had sold out their nation. They had sold out their God. And even if they wanted to change and reform, they would never be accepted back amongst the people.

They would always be seen as a scab. Folks would say, no, they've made their beds. They just need to lie in it. They're dead to us.

But it's to one like this that Jesus calls, follow me. Notice what Jesus doesn't say. He doesn't say, clean up your act, become an honest taxman, give it six months, prove yourself, and then you can follow me.

No, Jesus says, or Jesus commands, follow me. It's the same voice that said to the leper, be clean. The same voice that said to the paralyzed man, your sins are forgiven, get up and walk.

And now the same voice that says to Levi, follow me. It's the voice that spans the years, speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us.

[36 : 17] And on hearing Jesus' voice, Levi rose. It's resurrection language again. He becomes a new man. He leaves the tax collecting business behind, and he begins a new life following Jesus.

He moves from death to life. It's a recreation. It's a restoration. What is unbearable leaves, and what is impossible enters in.

And what is impossible becomes the focus of the passage. Because what happens next is 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. You see, Levi does what everyone who begins to follow Jesus does. He takes what he has, and he begins to serve Jesus. And all that he has is money, and a whole load of friends who are shady characters.

[37 : 27] And so he brings these two things together with Jesus. It's absolutely wonderful. But the religious guys, well, they are horrified, verse 16, because eating with someone was a very big deal.

Because it demonstrated acceptance and identification. For a man like Jesus to eat with these guys would make him unclean in their eyes.

But friends, 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 our rightness or wrongness. Not a community based on our riches or poverty. No. True forgiveness leads to feasting.

This is the kingdom of God. To follow Jesus is to be made clean by him and to be made alive by him. And those who are forgiven long to be together.

[38 : 28] 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. Those who are well have no need of a doctor.

But those who are sick, I came not to call the righteous but sinners. Friends, Jesus hasn't come for those who are confident in their own goodness.

confident in their own spirituality or confident in their own moral uprightness. No. Listen to Jesus. I've come for sinners.

Friends, 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 far too deep.

You may feel like an outsider just like the leper. But Jesus wouldn't be interested in someone like me. Would Jesus want someone like me? Would he be willing to cleanse someone like me?

[39 : 28] Well, I urge you, come to him. Ask him if he's willing. And I guarantee you, 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. But your life is full of all sorts of outward crippling problems. But the most important thing you need to hear is, my son, your sins are forgiven. Listen to Jesus' word of forgiveness. It will give you life. Or maybe you're someone who is morally compromised. Maybe you've come by things just like the tax collector in an immoral way.

Through cheating, robbing or stealing. You hear Jesus calling to you to follow him. Rise. Rise to a new life and follow Jesus.

Or maybe you've been a Christian for a long time and you feel that you've messed things up. In fact, you have messed things up. Go back to Jesus. Receive forgiveness.

[40 : 36] Friends, forgiveness is not something we get just at the start, the outset of our Christian lives. Forgiveness is ongoing all throughout our lives. Now just imagine we could interview these three guys today, 2,000 years after they met Jesus.

I wonder what they would say. Well, let's firstly come to the leper. He says, you know, I could have pretended to be clean. I could have stole clothes off a washing line and tried to cover up my condition.

And I can tell you I was solely tempted to. But that would have just dealt with the symptoms. But what Jesus did was to give me his purity that day.

And over these last 2,000 years that I've been with him, that purity has been a growing delight to me. Now what about the paralyzed man?

He says, well, you know, the day that 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. You know, I got married, I had a family, I went on to live a full and productive life.

[41 : 46] But do you know that now I've been with him these 2,000 years, I realized that the forgiveness he gave me that day was far more important than those 50 years.

Now what about Levi? Levi says, you know, I wasn't looking for Jesus or any kind of other religious experience. Jesus just came right out of nowhere and he entered my life and called me.

I want to tell you, you know, following Jesus wasn't easy and in the end people killed me for following him. But those early meals with him, those early meals with him and my friends, they were a great foretaste of what it was like to be with him now.

Friends, forgiveness is such a power. It's stronger than all our uncleanness, stronger than all our weakness, stronger than all of our sin. But without forgiveness, we can't make ourselves really clean.

All our religious activities, all our good works, they just can't do it. Without forgiveness, we cannot get to the root of who we are.

[43 : 03] For we will never see the new life that comes from forgiveness. Forgiveness restores us to God. God, it's not something we can earn. It's not something we deserve.

But you can have that verdict here today, forgiven. Not through me or a priest or anyone or anything else, but through Jesus Christ.

there is a way back to God from the dark paths of sin. There is a door that is opened and you may go in. And at Calvary's cross, that's where you begin when you come as a sinner to Jesus.

Have you come to Jesus? Jesus. Jesus has come for you. If you haven't already come to Jesus, then today would be a good day.

New life and forgiveness can be found in Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ alone. He has the authority here on earth to forgive sins because here on earth, on the cross, he died for sin and he was raised to new life.

[44 : 19] And we are raised with him. Death is dead. Love has won. Christ has conquered. And you can have that verdict here today, forgiven.

Fully, finally, and forever. Let us pray together. Our loving Heavenly Father, we indeed give you great thanks for your Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, our great Physician, the Doctor who has come to give us what we need.

Thank you for raising us from the dead and for bringing us forgiveness for all of our sin. As those who have received and believe this message, help us now to go as messengers to this dark and dead world and to proclaim to this world that in Jesus Christ death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered.

For he lives, Christ has risen from the dead. For the good of this world and for your glory alone. Amen.