

In Right Relationship with Him

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Date: 17 March 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Alright, let's get into it. Mark chapter 3, page 1004. It should be outlined in the newsletter insert as well. Well, my guess is that it's not easy being related to a pastor, especially if you belong to the same congregation as he does.

So, you know, and some of you are pastor's children, if you are in the same church, are they his children or are they his congregation members?

Now, many of you asked me to marry you as a pastor, which is always such a joy for me to do. But, you know, I have to say, I am in a bit of a dilemma. Because sometime in the distant future, if one of my daughters, let's say, wants to get married, do I officiate their marriage or do I walk down the aisle with her?

Which one will I choose? Now, I know what I'll choose, of course, but actually I've seen pastors want to do both. And they have done both. They've walked down the aisle with their daughter, and then they've jumped up in front of them as a couple, and then conducted the service.

Complicated relationship, isn't it? Now, I'm pretty sure there are other relationships in life that are similarly complicated. So, for example, if you're a teacher with a child in the same school as you, or if you're the boss and your son ends up working for you.

[1 : 4 0] Two hats. Two types of relationships. Well, today we see people having the same confusion with Jesus as well. Over the last few weeks, we and the people in the Gospels have been getting to know Jesus.

But what we're finding is that even as more and more of them meet Jesus and see and hear what he does, yet they're still not clear how to relate to him.

They answered F, confused, in Steph's survey. They're still wondering not just who is this man, but who is this man in relation to me?

Is he a friend? A family member? A master? A miracle worker? Who am I to him? Well, we'll be ending our little series in Mark today.

And the challenge tonight is to make sure we're in right relationship with Jesus. See, we may know who he is. We may even have memorized his teachings.

[2 : 4 5] Some of us may even be teaching others. But unless we're in right relationship with him, nothing else really matters. So let's begin in verse 7 with our first scene in the passage.

Reading. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Edomia, and the regions across the Jordan, and around Tyre and Sidon.

Because of the crowd, he told his disciples to have a small board ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.

Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried, You are the Son of God. But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him. Now we've seen Jesus' popularity among the crowds before.

At this time, we see just how far people have been coming from. So it's not just locals in the town of Capernaum, for example, crowding outside someone's house.

[3 : 52] Or even people in Jerusalem and Judea going to the Jordan. Now they're coming from all over. If you look on the map, Tyre and Sidon is in the north. Down to Edomia and Judea in the south.

Galilee, which is in the middle, is slightly to the north. It's a bit small, shaded in green. But you can see that they're coming from all across, aren't they?

And they're not just making day trips, you know. But these are overnight journeys of more than two or three days. Kind of reminds me of the recent Taylor Swift concerts.

People were flying, weren't they? Or driving from across Australia to get to either Sydney or Melbourne. And I know one of you even went from Melbourne to Sydney to go to the concert there.

Now if you're an influencer or a politician, this would be a dream come true for you, isn't it? Everyone else would crave such popularity.

[4 : 58] But not Jesus. Having withdrawn to the lake, the crowds were still following him. And so the only respite for him was to get into a boat. Thankfully, he chose some fishermen to be his disciples.

Likewise, when he cast out the impure spirits, he told them not to reveal his true identity as the divine son of God. He's trying to dampen down, isn't it, his popularity and people's attraction to him.

And so while Jesus still engaged with the crowd to teach them and heal as needed, his attitude to them was really one of ambivalence. Now two weeks ago we saw how he asked individuals to follow him.

Now large crowds were likewise following him, weren't they? Coming to him in droves. And it seems this is not quite what Jesus was.

And that's because, as I said before, they saw him as a miracle worker. Jesus was there to offer much more than that as the divine son of God.

[6 : 07] But they were only interested in Jesus fulfilling their immediate needs and desires. Now you contrast this now with the appointment of the twelve in verse 13.

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted. And so just like the crowds, we see the disciples coming to Jesus.

Earlier we've already seen Levi and Simon and a few others following Jesus. So they were coming and following. But this is different to the crowds, isn't it?

How? Because the difference is what we read there. Jesus called to him those he wanted. In other words, these were not just people who were coming and following.

These were people that God or Jesus had chosen and handpicked and called. And as he called them, they came. They responded by coming. And then from these, and I think there were more than twelve here that he called, twelve are appointed as special disciples who will become apostles.

[7 : 14] Apostles, because as the name suggests, they are people who will be sent out on mission for Jesus. So already we see that this is a very different type of relationship.

Jesus is not to them a miracle worker, but a master. They are following his agenda, not trying to get him to do theirs.

So verse 14, he appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out, apostles, to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. They are actually sent out to do what Jesus himself is doing, given the authority to do the same, preach and drive out demons.

Then we have the twelve listed. Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter, James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. To them he gave the name Boenezus, which means son of Thunder.

Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Now there's quite a few details here about the extra names of Simon, James, and John.

[8 : 24] The fact that Judas is the one who will betray Jesus, and this is quite early on in the Gospel for him to be flagged like that. Even to the sobering thought, really, if you realize that Jesus called and chose Judas, knowing that he will betray him.

But I guess the thing I want to focus on tonight instead is on the number twelve. Because as many of you know, this number is significant because it mirrors the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now what it symbolizes in the appointment of the twelve is that Jesus is gathering or regathering the tribes of Israel, re-establishing God's kingdom as was promised. He comes as God's chosen Messiah.

And these twelve are pillars of the new Israel. And their mission, as they're being sent out to preach and drive out demons, is to grow this kingdom, Jesus' kingdom.

So to be in right relationship with Jesus requires, firstly, that his disciples, including us, relate to him as our king. Israel's king. Israel's king.

[9 : 34] And God's chosen Messiah. Not merely as a miracle worker fulfilling their desires, but as a king that we serve, doing his will, sent on his mission.

And the nature of his kingdom is then fleshed out further in his encounter with the teachers of the law, who had come down from Jerusalem to check on Jesus. So moving on to verse 20, and the second half of our outline, I don't know why some of us have, some of you have three and four as your outline, is that right?

And some one and two. Anyway, it's two. But reading from verse 20, then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat.

When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, he is out of his mind. You see, so dedicated is Jesus, that he and his disciples didn't even have time to eat.

News travels to his family, they're concerned for him, so they're traveling down to try and boss him around, perhaps, take charge of his life. They even think he's out of his mind.

[10 : 45] And I think something that the teachers of the law thought as well. So verse 22, the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, he is possessed by Beelzebub. By the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.

So Jesus called them over to him, and began to speak to them in parables. How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

And if Satan opposes himself, and is divided, he cannot stand. So conclusion, his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up.

Then he can plunder the strong man's house. Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins, and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven.

They are guilty of an eternal sin. He said this because they were saying, he has an impure spirit. And so just by the way it ends, we can tell just how high the stakes are.

[11 : 50] What the teachers of the law have done is attributed Jesus' work to Satan, and that is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, something which can never be forgiven.

You see, I think that that suggests that the teachers of the law were not ignorant. They were not just careless in what they were saying. I think implicit in all of this is the fact that they knew full well in their hearts what the truth was.

Like the Pharisees of last week, their hearts were hardened. And so now they attribute the very work of God as the doing of Satan, calling what's good evil.

And this ongoing rejection of what is true, despite the conviction of the Spirit in their hearts, is what is the eternal sin that cannot be forgiven.

So we mustn't jump to this and go, oh, if someone swears, or whatever, in the name of Jesus, or whatever, that is an unforgivable sin because it blasphemes against the Holy Spirit. No, this sin is about continually rejecting what the Spirit is saying to them.

[12 : 57] That is the thing that cannot be forgiven. But as I said, the stakes are high because casting out demons is actually the act of freeing people from the domain or the clutches of Satan.

What is going on right in front of their eyes is a spiritual war. And so we need to realize that Jesus is king, but he's not king of an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual one.

There is a cosmic battle going on between the forces of good and evil. And God's kingdom, as Jesus is casting out demons, is breaking, God's kingdom of light, is breaking into Satan's realm of darkness.

There is really no mucking around. There's no pretend play like Satan can just pretend he's casting out demons. No. Satan knows that even though his defeat is certain, every person that remains demon-possessed is still another captive that he's able to take down with him.

He's not going to let them off as a sort of play-acting of exorcism. No. He will take every captive he can. And that's why it's only God and his Messiah that has the power to release all those in Satan's grip.

[14 : 15] And as Jesus goes on to say, he's the one entering the house of Satan, the strong man, tying him up, neutralizing him by the power of the Spirit in order for that person to be freed. But really, casting out demons is but the first step, isn't it?

Because all of those who have demons cast out, just like all of us, still have to repent and believe in order to enter God's kingdom.

Otherwise, that person still remains under Satan's sway. Jesus warns in a similar passage in Matthew chapter 12 that if the Spirit is cast out and the house remains vacant, that is, a person does not receive the Holy Spirit, that it simply invites the Spirit to return and with a vengeance bring his buddies with him, sevenfold, to regain control of the person.

And so what Jesus is portraying here is that there is really no neutral territory. Each person has to choose between Jesus' kingdom or Satan's domain. And don't think for a minute that these kingdoms are physical.

That, you know, if you just come to church on Sunday, physically, you're safe in Jesus' kingdom. Or that if you go to a sleazy joint up there, maybe a pub, not all pubs, some pubs, that that's Satan's domain.

[15 : 41] No. These spiritual domains are playing out right in our own lives and our hearts, isn't it? Where we live, where we are, where we work, we're choosing in our lives whether we want to serve Jesus or we're under the domain of Satan, under his sway.

We don't need to be demon-possessed to be under his sway. Well, after this, Jesus' family finally arrives and it gives Jesus the opportunity to shed light on one final aspect of the kingdom in our passage.

Verse 31. Then Jesus' mother and brother arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone to call, sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him and they told him, your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.

Who are my mother and my brothers? Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.

Now, I don't think that Jesus is trying to be disrespectful to his mother or brothers. He's probably aware that they're calling him out of his mind. But I think it's not out of his mind crazy but more out of his mind in the sense that he's so obsessed with his mission that he's forgotten to eat.

[17 : 07] He needs to get his priorities right. And I think, you know, that's understandable. I've seen that happen to some of you. Some of you doctors so busy at work that you forget to eat your lunch.

Students so engrossed with their studies, they skip dinner. It's generally not a good thing to do, right? But in Jesus' case, his mother fussing over him, and you children can take comfort, even Jesus had his mother fussing over him, reflected, however, her failure to see the importance of his work.

Because as I said, the stakes were high. Right in front of him were lives whose eternal destiny was at stake. And so he didn't feel like he could stop to eat while someone was still under the possession of demons.

And so what we see here is that a king in Jesus that's very different to all the other kings in the world, isn't it? All the other kings expect to be served. But here is a king who cares so much for those in his kingdom or those he wants to bring into his kingdom that he's willing to forgo his rights to care for us.

And in this instance, he forgoes food to teach and heal. But ultimately, he will forgo his very own life in order to save us. You see, he may be casting out demons to free people from Satan's clutches, but the only way anyone can be secure in his kingdom is through the death, his death, on the cross for our sins.

[18 : 45] Everyone who enters his kingdom is more dear to him than even his own flesh and blood. And so Jesus here is not disowning his family.

Rather, he's prioritizing those who are in his kingdom. Hence, he likens those in his kingdom as those who are his brothers and his mother.

Not literally, but as a point of comparison, saying, no, they are closer, they are more important to me than even my own flesh and blood. But notice again, however, that it's not everyone gathered around him.

Yes, he did look around at everyone in the circle. The crowds were there, his disciples were there, among them, probably Judas Iscariot as well. But then he says, it's the one that does the will of God who is my brother and sister and mother.

Those are the ones that belong to his kingdom. Everyone around the circle is given an opportunity to do so, but only those who believe in him do God's will, join in his mission. These are the ones he counts as his brother and sister.

[19 : 52] And interestingly, what he uses here is the image of a family. Not just because his mother and brothers were there, but because he's making a rather more significant point.

It's actually consistent with the image that we had in our Isaiah reading. If you recall there, God is gathering Israel back from all the four corners of the compass, north, south, east, west, just like the crowds were coming to Jesus.

God brings them from every corner and then he calls them his sons and daughters. And what Jesus does here is to identify himself with them as his brothers and sisters in God's kingdom.

And so even though Jesus is rightly our king, the disciples are not referred to as his subjects. Rather, even though we rightly submit to him as king and lord and master, Jesus instead chooses to call himself our brother.

In other words, he identifies with our humanity even though he's divine. He shares his humanity with us and reveals that he will share his inheritance as well.

[21 : 07] Because brothers and sisters of the family, we are adopted to sonship in him, aren't we? Because he's our brother, his father is our father.

His riches, his inheritance is our riches and our inheritance. That's the wonderful thing about our relationship with Jesus. He's our king and yet he's also our brother.

Now friends, it may be natural for us to be preoccupied with this life, aren't we? We're always concerned about eating well, thinking about dinner after church, things like that, thinking about our health, who we'll marry, what kind of work we'll do.

And as a consequence, sometimes I think our relationship with Jesus or the type of relationship we seek with him is very much focused on just the needs of this world, isn't it?

We just need to think about what our prayer list looks like. Just go through the things that you've been praying for the week and see that a lot of it is just focused on this earth, isn't it?

[22 : 09] And that's what the crowds were seeking, to be healed, to be fed. And you know, in one sense I can understand because when I'm hungry, I'm prone to be hangry as well. When I'm suffering from some sort of illness, I lapse into a man flu.

And whenever life throws up these challenges, it's easy to be preoccupied, isn't it? With them and starting to be anxious and worrying about them. But I think here Jesus is challenging us to look more than that, beyond that one-dimensional relationship with him.

That's just all about meeting our physical needs and desires. Now of course God cares for us. He will provide for these things. But the challenge that Jesus throws out to us is for us to be his brother and sister.

And what that entails is, in verse 35, doing the will of God. That is, building Jesus' kingdom, going out to ensure that others are joining his kingdom, and then growing the people that are in God's kingdom.

Because ultimately, these are the things that really matter for eternity, isn't it? The spiritual things. The stuff that we have in this life, food and shelter, those will pass away one day.

[23 : 25] But our life for eternity, that will endure. And so being free from the kingdom of darkness, from Satan's hold over us, from his hold over others, being forgiven for our sins and living by the Spirit, these are the things that are most important.

So the question then is, which I want to leave for you to, as a challenge, but for you to ponder, is as I said at the start, are we in right relationship with Jesus as our Lord and King?

Have we got our priorities right in life? We've spent a month or so now looking over the Gospel of Mark to discover who this man Jesus is. But now the question is, now that we know who he is, will we be in right relationship with him, as someone who will serve him as Lord and King?

doing that because he first laid down his life for us. And it's not a shame to call himself our brother. And because of that, if we are in right relationship with him, doing God's will, we will share in his kingdom.

Let's pray. Father, we offer ourselves again to you as your servants and pledge our faith and allegiance to your Son, Jesus, as Lord and King.

[24 : 48] Thank you that he laid down his life for us and that he draws us into his kingdom as brothers and sisters. Help us to join in his mission to do your will.

Help us to live for the kingdom. In his name we pray. Amen.