

...saves us from death

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[0 : 00] Some time ago, there was someone in our family who was in a particularly bad mood. And so when I was teasing them and stirring them, I got this certain look back.

You know, that looks like this on the next slide. Or actually more like this one on the next slide. You know, those looks that tell you that you're actually living under the shadow of death.

And if you keep stirring, you'll find yourself in reality of death. And so I stopped stirring them and I said, oh, look, I'm so sorry, Michelle. I'm joking. I'm joking. It wasn't my wife, Michelle, although I'm getting a look right now.

But sadly, the reality is we don't just live under the shadow of death when we stir people. We actually live under the shadow of death all the time, don't we?

Some of us know that better than others, particularly if we have suffered the loss of a loved one this past year. Or our health is such that our own mortality is quite mindful.

[1 : 10] In fact, death could come to any one of us at any moment. In terms of statistics, one out of every one person in this room will one day die. Merry Christmas.

But it is a merry Christmas or joyful Christmas because it's at Christmas we remember the birth of Jesus, who was born that we no more may die.

Hark the Herald is one of my favourite carols. And on the next slide is the last verse of it. I think on the next slide should be. It says, mild he lays his glory by.

That is, he's leaving the glory of heaven to become human. And notice, born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.

Jesus was born that we no more may die. He was born to save us from death, in other words. And he demonstrated this in his life. And so as we did last week, we're going to have a look at a section of Mark's Gospel to see how the arrival of Jesus, what he arrived to do.

[2 : 21] Remember, that's what the word advent means. It means coming or arriving. And here we see that Jesus arrived to save us from death. In fact, we'll see not just why he came, but that he has the power to save us from death.

There's no point arriving to do something if you have no power to do it, is it? And so it's point one in your outlines and verse 21 in your Bibles. Again, we'll move reasonably quickly through this.

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a loud crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders named Jairus came. And when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet.

He pleaded earnestly with him, my little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live. After healing the demon-possessed man, which is what we saw last week in the section just before today, Jesus now crosses over the lake to the Jewish side.

And he is met by this synagogue ruler whose daughter is dying. In other words, she is living under the shadow of death, isn't she? And so her father asked Jesus to come and place his hands on her so that, verse 23, she will be, well, it's not actually healed.

[3 : 37] The word is literally saved and live. That should be saved from death. In fact, the father pleads earnestly, doesn't he? You can always feel his heartache and desperation, can't you?

As a father myself, I'd be beside myself if one of my kids was dying. But notice this father knows who to go to. There's no question of his confidence or trust in Jesus.

For he says in verse 23, if Jesus comes, she will be saved. Not might be. The father knows she, his daughter will be saved and live.

He believes Jesus has the power to save from death, in other words. But as they head to the house, something else happens. Verse 24. So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had.

[4 : 39] Yet instead of getting better, she grew worse. Here is a woman who's been bleeding for 12 years. That's as long as Jairus' daughter has been alive, actually. It's a long time.

And I don't think us guys understand how bad this is. And to make it worse, this made her ceremonially unclean. And in the Old Testament, if you are unclean, you could not be in the presence of others.

You couldn't touch others. Otherwise, they'd be ceremonially unclean. So you'd have to isolate yourself. So for this woman who'd been bleeding for 12 years, she was always unclean.

And so always isolated for 12 years. Plus, she'd seen many doctors who only caused her more suffering and financial ruin.

Plus, her bleeding grew worse, which meant a real chance of physical death. Here is another person living under the shadow of death. Socially, financially, and physically.

[5 : 40] Until verse 27. You see what's happened?

She had seen many doctors who had no doubt tried many cures, but only suffered greatly. And yet, the mere touch of Jesus' cloak saves her immediately.

You see what Mark is trying to teach us here? Jesus has the power to save from death. In this case, by restoring her life.

Socially, financially, physically. But only because she believed in him. That's the point that Jesus seems to make next. Because we read in verse 30. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him.

He turned around in the crowd and asked, Who touched my clothes? Oh, you see the people crowding against you, his disciples answered. And yet you can ask, who touched me? But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.

[6 : 52] Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet. And trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, Daughter, your faith has healed or saved you.

Go in peace and be freed from your suffering. Now, earlier in Mark's Gospel, we're told that Jesus knew what people were thinking in their hearts.

And so I suspect Jesus also knew who touched his cloak. Rather, I think he calls her out deliberately to highlight her faith.

Because that's the very thing he talks about next, isn't it? Verse 34. Your faith has healed or literally saved you, he says.

For it was her faith or trust in Jesus that brought her to Jesus in the first place. That he might save her from death. You see, Jesus has power to save from death those who believe in him.

[7 : 53] But what if the person has already died? I mean, what if they're not living under the shadow of death like the lady? But what if they're actually experiencing the reality of death? Because this dying daughter has now actually died.

Verse 35. When Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. Your daughter is dead, they said. Why bother the teacher anymore?

Subtle as a sledgehammer, aren't they? Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, Don't be afraid. Just believe. Jesus ignores them and says to Jairus, Trust me, don't be afraid.

Believe in me. For again, it's by believing in Jesus that he saves from death. And so we read on in verse 37. Jesus did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John, the brother of James.

When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, Why all this commotion and wailing?

[8 : 57] The child is not dead, but asleep. But they laughed at him. Now these mourners laughed because they knew the difference between a dead person and a sleeping person.

And if you're wondering why they could so quickly turn from mourning and wailing and crying to laughing and mocking Jesus, it's probably because they weren't actually relatives of Jairus, but professional mourners, which was quite common in the ancient world.

In fact, even the poorest person, as the commentators say, was supposed to hire at least one professional mourner for his wife's funeral. For us today, it's like hiring funeral directors, if you like, who look somber during the service and then often lower the casket or coffin into the grave, particularly if it's a graveside burial, and they use those straps that kind of go under the coffin and they kind of let it down like that.

In fact, I remember doing one graveside burial and the gravedigger hadn't actually dug out the grave properly and so as the coffin was going down, they couldn't do it. So they had to kind of twist it on an angle like this and it almost slipped out of the straps into the hole.

It was shocking. In fact, it got worse because they called the graveside digger across to dig out more of the hole and so they got it a second time, but it got stuck. At this time, the graveside digger just decided to bash on it, to push it in.

[10 : 21] So the family is looking on. It was highly inappropriate. In fact, the coffin suddenly dropped and the graveside guy nearly went in after it. He couldn't make this stuff up.

And the point of the story, though, is this is highly inappropriate for the occasion. It's shocking for the family. We were just jaws dropped the whole time. And here, so too, is both this mourning and laughing highly inappropriate and shocking because Jesus is here.

And for Jesus, death is but like a moment's sleep. See verse 40? After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him and went in where the child was.

He took her by the hand and said to her, Talithakum, which means little girl, I say to you, arise. Immediately the girl stood up, or literally arose, and began to walk around.

She was 12 years old. At this, they were completely astonished. He gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about this and told them to give her something to eat. The word Talitha, or little girl, was a term of endearment.

[11 : 36] Parents often used it as well. We might say, sweetheart. And kum means literally, arise. And so Jesus takes her by the hand and the sense is him saying, sweetheart, I say to you, arise.

And notice she did immediately. You see, Jesus saved her from death, this time by raising her to life, and it was immediate. Mark's point, again, is that Jesus has power to save.

So why doesn't he do this for us today? Point two. Because when we pray for a dying loved one, he doesn't seem to save them from death, does he?

Well, actually, he sometimes does. I've heard of quite a number of stories, many from people at our church who have experienced healing in answer to prayer, and sometimes the doctors haven't been able to explain why they have gotten better.

In fact, even knowing one case of someone who was pronounced dead when they were a baby by the doctors, and then hours later, the nurses came back in and heard him still breathing.

[12 : 47] He's a teenager today. But Jesus doesn't often save from death like that, does he? Why? Well, because the purpose of these miracles here in the Bible is, firstly, to show us who Jesus is, that he is the king born at Christmastime, the Christ, who has God's power to save from death.

And second, these miracles give us just a glimpse of something better that he came to give us. You see, both the lady whose life was restored and the little girl whose life was raised, both died again.

But Jesus has come to bring us something better than that. He came to save us from death by restoring and raising us to life eternal.

In the words of the carol, he was born that man no more may die, but instead live forever. Our problem is that we often prefer one marshmallow now rather than two marshmallows later.

Have you seen those experiments with kids where they're given one marshmallow now and they're told if they can wait, they'll get two later? I've got a little video clip on the next slide, I think. So I have one marshmallow for each of you.

[14 : 10] Okay. This is one. Done. Done. Here's the deal. You can either eat it now or you can wait until I get back and you can have two. Okay? So eat it now or wait until I get back and you can have two. Now I'll be back and I'll be back in a little...

If we wait, will you get us two? Yep, if you wait, you'll get two or you can get back whichever you want. Okay? I'll be back in a moment. I'm going to wait.

I don't know what we're going to do. They're going to eat it?

They're going to want to eat something. And on it goes.

Sometimes we're like the little girl. We can't wait. We want it now. But which would you really prefer? Thanks, Wolf. Which would you really prefer? To be saved from death and raised to life for another 10 or 20 years in this broken world or be raised to life for eternity in a perfect world to come?

[15 : 17] Which would you really prefer? Which, by the way, the latter is better than two marshmallows, isn't it? Jesus came to bring us something much better than just another 10 or 20 years of life in this broken world.

He came to save us from death by raising us to life eternal in a perfect world to come. And these miracles here show us that He has the power to do it and give us just a glimpse of it.

But to save us from death by raising us to life eternal, Jesus had to first deal with the cause of our death in the first place. Sin. And sin is what brought death into the world, isn't it?

And so on the next slide, we read from Romans chapter 5 that sin entered the world through one man, Adam, in the garden and death came through sin or because of sin. And in this way, death came to all people because all people have sinned.

sinned. We've all sinned against God and therefore we all face death. And the death that Adam and Eve were to experience, physical death, was only really a sign of their spiritual death to God, which as we saw last week was because of sin.

[16 : 31] We were dead in our transgressions, we saw last week. And that would come with judgment in hell, which again we saw last week. But Jesus was born at Christmas time to grow up and die for us at Easter time so at the cross he could pay for our sins.

And as we saw last week, he suffered hell in our place. And in doing so, he not only saved us from hell but dealt with our sin that caused our death.

And now he can free us from it by raising us to life, both new spiritual life now with God as his children and new physical life later in the world to come.

That's why the carol on the next slide talks about also being born to raise the sons or the people of earth, born to give them second birth.

The second birth is spiritual birth into God's family as God's loved children. That spiritual life starts now when we believe and goes on for eternity.

[17 : 39] And when Jesus returns, it'll come with also physical life eternal. And so yes, each person in this room, me included, will one day die physically.

But it will be like it was for Jairus' daughter. Like a moment's sleep. for when we die physically, our souls will go to be with Jesus immediately in the blink of an eye and they will join our loved ones in Christ.

And together with Jesus in heaven, outside of time, it'll also feel like but a moment's sleep before Jesus returns and raises our bodies, breathes new life into our bones, in the words of our first reading, to be like his glorious body.

It's as though he will take us by the hand and say, my dear sister, my dear brother, I say to you, arise. And we will to live for eternity in a perfect creation where we no more may die.

Won't that be glorious? No more aches or pains, no more disease or disabilities, restored life to the full. This is how Jesus saves us from death.

[19 : 01] But only if we, like the lady and Jairus, believe in him. And so we read on the next slide these well-known verses, for God so loved the world that he gave both at Christmas and Easter his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his son into the world at Christmas to condemn the world but to save the world through him. He came at Christmas time to save us from death and give us life eternal if we believe in him.

And so the first question is, do you? Have you put your faith in Jesus? Do you trust in him that he really did die for you and rose again?

And for us who have done that, then first we need not fear death but face it with contentment. Now don't get me wrong, we were created by God to live and to enjoy relationships so it's natural and even right that we should prefer to live and continue in those relationships.

That's normal and right. But because Jesus saved us from death by raising us to spiritual life now and physical life later, then when the time comes, we need not fear it and even be content in the face of it.

[20 : 30] There's a man I know who's from our church, he's currently in hospital today at the moment and he's not sure how much longer he will have but he keeps saying to me whenever I visit him he says, look, I'm happy in myself, it's in the Lord's hands.

He's content, you see. Don't get me wrong again, he's a bit concerned about leaving his wife and how she will cope and that's good and right but for him himself he's not fearful in the face of it.

Or take a lady from St. John's, the other church we're in partnership with who shared on Thanksgiving Sunday a couple of months ago if you remember that we had a sharing time she stood up and said on Thanksgiving Sunday that she said, I saw the doctor about my cancer this week and the news is not good but I want to give thanks because whether I live or die I know I'll see the Lord's face.

Does not fear but is content. So much so she went on to tell us that the doctor had to make sure she understood what he told her because she didn't look worried enough.

But because Jesus was born to save us from death we can face it without fear but with contentment. And so secondly will we this Christmas join with the angels who sang Glory to the Newborn King.

[21 : 58] As we sit down to Christmas lunches and open Christmas presents will we remember what really makes it a merry Christmas. Will we with the angels glorify and give thanks to God for his son who mild he laid his glory by born that we no more may die.

As Paul wrote on our last slide the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law but thanks be to God he gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father we do thank you so much for Christmas and the joyful time it is but help us we pray to remember what causes what really causes the joy at Christmas the birth death and resurrection of your son who by his death for us has raised us to new spiritual life now and will bring us through physical death like a moment's sleep to be with you in glory.

Help us we pray not to fear our own physical death when the day comes but to remember what Christ has secured for us. Help us we pray also this Christmas in a couple of weeks time to give you thanks for the gift of your son in his name we pray Amen