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 Mark 1:28-34

The Ruler Who Came to Serve

Intro: If someone were to ask you the question, “What Is God like?” You’d probably give them an answer based on their cultural context. If you were answering a hippie flower child from the 70’s peace movement, you’d take a specific approach. If you were answering a Muslim from the Middle East, you’d take another.

And if you were explaining who God is to a Roman Gentile in the first century, who thought their view of the world and religion was right, you’d take a different angle altogether. That’s Mark’s method.

His Gospel account is short (the shortest of the 4), concise, & filled with action. He’s accommodating his audience. Mark fills his Gospel story with power feats of Jesus. He displays His power and authority over every realm (visible and invisible). Nature. Demons. Death. Disease. That was like throwing red-meat to the dogs.

Romans, obsessed with power and authority. Romans. Short attention spans. Romans, who were skeptics, who liked for you to just get the point and put your money where your mouth was. Mark claims that Jesus is the Son of God. Fine. prove it. What kind of Son? Not an airtight argument, but an airtight person.

Romans were attracted to power and authority...But they were missing something. Mercy. Pity. Compassion. You see it in their religion. The Roman gods & goddesses were big on power but short on compassion. And they demanded to be served by their human subjects. And they were short-tempered, impatient, and easily irritable. They were mischievous, perverted, self-centered.

Rarely did they come down to earth to help anyone other than themselves. They stayed on Mount Olympus above the trouble.

Unlike the heroes and gods of the Roman world, Jesus walks in the midst of a troubled world. He enters the drama of human suffering and trouble to bring hope. A world of unclean, defiled and polluted people to bring cleansing, healing, restoration & hope

Mark was presenting a version of Jesus that would have easily fit into a modern Marvel Comic book. Lots of pictures and action, but few words. That’s why Mark is the gospel for Americans in 2020!

For a culture with a short attention span and a LOT of skepticism. You couldn’t pick a better approach. Know your audience!

But shocking! Jesus is Humble. Jesus is meek. Jesus is the ruler who came to serve, not to be served! To give His life for ours!

Mark shows us God in high definition. Stunning brilliance and clarity. No doubts about his identity. Up close and person. He pulls the curtain back and shows us who God really is! That matters!

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3)
 Changed by SIGHT, not by SWEAT!

I want us to see 3 things about this Ruler who came to serve.

Point #1. The Compassion of Jesus Is Far-Reaching: *NOTE (*left the synagogue and entered the house*) Do you remember the 1978, first full-color Superman movie, with Christopher Reeve?

Superman was so busy keeping a bus full of school kids from falling off the edge of the Golden Gate Bridge and filling a valley with rocks to save a town from flooding, he forgot about Louis Lane in the middle of the desert. Her car ran out of gas, fell into the San Andreas Fault, filled up with dirt, and she suffocated to death. Superman, after saving an entire town from flooding, gets this look of terror on his face when his super-hearing picks up Louis screaming for her life. He says “Oh no! Louis!” Off he flies. But he’s too late. She dies. Why? Because Superman was busy saving the world and didn’t have time for a no-name reporter, out of gas in the middle of the desert. Not on the top of his “to do” list.

Cataclysmic disasters, and personal emergencies. I mean, does it matter that an earthquake is ravaging the San Andreas Fault, if your teenage daughter just got pregnant? Would you care that a terrorist attack is hitting Washington if you just got served divorce papers? If the stock market crashes but you’re in bed dying of high fever, what does it matter? Jesus can handle all emergencies.

Caedmon's Call wrote a song called "The Emptiest Day" and the lyrics are profound. The author describes God "They say you live in hospitals and trenches--and towers in the sky. But I'm not dying or fighting any wars except on the inside. The words I find impossible to mention are written on a star. They say that I can find you in a flower--but I need you in my car."

Which is it? Is God in towers up in the sky? Or is he in my car? Or both? Transcendent or Imminent? High or Low?. Near or Far? Yes!

Is a panic attack enough to register on God's care list?
How about an eating disorder? Miscarriage? Depression?

There are over 30 healings recorded in the Gospels. Every possible human ailment. Leprosy. Paralysis. Deformity. Blind. Lame. Deaf. And...Fever. What! That's right. It's here in Mark 1.

There are in this very building, multiple crises represented. I will stake my life on it. And listen. You need this truth. You need to be reminded that Jesus has not forgotten about you. Your problem. Your issue. Your emergency. Your crisis. Is not off His radar.

This Gospel has it all. Jesus confronting demons. Stopping hurricane-forced storms dead in their tracks. Raising people from the dead. And healing mother-in-laws, bed-ridden with fever. Why in the world did Mark include this miracle? Seems odd, no...?

Sure. Mark's audience was power-drunk. But they were human beings, too. And as blown away as they would have been by Jesus' raw power, they needed to know He could help them in their unglamorous, mundane problems. Their personal crises.

He could help them when they were sick in bed with fever. Because He's a Household Savior. Unlike the gods of Rome...

The issues, problems, sins, and pain we feel in our homes. We need Jesus there too, don't we? No boundaries to his care!

- Abuse. Neglect. Chronic Sickness. Chronic Pain...
- Jesus, I have a drinking problem. I need help. HE CAN HELP!
- I have fibromyalgia, Jesus. Is that too insignificant for you? NO.
- I'm a single mom, Jesus. And I'm exhausted. I need you. Done.

- Jesus. My back is so wrecked. I can't live like this. NOT ALONE.
- Does Jesus care that I'm enslaved to Social Media? YES!
- How about my teenager who cuts herself? My divorce?
- My Unemployed. My unemployment. My exhaustion? Yes. He cares.

Mufasa: Look Simba. Everything the light touches is our kingdom.

Simba: What about that shadowy place?

Mufasa: That's beyond our borders; you must never go there,

Simba. (If you go there, sorry...you're on your own).

Everything the light touches belongs to Jesus. But listen: Even where the light does not touch. That's His, too. It all belongs to Him. And He claims it. There is no area of our lives. And there is not area of the world where He cannot say "Mine!" And that's good news. Because we need him in the house as well as in the synagogue. God better be in the shadowy places! He is.

In fact, that shadowy place, beyond the borders ...Jesus is attracted to that place. It draws Him. He's never repulsed by our need. He's drawn to it. It attracts Him. "The eyes of the Lord..."

Our personal emergencies & crises do not exhaust or bother God. Do you know what wears God? Our hypocrisy. Our pretending. He hates *that*. He'd much rather you be honest and cry out to Him

Why is this miracle here? **Not so much to make Jesus look powerful as it is to make his look accessible.** A Jesus to whom you can go for help—and not be turned away. Not like Rome...

Can you imagine how this woman must have felt? Church is over. 5 grown men have just showed up at her door. Tired. Hungry. They need food, drink. This is a hospitality culture where it was a shameful thing to not greet visitors and serve surprise guests. But she's bed-ridden. She's sick. She's weak. And she's probably really embarrassed. Great timing. God's Son just arrived for lunch!

They were probably sheepish about this. "Jesus. I know you're busy. You just finished preaching, and you had this ugly confrontation with a demon! Long day and all but could you...?"

He could! He wanted to! He came, took her hand, lifted her up. So tender. So caring. In the ancient world, fever was deadly. No meds

My neighbor, divorced, empty-nester, sweet older lady. She came over when we first moved in. It came up right away that she was not happy. Lonely. Far-away from her children. I told her I would pray for her. She laughed. Not irreverent. Not mocking. I annoy Jesus.

There is no emergency too petty for Jesus!

Being a church planter is so exciting. We get to meet people in the daily pressures of life. And this passage applied helps me know that Jesus is right there with me. And He cares about these people's problems.

Stop smoking. Stop Drinking. Substance Abuse.
Anger problems. Anxiety. Depression.
PTSD. ADHD. OCD. Every label you can imagine.

I'm so thankful I don't have to apologize to them that Christianity has nothing for them or the Bible has no hope. Not on your life.

Point #2. The Patience of Jesus is Un-Ending.

Jesus never ran out of mercy. Plenty of reserves. And He never ran out of patience. Pushed to the limit. Look at this scene. 32-34.

The whole city is crowded at the door. Why? Because they are desperate. Because they need His help—and get this—because they know He cares. This scene would have looked like something right out of a walking dead episode. Zombie-like people growling and limping, dragging their paralyzed limbs to the front door for healing. Jesus never shied away. Remember the scene from Gladiator? **“Have you ever embraced a man dying of the plague?”**

Mt. qts. Is. **53:4** **“Surely he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows.”**

Why is it so important to wrap our minds around this? Because people are lonely, misunderstood, sad, depressed. I watched a short clip by a woman in ministry the other day and she said **the loneliest women she ever meets are not single. They are in a troubled marriage.** Wow. What's that mean? It means they feel trapped. Alone. Nobody understands them and they think they are beyond the scope of Jesus' care, compassion, love and help.

Desperate people gathered together outside the door is a great picture, isn't it? You'll never find a closed door with Jesus. A willing Savior is always waiting on the other side. He enters into our pain.

The language here suggests a continuous stream of people (GK. 'They kept on bringing...'). An ocean of sick, diseased, people. Needy. Clingy. Begging. Does Jesus send them away? No.

Do we bother God? Did Jesus peek out the window that afternoon, see all the needy people coming to find him, and do a face plant in his palm? Did he pull Peter aside and say, "Listen...tell them I'm not here. I'm in the Olive grove praying. Fishing...anything!" No!

How desperate were they? The whole city had gathered at the door. It was now sundown. The Sabbath had ended and people could finally travel and carry things. They were probably on makeshift gurneys and mobile beds. Sick, dying, diseased, demon-possessed, discouraged. What a picture of humanity. And what a window in the heart of the leaders of that time. All the Scribes and Pharisees could do was to judge people for breaking the Sabbath. They couldn't offer any hope or healing.

Luke tells us that **Jesus touched them all.** He made time!

Illustration: In the Netflix series THE CROWN, one episode features the deadly smog that depended on London in 1952 for 5 days in December. It killed 4,000 people. According to the series, the PM, Winston Churchill was reluctant to take any measures at all to relieve suffering or offer financial support, even though his cabinet were relentless in appealing to him. But then, his personal secretary, a young lady who had been inspired by him, was hit by a bus. She died in the hospital. He went to see her and was finally aware of the severity of the situation and acted. Jesus feels that way about each of us. No appeals from his cabinet necessary!

Accessible. Available. Caring. Loving. Compassionate. NEAR. Mark always includes the description of Jesus touching. Whether a little child, a leper, a blind man. His touch has power. But it also has sympathy. He identifies with us in our sickness, weakness.

He could have healed them all from a distance, with a spoken word. But He wanted to see them, acknowledge their pain. Touch

them. What a thought. God touching man—at the point of his great pain, sickness, affliction and need. And he healed them ALL. Not one person went home that night afflicted. Complete deliverance.

What an event! This is the Story of God. Does it encourage you?

Point #3. The Dominion of Jesus Is Timeless: Trailers. First of all.....Jesus is not showing off here. He is meeting a need. He is serving sinners. The ruler who serves. Every miracle Jesus ever did was to relieve human suffering. No showing off.

His miracles were not just naked displays of power. We display our power by breaking things, blowing things up. Bombs. Fireworks. Not Jesus. He put things back together again! “Dunamis” power. The Devil tempted Him to showcase His power. He refused...

- Turn rocks into bread.
- Fly off the top of the temple.

These healings are trailers. Previews of coming attractions. One of the things that annoys me the MOST about going to the movies is when I miss the previews. I can't stand it. I want my full money's worth. I want to see what movies are coming down the pike. The best part of the movie is in the trailer. In some cases, it's better!

These healings and casting out of demons not only point forward, but they point backward, to a time before children starved and tsunamis ravaged islands. Heaven on Earth. **Reverse the curse.**

These miracles are not Jesus interrupting the natural order. They are Him restoring the order. A taste of the New Heavens and New Earth. When he stills the storm, he's pointing to a time in which nature was our friend, not our enemy, and we weren't always dying because of blizzards, avalanches, earthquakes, & fires.

He's pointing back to the way the world was before sin and our turning away from God, broke everything apart. Looking forward.

“Behold, I make all things new.” No more death, decay, crime, war. That's **Revelation 21:5.** Not 2020.

Aragorn in LOR is just a ranger from the north. But as the story

progresses, we find out that he is much more than that. He is the King, come to take his rightful place as the Lord of Gondor. And one of the ways the people will know the rightful king is that he has healing hands. **“The hands of a king are the hands of a healer”**

Conclusion: Sometimes, church becomes a place where you come and get instructions. Lots of them. Marching orders. A divine to-do list. This week, I tell you 4 things to do better and send you out to get to work. Next week, I have 2 or 3 more and send you on your way again. Weeks go by and your list grows. A few months, and you have a stack of instructions. It can add up fast and become really, really wearisome. Now listen. I'm not against instructions. I'm a Bible guy. I love this book. I believe this book. This is God's Word—to us, and for us. But it's not just an instruction manual on how to live life. It's not. It's really not even primarily ABOUT us. It's about Jesus. He's the central figure. He's the beginning and end—and everything in-between.

So before you start looking for application, consider this...

Sinclair Ferguson wrote: **“Sometimes when we read passages like this [in the Gospels], we are too anxious to ask the question: How does this apply to me? What must I do? It is a good thing for us to pause to admire Jesus first.”** Well said. Pause often!

Jesus' entire life and ministry are so astonishing, so amazing, so shocking. It's good to just spend time being lost in wonder and adoration. No need for a to-do list, really. Just pause and admire.

Again, Mark is an action Gospel. Power. Authority. Glory. It's almost like a theatre experience. But not because Mark wants Jesus to entertain you. No, but He does want us to sit up and pay attention to this story and share the astonishment!

He wants us to put down our pen and worship. To look & Live. Watch Jesus. Stare at Him. Follow Him. He hasn't changed.

He loves us. We have access to Him. That ruler, with all that power and authority, came down here to help us. The ruler who came to serve.

What a Savior! Let's pray.