

The Touch of Christ

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[0 : 00] You could turn now please to Mark chapter 1 and into Mark chapter 2. We have a new clock on the wall since I've been away for a week.

So thank you to whoever got hold of that. We'll see how many weeks it lasts before it gives up too. Thank you.

I'm not one of these people. And when I go out on the road or on the treadmill or the hill, I plod. I just plod along. But when I happen to be on the treadmill next to a runner, or if a runner comes alongside me when I'm running along the side of the road, or if I happen to go for a walk up a hill in Duncan's in the vicinity, my pace goes up.

I kind of go at a speed that's more than I'm comfortable with, but my pace goes up. And I'm conscious as we come back to Mark that we need to keep the pace up.

[1 : 30] This is a fast-moving book. And I think the way that it's written lends itself to trying to move quickly and to cover fairly big distances in quite short spaces of time.

So that's my intention is to try and keep the pace up as we go through a fair chunk of Mark's gospel today. And we'll pick up at verse 35. And the first point that we come to today from this passage is the fact that Jesus prays.

Very early in the morning, verse 35, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him.

And when they found him, they exclaimed, Everyone is looking for you. It's almost a scolding tone in their words as they find Jesus in the place of prayer.

Everyone is looking for you, Jesus. The crowds were gathered and there were so many needs and there were so many demands on Jesus' time constantly.

[2 : 44] He was under so much pressure when he was here in this world. So what does he do? He prays.

That was Christ's priority. First thing in the morning, his priority was not a breakfast menu, but it was prayer.

It wasn't a fresh pot of coffee, but it was prayer. That's why Jesus got up very early in the morning while it was still dark.

Because he had to pray. That's why he left the house. Because he needed to get away from the distractions and pray.

And so he goes to a solitary place because he needed to pray. Jesus prays.

[3 : 53] Once the disciples were up, likely being woken up by the crowds who were gathering and pounding on the door, looking for Jesus, all that was on the disciples' mind, it seems, was that they would get to work.

There was so much to do, so many people, so much need, so many opportunities. So they go looking for Jesus, they're shaking Jesus, almost saying, come on, we have to get going here. Look at the crowds, look at all the opportunities we have with us today. See how popular you are, Jesus. All that was on their minds was activity.

But Jesus knew that before work, there must be prayer. Wearsby, the commentator, says, workers who are too busy to pray are too busy and God will not bless their efforts.

If the Son of God had to spend time in prayer while ministering on earth, how much more do we need to pray?

[5 : 12] J.C. Ryle says, we shall do well to watch our habits of prayer with a holy watchfulness. Here is the pulse of our Christianity.

Here is the true test of our state before God. And that's something I think we really have to underline.

Something I have to take on board before any of you get to hear this. The absolute need and priority of prayer.

Here is the true test of our state before God, says Ryle. It's not so much what we're doing. It's not so much what we can write on a time sheet in terms of what we've done in this week.

It's what we've been on our knees before God in prayer. Here is the pulse of our Christianity, says Ryle. It's in your prayer.

[6 : 17] You know, we could take that as a congregation. We want a gauge for how strong the pulse of Christianity is in our congregation.

It's not about how many items we can get in our notice sheet as encouraging as it is to see things going on. It's how many hearts we have coming together to pray.

That's what the true measure of our spiritual health is. It's not in our many meetings. It's in our prayer meetings.

It's in our prayer times. So let me encourage you as I have been challenged and encouraged myself in the course of this week to be people of prayer.

Let's follow the example of Jesus and set time aside each day even if it involves getting up earlier in the morning.

[7 : 25] Even if it involves leaving the house. Even if it involves finding a quiet place. We need to form this habit of prayer.

Alistair Big says I'm paraphrasing I couldn't find the quote but he says something like this before you let anyone else see your face in the morning seek God's face.

That's good advice. Before everyone else starts demanding your time in the morning give God your time.

Jesus prayed secondly Jesus preaches verse 38 this is his response to the disciples as disciples are pressing him to get off his knees and get on with the work.

Jesus replied let us go somewhere else to the nearby villages so I can preach there also that is why I have come so he travelled throughout Galilee preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

[8 : 39] I think it was Farrakhar that phoned me on Tuesday morning and a few words into the conversation maybe half a sentence and he was gone. His phone was dead his phone was done and he didn't reappear on the phone line for about half an hour or so because the phone had to be charged up before he could effectively speak.

And it's striking here to see that before Jesus went out to preach he needed to be physically and spiritually recharged and refreshed.

and that strength that refreshment that recharge came as he spent time in the presence of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit as he came into that place of prayer.

Isaiah 40 verse 31 says they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength and Jesus in his humanity because remember Jesus was the God man fully God but also fully man so he felt tired like we feel tired he felt weakness at times like we feel weakness he felt that sense of being under attack like we feel like we are under attack everything we struggle with he's experienced and so Jesus in his humanity needed to have his strength renewed before he set out to preach Jesus preached now how does this apply to us well it applies this way if we are Christians this morning if you are somebody who has asked Christ to come into your life take your sin away and abide with you then you have been given a calling to preach we've been given a message to share we could go to Matthew 28 and listen to Jesus commission us to go out with this same good news about Jesus we have been given a message to share in North

Harvest we have been given a name to proclaim and that's the name of Jesus Christ we have been given a work to proclaim and that's the finished work of Christ we have a cross to point people to we have been commissioned to speak about the life and the death and the resurrection and the impending return of Jesus so as we travel from place to place as we go from the bank to the post office to the shop to the gym from our homes to our work places to wherever we were calling to preach Jesus not simply talk about church it's easy to talk about church talk about Christ not all of us have been called to preach and approve it but all of us who believe are called to tell other people about the

[12 : 18] Christ that we believe in prayer but note before preaching comes prayer we don't determine to go off out and spiritually take hold of the next person we meet before preaching comes prayer so when you and I are on our knees in the morning part of our prayer time should be asking

the Lord to give us opportunities to speak about and to give us the courage to recognise and to take these opportunities when we're given them if we are to be effective in our preaching that preaching must be undergirded by prayer St.

Ferguson I think it was said if you want your preachers to preach better pray for them and I'm quite sure that you want your preachers to preach better and I don't know if it was McCray I think it was McCray that said this I'm sure one of you told me this but if I'm wrong on this you can pick me up afterwards I think it was McCray that said the more you put into the pulpit by means of prayer the more you'll get out of the pulpit by means of blessing Jesus preached but before Jesus preached Jesus prayed the third point here as we move brusically on is Jesus the physician sometimes we talk about Jesus as the great physician and we see that here we see here how physical Jesus was consecrated and we hear me crack one okay let's move on sometimes we hear about Jesus as the great physician and we see that here we see how physical Jesus is we see how ready he is to get involved with people not only did he pray in that private place not only did he preach and exercise these spiritual gifts, but Jesus was one who was ready to roll up his sleeves, spiritually speaking.

He didn't stand aloof. He didn't stay at a distance. But he loved people enough to put his arm around them.

He loved people enough to hold them. And to touch them. So Alistair begged, he said, sometimes the gospel is best felt, not tell.

[15 : 27] And that was certainly the case for this man that I was speaking to the children about. This was a man who wouldn't have felt the touch of another human being for a long time.

Verse 40, a man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged him on his knees, if you're willing, you can make me clean. Now why would he say that? Think about his words there.

Try to get inside the head of the man. Try to understand why he said that and what he might have been feeling. If you're willing, he says, you can make me clean.

I think this is a man that was depressed. I think this is a man who was feeling low. He was feeling down. You know, he was in a degree of despair.

I mean, think about it. In that day. Those with leprosy, their families were not willing to have them anywhere near them.

[16 : 37] The community that they would have been such a part of at one time, drove them away out to the margins and said, you can't be part of this anymore. We're not willing to have you part of this community anymore.

So they'd have to ring this bell. Unclean, unclean. Don't come near me. They were outcasts. And you can only imagine how that would make you feel.

So this man in his approach to Jesus, he doesn't seem to be full of hope and positivity. But he does have faith.

He says to Jesus, you can make me clean. I know you can make me clean. I just don't know if you're willing. And Jesus, verse 41, filled with compassion, reached out his hand and touched the man.

I am willing, he said. Be clean. Immediately, the leprosy left him and he was cured.

[17 : 58] See, when Jesus looked at this man, he was actually a bit angry. Some of the translations that you might be reading on your tablets and phones, the more modern translations, I think they translate this verse as, Jesus was indignant.

There was an anger in Christ. There was an anger in Christ when he saw what sin had done in the life of this man.

He was angry when he saw how sin, in general terms, even in terms of health, had marred his creation. compassion. But he loved the man.

He felt compassion for the man. And even though Jesus could have healed this man with a word, even though Jesus could have healed this man at a great distance, as he did with some, Jesus looked into this man's eyes and came close and reached out his hand and touched him.

See, Jesus knew that this man needed to physically feel the gospel as well as audibly hear the gospel.

[19 : 40] And so Jesus touched him and made him clean. I have a friend, he didn't have leprosy, but he was an addict.

I suppose he still is an addict. drugs and alcohol. And he was driven out to the margins of society like this man was.

He tried to get clean a thousand times over, but he couldn't. And he was in a hopeless, lost, despairing state until someone reached out to him with the compassion of Jesus. and through the man who reached out, he felt the touch of Christ. And through the touch of Christ, his ears were opened to hear the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ.

He felt the love of Christ, he saw Jesus, and he believed in Jesus. And in his testimony, which is a song, he wrote in the song, one touch from the king of kings changed everything.

[21 : 01] And that was the testimony of this man. One touch from the king of kings changed everything.

And the touch of Christ is no less powerful today. And we all need it. all of us have that heart disease called sin.

And there's no cure except through the touch of Christ. So can I ask you this morning, have you felt the touch of Christ on your heart?

have you felt the touch of Christ upon your life? Some might wonder, well, would Jesus heal me?

I can see that he's healed many, but as I see my own heart and the darkness of it, would he seriously, would he really touch me? Would he be willing to have anything to do with me?

[22 : 27] And through this passage, we hear the word of Christ to us. I am willing, he says. Be clean.

2 Peter 3.9 says, the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Jesus is the, he's the great physician. And you know, part of his calling upon his people is to follow his example.

people. And I think if we are Christians here today, those of us who are Christians here today, we live in a very private age in comparison with years gone by.

We're in a very individualistic culture, and we're sometimes very much distant from each other. I think part of the calling of Christ upon our lives here is to be ready, more ready than we are perhaps, to roll up our sleeves and get physical.

[23 : 55] I think the call of Christ upon us in this church, and whatever, is to be willing to get involved with sometimes messy lives of lost people.

People who might be knee-deep in muck and mire, the muck and mire that sin brings, but people remember whom Jesus made and Jesus loves.

People whom Jesus wants to lead to repentance and salvation. Jesus prays, Jesus preaches, Jesus the great physician.

Fourthly, Jesus privacy, verse 43. Jesus sent him away, this is the man who's been healed with a strong warning, see that you don't tell this to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing as a testimony to them.

Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places, yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

[25 : 16] Now what's happening here? How do we understand this, what seems like a change of approach? Jesus goes through him being somebody who's in the midst of the crowds and he's showing compassion and he's healing so many people and he's casting out demons, and then all of a sudden he's looking for his privacy to be maintained.

Why does he warn this man to be quiet? Why does he not want people to hear about this amazing episode? Well, this is something the scholars call the messianic secret.

And the reason that Jesus looked for a degree of secrecy was because healing the sick and casting out demons was not his priority.

Jesus had compassion. He loved these lost people. But he could see that the people needed more than just that physical healing.

and he wanted the people to be able to see that too. And Jesus was also aware that there was a growing opposition.

[26 : 36] There were scribes, there were Pharisees who were actually on location already and they're listening to every word that he was saying and they're growing in their opposition against him. They're beginning to formulate in their minds a plan to kill him.

And Jesus is aware of this. But there were things that Jesus had to preach and teach before he would be taken and nailed on a cross.

And so he needed there to be a degree of secrecy and quietness so that his ministry would be able to progress for the period that he had determined he would be on earth.

So for these reasons he tells the man quiet. Be quiet about this. He also tells the man to go and show himself to the priest so that the priest would see the change that Christ had brought about in this man's life.

He tells the man to offer sacrifices. He tells the man to go and offer sacrifices that would point to sacrifice. As far as we see here in this passage everything the man is told by Jesus to do he doesn't do.

[28 : 05] Jesus says quiet and the man goes and he blabs everything everywhere. And Jesus says go and show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices.

and as far as we can tell here he doesn't do either. And it just strikes me he's like so many of us. We see ourselves in this man don't we?

We come to Jesus for help. We might even on occasions almost make deals with Jesus and say if you help me out of this fix I will obey you.

And then we don't. There are some even who come to Jesus for salvation and pray Lord take my sinner away save my soul come into my life make me a Christian.

And Jesus hears their prayer and he comes into their hearts and he heals their hearts and he gives them salvation and Jesus says to such people now show yourself to the world.

[29 : 19] I have saved you. I have forgiven you. Now go and show yourself to the world. Tell the people about the cleansing of soul that I have given you.

Take the bread. Take the wine. Show yourself to be one of my children. children. And yet some of us don't.

And communion season after communion season passes and we determine that we will disobey Jesus in his command to profess that he is our saviour and our Lord.

Note here that because of this man's disobedience because of this man's disobedience there were many in the surrounding towns who didn't get to see Jesus.

They didn't get to hear Jesus. Verse 45 says that Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in the lonely places and that's always the way.

[30 : 33] When Christians disobey Jesus we don't lose our salvation. Jesus doesn't reverse his healing touch on our hearts and our lives but our disobedience always has consequences.

It affects people. People who should see and hear Jesus in us and through us.

they don't because of the disobedience and the sin that we are allowed to get a foothold in our lives. Jesus' privacy which was not respected. Final point. Jesus' priority. A few days later verse 1 when Jesus again entered Capernaum the people heard that he had come home.

So many gathered that there was no room left not even outside the door and he preached the word to them. Some men came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and after digging through it lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.

[31 : 57] When Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic son your sins are forgiven. Hit pause there for a second. Can you imagine if you were one of the man's friends and you've carried this man how many miles?

A dead weight on the stretcher. You arrive you're sweating you're exhausted you can't get in the door so you have to go onto the roof when you're dismantling this roof and eventually you get the roof dismantled sufficiently that you can lower this man down into Jesus presence.

You're desperate that he's going to get his legs healed. Can you imagine the frustration on their faces when Jesus says son your sins are forgiven.

You can just hear the men saying we didn't come here to get his sins forgiven. We came here to get his legs healed.

That was their priority. But Jesus' priority was the healing of the heart. Jesus could see that this man's biggest problem was not his mobility but it was his depravity.

[33 : 30] It was his heart. And his heart along with ours was desperately wicked. It was an offense against the God who made him.

And so Jesus went straight to his problem and said son your sins are forgiven.

And with these words Jesus was revealing that he himself was God. The sin in this man's heart was an offense against Christ.

his maker. And the forgiveness that this man needed could come only through Christ as his savior. And the teachers of the law they understood exactly what Jesus was saying. Verse 6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there thinking to themselves why does this fellow talk like that?

[34 : 41] He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? And immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts.

And he said to them why are you thinking these things? Which is easier to say to the paralytic your sins are forgiven or to say get up take your mat 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 tell you get up take your mat go home. And he got up took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.

And this amazed everyone. And they praised God saying we have never seen anything like this. Jesus' priority his reason for coming was to seek and to save sinners. sinners. And yes he helps us in our weaknesses.

[35 : 59] He comforts us in our sorrows. He drives away the demons that terrorize us. He may even sometimes heal supernaturally from disease.

but his priority is to offer to us forgiveness of our sin. Because without that we may know comfort and help and healing and many good things in this life and yet never get off the road to hell.

Mark 8 36 Jesus said for what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world even his mobility and lose his soul.

Jesus came so that souls lost in sin could find forgiveness and salvation and eternal life and heaven in and through him.

So can I finish by asking have you received that forgiveness? And if you haven't received that forgiveness forgiveness, will you not receive it today?

[37 : 44] Jesus looks in love at us. I am willing, he says, as he reaches out his hand, will you be clean?

Will you come to Jesus for that cleansing? water? He can I