

I Know Who You Are

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[0 : 00] Now, if you have a Bible or a tablet or a phone or the screens are showing the text, we're going to turn this morning to think for a time together in Mark's Gospel in chapter 1.

Mark's Gospel in chapter 1, which we know it begins with that great statement, the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. What made Mark so convinced that what he was about to write was actually good news?

What gave him the insight, the conviction, the understanding that what he was going to say was really good news? Because that's what Gospel means. It's good news.

And whereas before it would be in terms of something that was about to be announced verbally, Mark takes the word from its original setting and says, yes, what we say verbally is good news.

I'm about to write. And that's how he takes the word, because it really gets to the heart of the issue.

This is a message that is good news. And why? Well, he tells us immediately.

[1 : 08] This is good news because it is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That's the key thing. That's the key thing, of course, throughout the New Testament. That's the key thing at the heart of the Christian church.

It's all about Jesus. It's all about Jesus. So when the Gospel writers and Paul and Peter and others who contributed to the writing of Scripture sat down and prayed and were guided by the Spirit, they were left in absolutely no doubt that they wanted everyone to be convinced and hear about what they knew.

And what they knew was not a moral code. It wasn't an ethical manifesto. It wasn't a bunch of rules to help you become religious. That's not what the Bible is.

This is good news about a person. Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And that's what is a real game changer. And when we engage with people out there or at work or over the garden fence, at home, in your family, on social media, people perhaps want to get under the skin of things and ask, what makes you tick as a Christian?

Why do you go to church? What do you mean you're going back to church on Sundays? Is that wise? Is it safe? And when we begin to respond and describe why we're here and why we gather and what makes the Christian tick, it all comes down to the person of Jesus Christ.

[2 : 34] And so we must always remember, Christian friends, if you're witnessing, if you're sharing, engaging, and trying to tell people why you might even be here this morning, get the conversation around to the person of Jesus Christ as soon as you can.

Otherwise, you'll be down 10 rabbit holes before you know what's going on. And you've been the prophecy of Daniel. And they'll have the upside down in Revelation and wondering about ethics and morals and all this stuff. Talk about Jesus.

That's what the gospel writers did. Mark does it in his very first sentence. So I want to think with you this morning about something that comes out of verses, the passage in chapter 21 and then particularly chapter 2, the healing of the paralyzed man there in Capernaum.

It's rooted and set in the early part of the ministry of Jesus. It's what we call the year of popularity where the Lord's name is beginning to spread.

His reputation is going before him. And we see this, verse 28, chapter 1, news about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. And that was without social media, without a mobile phone.

[3 : 39] News spread. And we have people walking, in some instances, 100 miles just to see him in the hope they would hear him preach, in the hope they would hear something amazing.

His fame really just exploded. And what we have throughout is this constant returning us to the main theme of the identity of Jesus Christ.

I want to just launch into this by noticing what was said in verse 24 of chapter 1, where Jesus went into the synagogue and he's teaching.

He's in the local synagogue. He's teaching. And this poor man who is suffering the torment of devil possession, he's possessed by the evil spirit. Through him we have these words, I know who you are, the Holy One of God.

I know who you are. So we have this cry from anguish that even there is all about the identity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

[4 : 45] I know who you are. So from there, I want us just to notice, first of all, that the gospel's put before us, and particularly in Mark, a clear statement of identity.

A clear statement of identity. It's all about the Lord Jesus Christ and what we need to know. A couple of months ago, I was in Waverly Station, and you know what the main platform there is like. If you go into the main concourse, you've got all the screens that tell you what platform time where you're going. I was waiting for a train to Inverness, and I know it usually goes from through the main barrage and over to the right, and I was watching it, and it goes from right to left, which doesn't help. It's a bit like the Hebrew. It goes that way. So you're watching for Inverness, and it's counting down. It's 15 minutes to go, nine minutes to go, seven minutes to go, and I was getting a little bit worried because as it was moving toward my departure time, the platform part of the announcement was blank.

There was no platform. Every other train in Edinburgh had a platform except mine. Platform's blank. All I said underneath was being prepared was flashing. So the cleaners were going on to it or whatever, being prepared, and it was moving and moving and moving.

[5 : 52] And then about two minutes to go, trying to remain calm and not sure I was flapping like a budgie inside. Eventually, poof, the platform number came up, and it seemed that the whole world just moved to that platform to get in the train.

The one thing I needed to know was missing to the last minute. I want to turn that on its head as an illustration of the gospel's emphasis. The one thing we really need to know is not left to the very end.

Here it is right at the beginning of the gospel, the beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. So, Christians, when you're engaging, when you're defending the faith, when you're involved in an apologetic moment, as quite often we will be, perhaps unexpectedly, perhaps taken by surprise, perhaps you didn't get the chance to have a nice strategy worked out for a discussion to get them round to the Apostle Paul and speaking about Peter's defending of the faith and all that.

Don't worry about it too much. Just in your heart and mind think, right, I need to steer this to Jesus. Because that's what we're here for. Why is there a church on the world today?

Why is God, in calling us through faith in his Son to become his children, why has he left us here?

To proclaim the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[7 : 12] And so we proclaim. Oh, that's okay for you. You're in a pool, but you do the proclamation. I'll just sit back and listen. Not allowed. There's no such thing as a dole cue in the kingdom.

There's no P45. There's no equivalent of a spiritual P45. Every one of us, where we are living, working, where we are operating in an office, maybe not so much nowadays in offices, but wherever you're working, wherever you're living, whatever you are in a community, in a student hall or in a house, in a block of flats, God has put you there for a reason.

Why? To speak about the good news of Jesus Christ. You belong to God. And God wants us to witness. Isn't that amazing? To think today that God could be using us to share the good news of Jesus with people around us, beside us, on a text, on the social media, over a cup of coffee, sharing about the good news of Jesus.

Our psalm this morning begins with, O come, let us joyfully sing to the Lord. To the rock of salvation, let us raise our voice. Now, we can't do so as a formed body in worship this morning. But we can take the sentiment and spirit of these words with us when we leave here today and commit to living out in such a way that something of Christ would be seen and heard through us.

[8 : 42] And who knows how God would be pleased to use that to his glory. The one word, perhaps, that comes to mind in speaking about this clear statement of identity that Mark puts before us.

This fame that's growing. The first, what's very interesting is, just take note of, in verse 15, in chapter 1 of Mark, the first recorded words of Jesus' preaching ministry. Jesus himself, the Son of God, preaching. What does he preach? What does he have to say? The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news. Now, there's an interesting emphasis. There's Mark's first attempt, being guided by the Spirit, praying and has utterly depended in the Spirit to provide for us the Word of God here in its inspired form as he reflected and wrote on the first recorded words of Jesus' preaching ministry. Repent and believe the good news. Again, Christians, I want to encourage you today, don't be afraid or uncertain about using the word repent because Jesus wasn't.

[10:00] And when we start speaking about repentance and its necessity, of course, that brings us to sin, doesn't it? And that's not an easy sell.

We know this. People do not want to know about sin today. I thought about this recently, the postie, got a nice postcard. She usually brings us nice things, and we get things through the post, and we like our postcard.

But it's nice to get stuff we've ordered off Amazon. It's nice to get a postcard from a friend. It's nice to get letters. It's nice to get things through the post. And she brought the post as normal the other day, but she brought two things I didn't want.

One was a letter from Network Rail telling us that over the next three or four months, there's going to be night works going on at the railhead right just beside the house. Noisy plant, lots of work, and it's going to be at night.

And the letter begins, dear neighbor, you think, oh, what's coming in a course? Sorry to tell you this, but guess what? You're going to be awake a lot over the next few months because it's going to be a lot of noisy work. I didn't ask for that kind of news.

[11:02] And then also the postgirl that morning brought me a parking ticket, which was even worse. That was a real morale Hoover. It's the last thing I wanted. It wasn't the postgirl's fault. She didn't know she was delivering, but she'd been told to deliver.

And I've thought about that since this week. When I took a huff looking at my parking ticket, I thought, no, it's not the postgirl's fault. But that's sometimes how people react and respond to us when it comes to sharing the truth of the Word of God, when it comes to speaking about repentance and sin.

Why do we need to repent? What is sin? What's the consequences if we don't? Another reason to reflect upon why God has left his church on earth this morning, to tell people the good news.

And so we have this real reminder. And I want to just use one word to speak to you this morning about the clear statement of identity when it comes to Jesus. And that word is unique.

The uniqueness of Christ. It's something the Christian church throughout her growth down through the centuries would assert, maintain, and defend. It has been assaulted and attacked and deleted and diluted and removed time and time and time again.

[12:15] The world, the flesh, and the devil do not want a unique Savior, the promised Messiah, the Son of God, God and man, dead upon a cross.

There's no message like it in the planet. The uniqueness of Christ is put before us when we start to think about these things.

Mark and the other gospel writers were so keen we would grasp this uniqueness. They put his identity at the very start of their messages.

Just look through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew 14, Mark 1, Luke 1, John 20. These things are written that you might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing have life in his name.

That's why we have our New Testament this morning. This is, it's not just the First Testament and the Second Testament. It's the old and the new. Why new? Why old and new?

[13:17] Why not part one and part two? Why not first and second? Why old and new? Because something new happened here. Something new happened in the birth of Jesus Christ.

Something unbefore, that before was unknown. The Son of God had not been revealed in this way up until this moment, until Bethlehem, in the birth of the Son, the Messiah, the promised one had come.

What did Jesus say in verse 15 again? His first recorded words, the time has come. The time has come. The wait was over.

See, all the Old Testament is straining forward and looking forward, anticipating the arrival of the Savior. And now here in the New Testament, we're looking back and we're having his revelation and the consequences and the impact and the application of his arrival, his life, his work, his death and resurrection explained and unpacked for us.

And it all rests upon the uniqueness of Christ. The uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Even if you pay a mere passing attention to the claims of Christianity, if you just dig a little bit beneath the surface of what the Bible is saying, we find, don't we, that Jesus is the key to everything.

[14:38] Everything. A clear statement of identity. If we just turn into chapter 2 for the next few moments of our time together this morning, we come to a very well-known instance of Jesus Christ in his early phase of his ministry.

He's preaching the word. He's come back to Capernaum. He's gone in what would seem to be at this point around the region of northern Galilee into villages and into towns.

As verse 39 puts it in chapter 1, he traveled throughout Galilee preaching in their synagogues, driving out demons. That's where we had this initial statement.

I know who you are. Came from the Lord Jesus Christ confronting the forces of demonic possession, the forces of evil and wickedness and darkness, the minions of Satan himself.

He's going to be in the first place of God confronting Jesus. And through that confrontation comes the great cry, I know who you are. And can I just take that question and ask you today if you know who he is?

[15:40] Who is Jesus to you? It is the most important question any preacher can ask. Any Christian in our witnessing, in our mission work, in our evangelism, whatever it might be, when it comes down to it, this is the moment we're aiming for, praying for, hoping for, getting the opportunity to say to someone, what does Jesus mean to you?

And maybe it's someone today or tomorrow that's going to ask you that very question. Why do you go to church? What do you mean you read the Bible?

You're going to a youth group? What's that all about? It's all about Christ. And it's brought out beautifully here in chapter 2 in this incredible incident that happened in this early phase of Jesus' ministry.

And it follows on this clear statement of identity, Jesus Christ being the Son of God. I know who you are, the Holy One of God.

And the Gospels go on to unpack this and explain for us about his divinity and his humanity. And we come to terms with a Savior who is both God and man. And we follow him through and we follow him all the way to Calvary.

[16:54] And there we see just how far God was prepared to go to save us. And before Calvary, we have here in chapter 2 a very real claim of authority.

A very real claim of authority. We see Jesus in a few ways here. First of all, we see him as a teacher. I've loved this story and read this story often. And it wasn't until some time, having read the story often, that I began to realize I'd been rushing to the story of Jesus healing this paralyzed man. And I hadn't taken note for a long, long time of the words of verse 2. So many people were gathered. His fame was such that when they heard Jesus was back in town, the whole town just went there.

They went to his home. He's living here in Capernaum at this time. The people heard he had come home. So many gathered. There was no room left, not even outside the door. And then notice what he's doing. He preached the word to them.

He preached the word to them. The Son of God preaching the word of God. A picture that is. It's amazing.

[18:06] That's an awesome description by Mark of what was going on in Capernaum at this time. All the people came in. What did Jesus do? He told them what they needed to hear. He preached the word to them.

What was he saying? We don't know. We don't know. But we do know from the previous chapter, the thrust of Jesus preaching, because it's recorded for us in verse 15, repent and believe the good news.

What good news, Jesus? What good news? Jesus. That in me is found the forgiveness of sin. That's as good as it gets.

It's as good as it gets. So we see him as a teacher here in his claim of authority. He came to meet a great need. People were drifting, uncertain.

Just didn't know how to get right with God. They had the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and they had the synagogue, and they had the temple, and they had the Aaronic priesthood, and they had all the laws of Moses.

[19 : 03] They had the Torah, and they had this burden. Religion had become a burden. It wasn't so much a fulfillment and a joy.

Oh, come let us joyfully sing to the Lord. It's as if by this point that the rule book had absolutely suffocated any sense of joy in serving God. This is why so much time Jesus spends, you have heard it said, but I say to you.

You have heard it said, but I say to you. And Jesus is lifting that burden. And he's saying, come to me, all you who labor under heaven laden. And what?

I will give you rest. Rest. Jesus then, as a teacher, is putting before them the truth.

He's putting before them the gospel. He's putting before them what they really need to know. He is here a teacher. He's also here seen in this instance, of course, as a healer.

[20 : 03] And this is where the story really is. It gets incredible. These friends had a paralyzed friend. And they had heard so much about Jesus. We don't know what they'd heard, but they'd heard enough.

They'd heard enough to get their friend on a mat and carry him through the town to where Jesus was. That's how much they'd heard. And when they got there, they saw such a crowd, they couldn't even get near him.

Did they give up? Did they stop on their tracks? No. No. They managed to fight their way through to the side of the house, go up the outside stairway and get to the middle of the floor. Now, they knew that Jesus was down in there.

So what do they do? They pull the roof apart. They dig a hole in the roof. 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, Lord, the paralyzed man was lying on. What a scene. Can you imagine the tension in the room? Can you imagine the utter shock of people seeing the roof start to cave in and the wattle and the mud and the lattice work all just falling through as they rip the roof apart?

[21 : 11] And then they lower this paralyzed man down onto the ground in front of Jesus. You could have cut the atmosphere with a knife. The tension would have been palpable.

And they're thinking, what's going to happen now? Can you imagine everyone just straining in? What's he going to do? What's he going to do? What's he going to do? When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven.

Wow. That's absolutely incredible, isn't it? It brings us back to chapter 1, verse 1. The beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Why, Mark, is this good news? Ah, your sins are forgiven. That's why. Because Jesus, as the Son of God, had the authority to forgive this man's sins.

He'd been casting out demons. The whole region had heard of him. Lepers had been healed.

People who have all kinds of sicknesses had gathered. Chapter 1, verse 33.

[22 : 10] The whole town gathered at the door. Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He drove out many demons. And he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

They knew who he was. The demons knew. What about the religious leaders of the day? Well, sadly, they don't come out of this well.

Some teachers of the law, in verse 6, were sitting there thinking, Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Now we can step back and point at them and talk about their religious pomposity and their arrogance and their dismissiveness.

And yes, it's in there. They didn't want Jesus to be who he said he was. And so they rejected him, dismissed him, and ultimately sought his life and had him nailed to a cross because they detested him so much.

But what they said here is actually right. Listen to it again. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

They were right when they said that, friends.

[23 : 19] They were right. And so we have Mark using a demon-possessed man and now using the very enemies of Jesus to confirm his identity. They knew who he was.

But the religious leaders confirmed his identity without acknowledging who he was. Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit what they were thinking. Why are you saying these things? Which is easier? To say your sins are forgiven or to say take up your better walk. But that you may know the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Jesus takes this Old Testament title to himself, the Son of Man, from Daniel and Ezekiel, which clearly speaks of the yet-to-be-revealed Messiah.

Here I am, he is saying, but that you may know the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He turned to the man and said, take up your mat and walk and go home. And he did. So Jesus said, so that you may know I've dealt with him internally, I'm going to heal him externally. So that you may know I've healed him spiritually, I'm now going to heal him physically. [24 : 24] To show you, I have the authority and the power. The people praised God, saying they had never seen anything like this.

Isn't it wonderful that the gospel is so clear with us? They put it right at the start, the identity of Jesus and his claim of authority as teacher and healer and ultimately as the forgiver of sins, which points us to what?

His identity as the Son of God. And we have to get it right here, don't we? We have to get it right. Angus mentioned at the start, I'd spent a few years in the 4th Royal Tank Regiment. It was Scotland's finest tank regiment until it was disbanded many years ago. But I remember, all you do as tankies, a lot of the time they'd send you out to Canada. And there's a big training area in Canada and Suffield and Battis out there in Edmonton, north of Edmonton, massive, massive prairie.

And tanks can go out there and train. And it's amazing. It's where you want to be because the land just goes for as far as the eye can see. And it's amazing. We went out there a few times on exercise and there was a big exercise one day going on.

[25 : 33] And I remember, as being part of this exercise, the regiment or part of the regiment, this B Squadron, 7th troop, 4RTR, were sent to attack a hill. And it all went accordingly, seemingly all went to plan.

The tanks went in, the infantry were in support, the artillery were there, the engineers were there, the medics were there, the signalers were there. Everything looked good. Everything was spot on. Everything looked cushy. Until after the serial was finished and it was confirmed, we'd attacked the wrong hill.

We'd attacked the wrong hill. So guess what? They made us do it all over again. That's what they do, isn't it, of course, to drum home and get things right. And we went wrong because we went wrong at the start.

Someone in the chain of command, in the transmission of orders, had taken down a wrong grid reference, got the map out, and said, that's where we need to be.

When, in fact, it was the wrong place all along. So everything went fine and went to plan, but we attacked the wrong hill. We went wrong at the start.

[26 : 40] Friends, if we go wrong at the start as to the identity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, everything else will be wrong. Everything will be out of kilter.

Everything won't be lined up as it should be. And the truth will be lost. And the gospel will become an ethical manifesto or a moral guidebook or a book of religious principles.

It will become something other than what it should be, the Word of God. The Word of God. And that's where we close this morning. We have a clear statement of identity and a claim of authority. We see this in Jesus' activity as a teacher and healer and forgiver. And I want to close with this. Because of this, because of his identity, because of his authority, there is today, through the gospel, an ongoing invitation.

Whether you're in a church building this morning or at home with a live stream like from Bon Accord today or listening to something later in the week or reflecting or opening and reading your Bible, there is an ongoing invitation from Jesus Christ to come to him for the forgiveness of your sins.

[27 : 55] It is the only way we can be right with God. It's as simple as using the wrong remote for a TV. It won't work. It'll never work.

Can't get to God. We can't become right with God. As we read from Philippians this morning, what we want, what Paul wanted, he wanted to be found in him, in Christ, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law.

That's his own works and efforts, but that which is through faith in Christ. Faith in Christ. Faith in Christ. Friends, when you go home today, when you go about the business of the week, remember that as a Christian, people will listen to you and they'll make assessments and judgments and they'll have questions, they'll draw conclusions.

Be prepared for the questions. Be prepared. Be prepared. Because light shines in the darkness. And if people detect something about you that's different, they'll be seeing and sensing something of Jesus and they're going to come and ask you.

And often think about this, it's a spiritual accent. It's the same as a spiritual accent. That's what it is, being a Christian. Now you know as well as accents, they're really, they're interesting, aren't they? [29 : 04] I've often been asked what part of Ireland I'm from. And I've been asked if I'm from Inverness. I've been asked if I'm from the islands, if I'm from up north. No one has ever asked me if I'm a Geordie.

I've never been asked if I'm from London. No one's ever said, are you from LA? Why? Because they maybe can't pin the accent down specifically. But what an accent does do is it certainly confirms where you're not from, doesn't it?

It works both ways. You can get a good idea of where someone's from, maybe not exactly, but you can certainly figure out where they're not from. Christian friend, as you live for Christ this week, something of him will shine through you.

Be prepared. Be prepared to show people something of Christ and how you live. And always, always, always remember that maybe that's the moment that Jesus in you is extending an invitation to that person with their questions to come in faith to him.

and the invitation is extended always. In him, through him, by him, because of him. Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[30 : 21] May God bless us all as we seek to witness to him and show forth his praises, remembering his identity, his authority, and the ongoing invitation to come to him in faith.

We'll pray for a moment together. Lord our God, we thank you that we can spend time together this morning looking at your word. We thank you that today we can consider the good news of Jesus and see his clear statement of identity, the Son of God.

We see him as teacher and healer and forgiver. And we hear in the word also his invitation. Come to me and I will give you rest.

Lord, we pray today for any who as yet have not taken that step. We pray for those who are at home, who have joined us on live stream. We pray, Lord, for those here in the church.

We pray for the congregation. We pray, Lord, men and women and boys and girls today will respond to this great invitation to put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

[31 : 28] In his name we ask it. Amen. Amen.