

Who Is This Man?

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One of the great things about preaching the Bible and believing in the perfect authority and the perfect inerrancy of God's word is that you do not have to manufacture emotion or manufacture a spectacle in order to celebrate the resurrection. We go to the true word of God, we see the true Lord Jesus Christ in all of his glory and splendor and we have all of the reason that we need for meaningful, true worship without being stimulated by artificial means. What we have in front of us today as we remember the resurrection, is the gospel of Mark and I invite you to turn to the gospel of Mark this morning. We're going to cover all 16 chapters of Mark here in this one message as we continue a series, really, of looking at the life of the Lord Jesus from the four perspectives of the four gospels. I am very, very excited to bring this message with you this morning, especially as I think about some of you younger people in the audience, those of you that are still in your teen and pre-teen years although this message isn't exclusively for you. This is a message that is certainly accessible to you because the questions that we're going to raise this morning are clear and simple. They are questions that a child can understand and answer as we look at the clarity and the sufficiency of God's word and yet for those of us that are adults, it should not be lost on us that we are about to look at the most profound aspects of the life of Christ and to see how Scripture challenges each one of our hearts very clearly and very directly to contemplate what is revealed before us.

What you see as you read the gospel of Mark is the Scriptures repeatedly again and again asking questions, challenging each one of us to ask this question for ourselves, to ask and answer the question for ourselves in the presence of God; to answer the question for ourselves with the knowledge that, beloved, the answer that we give to this question has eternal consequences for our soul. You see, Scripture doesn't play games. God doesn't play games. When Scripture speaks, it speaks the truth. I like to often say when Jesus teaches, he is teaching for keeps. We need to take the word of God seriously. We need to take its testimony about Christ with profound sobriety. This is not a superficial matter. What we have in front of us is eternity crystallized in time in this hour of the proclamation of God's word and so I invite you today to humble your heart to receive the word of God with earnestness and to follow along as the inspired writer of Scripture leads you through the life and ministry of Christ and calls for a verdict from your heart on what you have heard. As we do that, beloved, understand that the verdict which you give on what you hear is one day going to be subject to the verdict of God on you. These are

serious matters. These are matters of joy but true joy comes from dealing earnestly with the word of God, not superficially and so that's what we're going to do here this morning.

If you're taking notes, if you want to write a title on your sermon notes this morning, we would title this morning's message "Who Is This Man?" Who is this man? And as you read the gospel of Mark, as you see it and it's going to be so plain and evident, you're going to wonder how you missed it as you read through Mark in years gone by, Mark is bringing us to a point of decision of response about who Christ is. That's what we're going to see. This is the question that we need to answer: who is this man? Who is this man by which we mark time? That's the question this morning.

Mark gives kind of a title verse in chapter 1, verse 1. This is his introduction. This guides the way that we see; this is the lens that he gives us to put over our eyes to interpret everything that follows. In 1:1 if you'll look at it with me, he says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God so from the very beginning, what we have laid out for us is a clarion call, a trumpet blast that says, "What you are about to read is about someone who is unlike any other. This is Jesus Christ, the Son of God," and then the rest of the gospel goes through and brings you face-to-face with exactly what that means and even as believers, beloved, even as believers that are familiar with the word of God as we come in this morning in varying degrees of familiarity with the word of God, I need what this message has, you need what this message has. There are times where we need the fog blown away from our minds so that we see things with the crystal clarity of an early morning sunrise. That's what we're going to do today and I'm going to be prompting you through this message as we go through Mark with questions that you must answer for yourself.

It doesn't matter as we'll see later on, it doesn't really matter at all what people outside the walls of this room would say about Christ. I realize and you do too that if you want to reject the testimony of Scripture, you can easily find anyone, any place, to support you in your rejection of truth. You can find men who will mock the Scriptures; you will find men who will spit on the face of Christ if only they could if he were physically present, they would repeat what those who crucified did to him. But beloved, that's not going to help you and I want to make something really clear to those of you who are not Christians and who gravitate toward that kind of thing, "Well, experts say this about Christ," and you know that, "There's so much confusion." Do you know what? Listen, let's get something really clear that will help you and also will help you as you talk with others as well in the days to come, understand that those experts, those writers who mock the Scriptures, who undermine the truth of the word of God, who try to exclude any mention of Christ in modern discourse, understand this one really basic thing, beloved, and you'll have the proper perspective from which to view them for the rest of your life: those men, those women, those authors, those mockers, those doubters, not a one of them are going to stand at your shoulder when you stand before God in judgment and give an account for your life. You must deal with Christ for yourself. You must look to him alone. You must answer these questions for yourself and understand that no one is going to act as your substitute; no human man is going to stand beside you and support you. It

will be a holy Triune God and you one day soon and so it is utterly urgent for you to respond to what Scripture says this morning.

Mark asks us questions that we're supposed to answer, that we're responsible to answer, that we will be held accountable for how we answer and how we respond. Point 1 here this morning. So delighted to be able to bring these things to you this morning. Just the simplicity and the clarity of God's word. Point 1: here's the question – the points this morning are in the forms of questions. Point 1: who is this man? Who is this man of which the gospel of Mark tells us? Well, whoever this man is, there are four subpoints here: who is this man, subpoints 1, 2, 3, and 4. Who is this man? First of all, as you answer that question understand that he commands spirits. He commands spirits. He teaches with authority and he casts out demons. Look at Mark 1:21 as finally we get into the text of Scripture which is where we really want to be today, right? Mark 1:21, "They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach." Verse 22, "They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, 'What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!'" So here is this man being dominated by an unclean spirit coming in and taking over the synagogue service, as it were, and crying out and with a demonic fury asking questions of this one who was teaching with authority and Jesus isn't going to have a demon give testimony to him, that pollutes the whole message, and so in verse 25, this man with an unclean spirit remember, verse 25, "And Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying," now watch this, here's the question, "'What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.'" Listen beloved, I want you to understand something about how God intends you to read the gospel of Mark, how the human writer under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote this book so that you would understand how to relate to it and interact to it. Mark is doing more here than simply giving a quotation of what was said at the time. This question that he asks, that he reports them saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority!" The question that was on their mind in the first century as direct eye witnesses to the ministry of Christ, as you read the gospel, you are to be asking that same question of yourself. When you read this testimony about a teaching with authority, when you read this testimony about a man who has the authority to command a demon and compel immediate obedience, you are to be asking the question of yourself, "Who is this? Who is this of whom I am reading?"

So when you contemplate this narrative about the Lord Jesus Christ, this man whose teaching amazed his audience, astonished them with its clarity and its force and its utter authority, "Never a man spoke like this man," they said and they had had a lot of teachers. Jesus was in a class by himself as he taught. He stood out from everyone else. So as he's teaching and then this demon comes and confronts him and Jesus says, "That's enough out of you. Quiet. Come out," and a demon submissively obeys. There is a holy hush that falls upon the audience. There is a holy hush that should fall upon our souls as we ask the question: who is this? Who is this clothed in human flesh that has such

authority with the way that he speaks? Who is this that commands the demonic realm and gets immediate obedience? When you see the life of Christ laid out before you, you are meant to ask that question. Not as a skeptic as we've all been conditioned to do by our training over years of education and skepticism and all of the environment, beloved, mindful of the fact that as you walk on a bridge from time toward eternity, you're crossing from time to eternity. Some of you sooner, some of you later but we're all walking toward eternity and as you walk that bridge, you are to ask the question: who is this man of whom I read? You are to read the Scripture with a believing heart that what it says is true. Even now as I speak, the Spirit is affirming to you in your heart the truthfulness of what Scripture says. This is not to be taken lightly. We interact with this question. We interact with the text of the inspired word of God and we humbly submissively say, "What is this that I'm reading? This is unlike anything else. I'm reading about a man who commands spirits with authority and they obey."

There is more to it than just that one passage. As you continue on in the gospel of Mark, you see that Jesus not only commands spirits, he cancels sin. He cancels sin. He forgives sin against God. He exercises a prerogative that only God has as he interacts with men. Look at 2:1. We'll read some extended passages here. God's word says in chapter 2, verse 1, "When Jesus had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts," now watch the literary technique here that Mark is using, it's another question. He's not just giving a quotation here. This is the question that his readers are supposed to ask throughout the history of the reading of the gospel of Mark. Here is the question: "Why does this man speak that way? How is it that this man could speak like that?" Now, the scribes drew the wrong conclusion. They asked the right question but as you go into verse 7, they pivot to the wrong conclusion. "He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" They were wrong in saying that he was blaspheming, they were correct in saying that only God can forgive sin. Notice the connection here: a paralyzed man comes down through a roof, this man who has human form, who had no appearance otherwise that we should be drawn to him, looks at this paralyzed man and says, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Who can say that? Who has the privilege and the authority and the prerogative to speak to a man and say, "Your sins against God, I forgive them." Who can say that? I sure can't. No other man on earth can: not your father, not your mother, not your children, not a priest. There is no one who has the authority but God alone to forgive sin and yet, follow the train of the thought of the gospel here, and yet here is this man saying, "Your sins are forgiven." Who is this man that speaks like that?

Go back to verse 8, Jesus went on and gave his stamp of authenticity. He proved by his control over that man's physical condition that he also had authority to speak to his spiritual condition. Look at verse 8, "Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they

were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, 'Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven"; or to say, "Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk"?' You see, I can say those words with equal ease, "Your sins are forgiven. Get up and walk, but if you want to see that I've got the authority to speak with authority over the unseen realm, let me show you what I can do in the physical realm to verify this for you." Verse 10, "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins - He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.' And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'" It's not just that he made a verbal proclamation of the forgiveness of sins. Those of you that come from ritualistic backgrounds know that there are lots of people that will try to tell you that. You go to a confession booth and a priest will supposedly absolve you of your sins. Well, they don't have the authority to do that but when Christ forgave sins, he showed that by a miraculous exercise of power that no one else could do, he showed by an exercise of power that there was a distinguishing force, a distinguishing authority to his words and he proved that when he told a crippled man, "Get up and walk," and the guy got up and walked. So you just make the connection, "Wow, he can do this in the physical realm, that shows that he can do it in the spiritual realm as well." He has the authority to forgive sins. What kind of man is that?

But it goes on. Turn over to chapter 4, verse 35. What I want you to see, beloved, I understand and I'm the product of Bible reading plans in some ways, as you go through a Bible reading plan and you read 2-3 chapters a day, it's really easy to miss these overarching themes in a larger body of literature. When you read the gospel as a unit, what you should understand is that this pattern is establishing an even greater point. These questions that are being asked are part of a greater whole that Mark is intending to communicate. It's unfortunate that we tend to read Scripture in isolated little pockets and miss these bigger pictures. That's why from time-to-time we like to do messages like this to help see the bigger picture, to pull these things together, to see the forest and not just the trees of individual words or individual grammar because, beloved, the cumulative impact of what we're seeing as we go through the gospel of Mark is enormous. The force and the weight of these things on the human heart is meant to move us to a place which we'll describe in a few moments.

Who is this man? He commands spirits. He cancels sin. Do you know what else he does? This man, whoever he may be, this man calms the sea. This man calms the sea. Look at Mark 4:35, "On that day, when evening came, He said to them, 'Let us go over to the other side.' Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up." I'm getting seasick just kind of reading this right now. Get the picture there in verse 37, this is a storm beyond human power to respond to. It's not just a wind, it's a fierce gale. It's not just that there were rolling waves, it's that the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was filling with water. This is a desperate situation of a severe storm on the sea.

Verse 38, "Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Hush, be still.' And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm." I would often think about this passage when I stood on the beach of the ocean when we lived in California and the waves rolling in as they do, sometimes big, sometimes small, contemplating. I don't think I ever actually did it but contemplating how foolish it would be for me to look at those rolling waves and say, "Stop! Okay you guys, just knock it off," because those waves are just going to continue to come. I don't have authority over nature like that. I would have made an utter fool of myself to speak such words let alone to speak them when people's lives are in danger in the middle of the sea on a boat that is about to sink. Jesus, by contrast, with utter self-control, with perfect knowledge of what was about to happen, with no doubt in his mind that there would be complete obedience from nature said to natural elements, to a roaring sea said, "That's enough. Stop. Be still." The result was instant calm. From crashing waves to placid glass instantly at the voice of a man. Who is this man?

Verse 40, "And Jesus said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?'" Watch their response here in verse 41. The question is a literary intended device, not merely an isolated quotation. Read this question in connection with the others that have come before and the ones that will come after. "They became very much afraid and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'" This is incalculable. We have never seen anything like this. We've not seen this kind of authority and, beloved, understand something really important here: they had been frightened by the sea because they thought it was about to physically kill them. Their fear in the presence of Christ after he calmed the sea was even greater because it's one thing to be threatened by natural forces, all of a sudden they realized that they are in the presence of a completely different realm. Who is this? The presence of omnipotence frightened them and the fact that omnipotence was held in the hand of a man transcended any prior experience that they could possibly have had. So what could you do? What else could you say to one another? He raises his hand and the sea stops and you look at one another, you look at the men that you've worked with on the sea over the years and you say, "What is this? What is this? Have you ever seen?" "No, I've never seen anything like this." This is something totally other. This is something totally different. This is outside my realm of experience with this man.

He didn't stop there. He commands spirits. He cancels sin. He calms the sea. But more, he comprehends secrets. He comprehends secrets. He knows the inner workings of the human heart. Look at Mark 5:21. This will be a more extended reading here but I love the pure joy and simplicity of simply letting Scripture speak for itself. Mark 5:21. As you read this passage, let's just introduce it with this little statement: Jesus is so great that he can discriminate between human touch based on the motivation of the one who touched him. Look at verse 21, "When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore. One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet and implored Him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter is at the point of death; please come

and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live." God bless you parents that are dealing with that right now with a daughter that you are concerned about. May Christ heal your daughter just like he did Jairus' daughter. May the fear and the uncertainty that you feel, may you take that to Christ and may he give you the same kind of blessing that he gave to Jairus here today, what we read about today.

Jairus is at the point of desperation. His daughter is at the point of death and he appeals to Christ because he has nowhere else to turn. Verse 24, "And Jesus went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him." Okay, so you get the picture: Jesus is being pressed upon by a large crowd. It's like you're at a big stadium event and everybody is pressing toward the gate and it's just wall-to-wall, shoulder-to-shoulder people. Jesus is being touched repeatedly in all kinds of different incidental contact as he walks through this crowd, bumping up against shoulders. Now watch this in verse 25, "A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse - after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him," notice, it's behind him, it's outside the realm of his physical vision, it's outside his peripheral vision, it's behind him, she came up in the crowd behind him "and touched His cloak. For she thought," you see, here's her inner thought, she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well." There was this tender strand of hopeful optimistic faith. She thought, "I don't have to speak to him. He doesn't need to see me. If I could just touch the threads that are connected with him, that will be enough for me to be healed," and so she did it. Verse 29, "Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction." Twelve years of suffering was over in a moment because she had touched the cloak of Jesus from behind.

Now, watch what happens here. Verse 30, "Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched My garments?'" Verse 31, "And His disciples said to Him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, "Who touched Me?"' "Come on, you're in a mob. Everybody is touching you. Why are you asking such a question like that? What does it even matter? All kinds of people are touching you. Why would you ask this question?" He asked the question to demonstrate the fact that not only does he have power over the spiritual realm, not only does he have power over the area of sin, not only does he have power over the natural realm, he has power over the mental realm as well. Verse 32, "And He looked around to see the woman who had done this." He wasn't asking for information that he didn't already have when he said, "Who touched me?" He knew to turn directly to the woman who had done it even though she was outside the realm of his vision. He knew her touch by the reason for which she touched him and so he looked around and looked right at the woman who had done it.

Verse 33, notice the fear and trembling again. We've seen this before. Who is this? Who is this? When Christ puts his true power on display, the real response is fear and trembling. Verse 33, this woman, God bless her tender heart, "But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth." You get the impression that she thought she was in trouble, that

she had done something bad and that she was about to be rebuked and so with fear and trembling, she comes and falls down and tells him the whole truth and Jesus in his great merciful, loving, sympathetic heart, looks at her in verse 34 and says, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction." Who is this? Who is it that when someone touches his garments with faith, they are healed of something that human physicians couldn't treat them for? Who is it? Who is this man who understands the realm of the human heart? Who knows the thoughts of men and can identify them without any difficulty or prompting?

Who is this man? He's unlike any other man and as you keep reading the gospel of Mark, he starts to press this question home in a different way. Look at chapter 6, verse 14. You start to see that who is this is the theme of this gospel. You see, Mark wrote this gospel to reveal Christ to you. In 6:14, the question that you're supposed to be asking is: who is this? Not getting caught up in every little curiosity that your mind might run to. Don't miss the big point here: someone amazing is in front of us in this gospel. Verse 14, "And King Herod heard of it, for His name," meaning the name of Christ, the name of Jesus, "His name had become well known; and people were saying," you see, they're trying to figure out who he is. Who is this? Well, some people were saying, "'John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.' But others were saying, 'He is Elijah.' And others were saying, 'He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.'" They didn't get it. They weren't seeing that he was the Son of God as Mark said at the very beginning but, beloved, what I want you to see in the whole context of the gospel is this: at least they were asking the right question; at least they understood that something of profound significance was in front of them that demanded an answer and an explanation. They were wrong in their answer but at least they were asking the right question and attributing miraculous powers to whatever Christ was doing. "Who is this man? I don't know, I think he might be one of the prophets of old." The point is that at that stage in the narrative the question is brought back in front of you again as the reader of the gospel of Mark, the question is brought back, "Who is this?"

Well, Mark builds to a crescendo toward the middle of his gospel and he lets the disciples give the answer. At least from a human perspective, the disciples give the answer. Mark 8:27. Who is this man? Mark has built up to this point in his narrative and so now being confronted by all of this supernatural aspect of the authority of Christ's teaching, he authority over demons, his authority over sin, his authority over nature, his authority over the realm of human thought, it's obvious that we're dealing with somebody unique, right? This is not impostor. This is not a charlatan. This is the real deal right in front of us and so Mark 8:27, "Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, 'Who do people say that I am?'" You see? This is written all through the gospel, isn't it? Who is this? Who is this? Who is this? Now Jesus makes the point and Jesus presses it upon his disciples in this passage and he sets a context and says, "Who do people say that I am? Let's talk about my identity." Verse 28, "They told Him, saying, 'John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.'" They're responding and they're saying, "Jesus, there is a conflict of opinion about you. There doesn't seem to be a consensus. There are differing opinions. Some men say A., some men say B., some men says C."

So as you continue on, Jesus said, "Therefore it's obvious that no one could ever know and it doesn't really matter." Is that what it says? Do you realize the context of what the disciples were saying, how that applies directly to you today in a pluralistic society of tolerance that says all truth is equal, there are multiple paths to God because everybody says something different, therefore, no one can know? Do you know what that is? It's a lie. It's not true and it does not excuse your soul from answering the question that's in front of you here today, who is this man, because Jesus goes on and look at verse 29, "And Jesus continued by questioning them, 'But who do you say that I am?'" You see, the fact that a lot of people are confused and lying in the world around you doesn't excuse you from coming to the correct answer. You have to answer for your own soul. You have to answer for yourself and you don't get to blow it off by saying, "Well, everybody else is confused." It's doesn't matter. That's absolutely irrelevant. What do you say about this man? Who do you say that he is? You have to answer for yourself. You have to answer for yourself now. Today. You have to answer in this life while there is time. I'll say it again: the people who create the confusion, the architects of our post-modern world are not going to stand beside you at judgment and help you when you are face-to-face with your Judge. You don't want to rely on them because they're not going to be anywhere to be found. It's just going to be you and a holy God and at that moment, you had better have gotten the answer to this question right and you had better have dealt with this question earnestly and sincerely and not play a game of saying, "Well, I prayed a prayer, you know, 30 years ago and my life never changed but everything's cool with me and God." What? You mean to tell me that you claim that you met the living Son of God 30 years ago and you kept living the same way and it made no difference in your life whatsoever? You mean to tell me that you met the one who people were amazed at the teaching of this man, who trembled in his presence, who were afraid when they saw him display his power? You mean that you could meet and come into personal relationship with the man who has authority over nature, over demons, over human thought, and it didn't make any difference in the way that you lived? That's nonsense! You're not a Christian at all!

What is with this idea that we could play that kind of superficial game with the living Son of God? Please. That's foolishness. That is a trivialization of the majesty of the glory of the Son of God to reduce it to something like that, to say, "I know him but it doesn't change the way that I live. I know him but his word is not important to me. I know him and I'm going to heaven but I live anyway that I please." You had better repent is all I've got to say to those of you that feel that way about the truth of the gospel. You'd better repent and really humble yourself and come to Christ in true humble, saving faith because that charade that you're playing with life, with the gospel, with the Son of God, that charade will be called to account and it's an act of mercy that God is giving you one more opportunity this morning to put all of that aside.

Go back to Mark 8:29, "And He continued by questioning them, 'But who do you say that I am?'" "My disciples," he says, "you are personally responsible. You have to make your own judgment." Verse 29, "Peter answered and said to Him, 'You are the Christ.'" "You are the anointed one of God. You are the Son of God. There is no one else like you. You

are no ordinary man. You are the Messiah. You are the one promised long ago. You are the King of creation." Verse 30, "And Jesus warned them to tell no one about Him." They weren't ready yet to go out with that message. They needed time to learn and to understand more. What I want you to see as we look at the gospel of Mark is that that's the whole point: who is this Christ? Who is this man who does all of these things? You start to answer it by saying, "This is no ordinary man at all. He's the very Son of God. This is God in human flesh in front of me. This is God in human flesh of whom I read. He has authority over all of these realms and, therefore, he must have authority over me and woe on my sin-stricken soul, I have not bowed the knee to him. Woe on my sin-stricken soul, I've treated him lightly." The weight of these questions should press upon your heart.

Now, as you read the totality of the gospel of Mark, one of the great blessings of this portion of Scripture is that Mark does not leave it to human testimony alone to affirm the conclusion that you are to reach. Go back to Mark 1. You see, it's not just these authenticating marks that flowed out of the life of Christ that affirm him as the Son of God to us, we have the very testimony of God the Father himself. Mark 1:9, "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.'" Who calls Jesus the Son but the Father? This is the voice of God the Father at the start of his ministry saying, "This is my beloved Son." He looks at Christ and says, "You are my beloved Son." Total, absolute approval from a holy God. "This is my Son."

Now turn over to Mark 9. I should have had you keep your finger there. Mark 9:7, this is at the Transfiguration. Mark 9:2, "Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus." Peter got his foot in his mouth, "Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified." Do you see it again? The response to being in the glory of Christ is terror. Terror. Verse 7, "Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!' All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone." There were three going into the cloud, so to speak, God spoke and clarified and blew away the fog and all that was left standing at the end was Christ. "This is my beloved Son." The Father has testified that this is his Son.

Look at Mark 14. Jesus himself affirmed this as the question about his identity comes up again. Mark 14:61, Jesus is on trial for crimes that he did not commit. "The high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?'" The question on the table, And Jesus said, 'I am; and you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'" "Yup, that's me. I am the Christ." What Peter said, what the Father said, Christ himself owned it. Now

today, we're in no inferior position because we have God's word in front of us saying the same thing, "This is the Christ." God's word testifies that this is who Jesus is and the Spirit of God affirms in your heart the truth of what his word says. There is no denying it. There is so much attestation to the veracity of the statement that Jesus alone is the Son of God, Jesus alone is the Christ. He is God in human flesh with unparalleled authority that is verified and attested to us in all manner of ways so that anyone who rejects it is without excuse.

Now, that's who he is, why is he here? Why is he here? Why is the Son of God on earth? You'd never guess it. That's point 2, by the way: why is he here? You see, these questions are really simple. Why is he here? This great Christ is here to die. Look at Mark 8:31. You see it three times, the same statement, before his crucifixion. In Mark 8:31, Peter had just said, "You are the Christ." In verse 31, "And Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." Look at Mark 9:31, "For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, 'The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.'" Look at Mark 10:32. I want you to just see the emphasis that he is here to die. Verse 32, "They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful." You see those responses again: amazement, fear. "And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him." He told them multiple times in advance so that they would realize that this was no unexpected turn of events. Verse 33, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

He came to die. He came to suffer. Why would the Son of God do that? That makes no human sense. This is incomprehensible apart from the word of God. This is certainly incomprehensible by any human measure of power and authority. When men on earth get authority, they exercise it to their own benefit. Here is a man with authority and he's going to die? You've got authority over all these realms and you're going to subject yourself to death? Why would you do that? Mark 10:45, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." There should be a tension in your mind just about now, a tension that says, "But you've got all of this authority and yet you're coming to die? You're coming to serve rather than to be served?" Scripture tells us that this great act of condescension was to offer himself, his own life, his own blood as a sin sacrifice to satisfy the demands of God's justice against sin. God's justice, his holiness, needed to be vindicated in light of the sin of men. In light of your sin, my sin. A price eternal in nature which we could not pay for ourselves. Christ came to pay that price with his own life.

Does that thought ever get old to you? Does it get stale because of familiarity? Go back to the question, who is this, and he's going to die? And you realize that suddenly the veil is being pulled back, the curtains are being opened and you are seeing divine glory on

display. A divine glory that would save sinners. A divine glory of one with such majestic power. A divine glory of one who in his merciful condescension would lay down his most holy life for the sake of saving you and me from sin. This is wonderful. This is true. But it so otherworldly that it should provoke a sense of fear and reverence and amazement in our hearts. That's why he's here.

Point 3: what does he want? What does he want? Who is this man? Well, he's the Son of God. Why is he here? He came to die to give his life a ransom for many. Well, what does he want then? Apparently, this isn't something that I can just read about and go away from unchanged. Look at Mark 8:34. His grace and his mercy and his love are real. His invitation to you to come to him for the forgiveness of sins is sincere and his promise to forgive you if you put your faith in him is guaranteed. But beloved, this is not something with which we trifle. What does he want? He's calling you to follow him with everything that you have. Look at Mark 8:34, "And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me,'" seeing who I am after all, if you want a part of me, here's what is required, "he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." There is no easy believism in the true gospel of Jesus Christ. The call of Christ on sinners is that they would surrender their lives to him, that they would acknowledge him for who he is, the Lord of all. That having seen the fullness of him on display in the gospel, realizing that he has authority over all, that you would bend your heart in permanent submission and allegiance to this one. No games. There is an utter self-repudiation that is inherent in saving faith. "I repudiate my old man. I repudiate my sin. I disown my old man. I deny him. I leave him behind and I come alone with no preconditions, with no reservations, with no qualifications. I come to you, Lord Jesus, and I place my life before you. If the seas are going to bow before you, heaven won't find me refusing my own bended knee." The one who rejects the Lordship of Christ is someone who deliberately says, "He will not reign over me," is a man still in his sin no matter what kind of foolish simplistic prayers he prayed in the past. Christ says, "If you want to come after me, deny yourself. Take up your cross," which the cross in that day was an instrument of execution, "and follow me. Recognize my headship. Recognize my leadership. Recognize my Lordship and give your heart over to following me unreservedly." That's what he wants.

You see, it couldn't be any other way. It couldn't be. It couldn't possibly be any other way. He has all this authority. He commands demons. He cancels sins. He commands the sea. He discerns the secrets of the heart. He condescended to death himself. How did we ever begin to think that we could casually deal with him and not have it impact every area of our lives? Where did we ever get that idea? That's foolishness. That turns this great majesty into a trivial game. No. No. No. This one who has authority over all is making, when he calls you to follow him, understand that he is placing upon you an authoritative call over all of the totality of the affections of your heart and says, "That is the only way that I will receive you is if you come to me like that. If you withhold an area of sin, if you're conscious of saying, 'I want you to save me but I don't want to follow you,'" he'll have no part of you. You see, blow through all the smoke and realize that we have to come to Christ on his terms, not on ours. He determines the terms of salvation. He determines the terms of surrender.

We don't get to make it up on our own. Christ says, "Deny yourself and follow me." You say, "I don't want to do that." Well, look on in verse 35, "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Verse 38, here it is. Here is the eschatological punch. Here is the consequence of how you respond to Christ. "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." Look, I'm never going to get tired of reminding you of your appointment with an eternal God. I can't let that go. I can't let you let that escape from your thinking. That day is coming and those who casually respond and reject and dismiss the words of Christ here in the gospel are going to find that when they are before the Judgment Seat of God, he is going to dismiss them into eternal condemnation. There are such great and profound consequences to the truth with which we are dealing this morning. To dismiss and reject what Scripture so clearly teaches us is to invite eternal condemnation on your head. Christ says, "Follow me," and if you're ashamed to do that, if that's something that you don't want, he says, "Beware that there's a consequence on this day when I return in glory. You're ashamed of me now? When I come in glory, I'm going to be ashamed of you and the opportunity for you to repent will have passed and there will be no second chance."

So beloved, you young people, trying to come to grips with the gospel, understand that the consequences of what we're talking about here are incalculable. I can't help but have the sense, Spurgeon described it, the sense of agony over those of you who are careless and indifferent and flippant in response to the gospel because the consequences are so vast. You could not possibly understand the consequences of what you're doing but understand, that won't excuse you on the day of judgment. Jesus is calling every one of us to a permanent, irrevocable, spiritual commitment to him to follow him, that transcends everything in life. Only that kind of surrender is the mark of true saving faith. Have you responded to Christ that way? Is that the mark of your life? It's the only question that matters.

Who is this man? He's the Son of God. Now what are you going to do with that? So we can put the fourth question, this final way: what do you say? Who is this man? Why is he here? What does he want? What do you say? My non-Christian friend, I ask you one more time, "What do you say?" What will you do with Christ? What will you do with this one of all authority who calls and tells you, commands you, "Follow me. Deny yourself and follow me"? On what basis would you tell this authoritative, eternal Son of God, "No, I'll go my own way"? Do you think that he's going to lightly treat that rejection when he has graciously offered himself to you in the gospel? What do you say?

To my brothers and sisters in Christ. We had a sweet, sweet time remembering his death on Friday, didn't we? That was a wonderful time together. What I want you to see is that this reality about the authority of Christ helps us too. It's not just a call to salvation. Clarity about Christ, clarity about his authority, frames our entire attitude toward him. When you're clear on the authority of Christ, it should build in your mind a

superstructure, a framework with which you think about all of life and it's a framework of holy reverence toward Christ. Christianity was never meant to be a superficial flippant thing. It couldn't possibly be about an act of religious ritual that leaves your life unchanged. It couldn't possibly be that. This is real. This is profound, the revelation of Christ. And as such, if you appreciate the profundity of who Christ is, then you start to get a measure of the profundity of what your response to him should be like. Profound reverence. Profound fear. Profound devotion to this anointed one of God.

Look at Mark 16 and with this I'll close. Mark 16:8, which according to the earliest and most reliable manuscripts is where the gospel of Mark really ended. Verse 8, we read it earlier, those who were told about the resurrection and this culmination of the entire gospel of Mark, "They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." Does your soul know something of an acquaintance with the fear of God? Something of trembling in the presence of the majestic Christ? Do you know something of that? That's the mark of true conversion. We see his authority with mental understanding and we tremble before it. We fall silent before him. Enough of a causal response. Enough of superficiality consumption or being consumed with earthly life. Beloved, beloved, this is the authoritative Son of God. As Habakkuk said, "Let all the earth fall silent before Him." We worship, we submit, we tremble in the presence of this holy greatness.

My Christian friends, what do you say about Christ? Stop and think. Stop and think. What do you think about this Christ? Stop and think because your life is answering that question. Your approach to life is answering in a way that goes very deep. Your life is answering the question. Christ has risen. He has risen indeed. He has risen for our justification. He's risen for the forgiveness of our sins. But when we see him for who he is, we're filled with joy. Yes, we're filled with reverence as well.

Let's bow in prayer.

Lord Jesus, we bow before you as those who have been redeemed and reconciled to you. We give you thanks that you have accomplished our salvation by offering yourself as a ransom for our sin. We thank you for that and we thank you that we are truly reconciled to a holy God. Having been reconciled, our God, we want our lives to be worthy, to reflect a spirit of worship. Not just an emotional passing thought, not that, Lord. No, we want to respond to you as Christ said to respond to you. To deny ourselves. To repudiate our sin. To repudiate our autonomy. To take up our cross. To be willing even to sacrifice and die for this Lord and to follow you. The privilege of knowing you, the privilege of walking with you, the privilege of having you order our thoughts and words and actions, Lord, that is the response with which we come to you in response to this gospel of Mark.

For those who are outside that realm perhaps convicted for the first time that they've never responded to you like this, O Lord, I pray that you would have mercy on their souls and lead them to saving repentance and faith in Christ. Father, for those whose hearts are still hard, who after all of this still are cold and impenetrable like a big lump of rock, God, we pray for them again and pray that you would shatter the rock, remove that heart

of stone that is cold and lifeless and non-responsive and give them a heart of flesh that is warm and receptive and trusting in Christ. Save them too, Father, to the uttermost.

Lord Jesus, who are you? You are the Christ. You are the Son of the living God. You are the only Savior of the world and we believe in you. We trust you. We rejoice in you. We look forward to seeing you face-to-face. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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