

Compassionate, Praying Jesus

Summaries of Mark Part 4
Mark 1:30-39 5/20/2018

Summary: Having an absolute authority over you is a great thing if he is loving. Jesus showed his compassion by taking care of Peter’s mother-in-law (called people to leave family, but not to neglect them) and in his care for the crowd. His compassion came from his subjecting himself to our weakness, which is seen in his prayer life, which was an example for us. Sometimes there is a need for extended, uninterrupted prayer, which is worth what it costs you.

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Mark 1:30 Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” 38 Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”

39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” 41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. 43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44 “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.” 45 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.

Introduction

Last week we saw Jesus' awesome, staggering, absolute authority over everything and everyone. Is it a good thing or a bad thing to be under an authority like that? It depends. It depends on how wise he is and on how loving he is. If you have someone in charge who is foolish, or who is cruel, that's a bad thing. But if the one who is in authority over you is loving and wise, that's the best possible life. And when I say "best possible" – I mean that. It's a lot better than being your own authority. Most people think they would be happiest if they could just be their own authority. They think, "If I could just call all my own shots in life, that the ideal situation." That is dead wrong.

The fact is, we need a king because we are incapable of ruling ourselves. I am incapable of being my own king because I'm utterly unqualified for the position. I don't have enough wisdom, I don't know the future, I don't control the future, I don't love people enough, I don't prize God's glory enough, I make mistakes, I do dumb things – I'm a terrible candidate for the role of king over my own life. I've proved that a million times.

And yet what do I do? What do we all do? We all keep trying to climb up onto God's throne and be king of our own lives. Why are we impatient and short with people? Why do we retract into ourselves and become oblivious to the needs of the people around us? Why are we so often selfish? It's because we're immersed in our own kingdoms.

Why do we get so uptight when someone stands in the way of what we're trying to do? Is it because we're concerned about God's kingdom? No. If we're honest, we'll admit that most of our anger has absolutely nothing to do with God's kingdom. Our anger has to do with our kingdom. I don't want people to be obstructionist and hinder the agenda of king me.

I'm constantly jumping back and forth between two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Darrell. The kingdom of Darrell is a place where Darrell Ferguson sits on the throne and expects his wife and kids and all the people around him – and the weather and circumstances and everything else to serve him and accommodate his preferences, and to adjust to his comfort and convenience.

And here's the thing – the kingdom of self is not a happy place. The truth is, I hate my time in the kingdom of Darrell. Every hour I spend in that kingdom is miserable. The whole time I'm up on that throne, I'm annoyed. Somebody or something isn't falling in line, and I feel slighted. There is momentary pleasure in that kingdom sometimes, but there's no real happiness because when you fall into thinking that everything should go according to your will, it's nothing but aggravating because the world doesn't cooperate. And I don't belong on the throne of anything because I don't have omnipotent power to control things.

So I need the Savior to come and save me from my lame kingdom and bring me into a real kingdom. My biggest need right now isn't for Jesus to come and defeat ISIS, or to come and remove Kim Jong Ill, or to bring justice and annihilate all the wicked people in the world. He will do all that eventually, but that's not the biggest need right now. My biggest need first is for King Jesus to come and conquer king Darrell. We all need that because our own kingdom is a place of nothing but frustration and anger and disappointment and, eventually, total destruction.

But what about his kingdom? What is it like to be ruled by Jesus? Well, again, that will depend on how loving he is. Does he care about my suffering? Is he going to be compassionate with me? That's what Mark is going to show us next. Last week we saw Jesus' authority and power; now he's going to show us Jesus' heart.

Jesus' Compassion

Compassion for Peter's Mother-In-Law

We left off last time with Jesus preaching in the synagogue and suddenly a guy with a demon started screaming at him. And Jesus instantly sent that demon packing. And a few verses later Jesus casts out a bunch more demons, and silences them all. So Jesus starts out his ministry by rattling the cages of hell. Demons are awesome spiritual powers that were far more powerful than any human, and they terrorized

the people. Now we've got someone who can manhandle those demons on a whim. What is it going to be like for us to be ruled by someone like that? Is he going to be a hard master?

So far in this gospel it kind of sounds like it. He called the disciples to follow leave everything and follow him. That sounds kind of demanding – and what about the disciples' families? Poor Zebedee is left out in the middle of the lake in the boat. Does Jesus care about him? Or is he like some kind of cult leader who tells people to disown their families?

Mark 1:30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

What does that show us? It shows us that Jesus requires that we make him a priority above our families, but he doesn't call us to neglect our families. He still cares about Peter's wife and Peter's wife's mom – the whole family.

Sometimes people wonder why this miracle is mentioned. It seems like the least spectacular of all Jesus' miracles, and yet it's reported in 3 different gospels. Why is it so important? One reason is to show Jesus' care for the families of his disciples, including a mother-in-law. And that's significant because in that culture, women were not considered to be important at all. Nobody who was trying to start up a new religion in that culture would give any attention to women. Especially not older women. Very often the elderly are sort of pushed to the side, and neglected in society. By doing this miracle and showing special attention to this woman, Jesus was shaking up the value system of the day. And by including it in the Bible three different times, God is shaking up the value system of the world forever. Christ's values are not shaped by his culture. Jesus loves mothers-in-law.

And you can see his tender heart in how he does this healing. Jesus has various ways of healing; in this case he does it by taking her by the hand and helping her up. Such a gentle, tender gesture.

So we see the gentleness of Christ, we see his care for those who are neglected, and we also see that his love for us extends to ordinary situations. Jesus' mighty power isn't just for special, spectacular circumstances. It's for all of life. Because let's face it – most of life is not spectacular at all. Our lives are a series of very unremarkable little moments, where ordinary aspects of this broken world press in on us, and we need God's mercy. Those moments of life that wouldn't even be included in your own autobiography because they are too boring – Jesus cares even about those.

Healed to Serve

And look at her response:

31 ...The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

Typical mother-in-law – she starts serving everybody. But that response teaches us two things. First, it shows us the completeness of the healing. She didn't need a week of bed rest to recover her strength – the healing was complete instantaneously. But it also shows us the reason for the strength God gives us. The way this great King – this awesome authority, gets his people to serve him is not by heavy handed, intimidating, demands or threats of punishment like other rulers. He gets us to serve by winning our hearts. He comes and takes us by the hand and touches us and heals us and restores us, and his tenderness and love inspires our hearts to want to serve him.

Jesus gives us health so we can serve. And what this woman did for the kingdom of God may not sound very earth shattering – just helping make preparations for lunch, but God doesn't need us to do earth shattering things. He does the earth shattering things; our role is to use whatever strength he has given us to humbly serve his people.

And do you want to hear something really cool? When it says **she began to wait on them**, that word *to wait on* (*daikoneo*) was used one time already in this gospel – back in v.13, when the angels waited on Jesus out in the wilderness during his temptation. Two parties have the high honor and staggering privilege of waiting on Jesus – the holy angels, and Peter's mother-in-law.

And that's evidence that Peter's mother-in-law had the right response to Jesus' miracles and teaching. Later on in the book (ch.9,10), Jesus will teach that the objective for his followers is for them to become servants. And the greatest of his disciples will be the ones who were the servants of all. So when James and John come later and ask Jesus for the #1 and #2 seats in the kingdom, who knows? God the Father might have been saying, "Sorry guys. The #1 spot is going to Peter's mother-in-law." (Or someone like her – a humble servant.)

Purpose: Repentance, not Amazement

She shows us the right response to Jesus; then in v.27 we see the wrong response.

27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this?"

They are amazed and confused. That is not an adequate response to Jesus. He didn't come to bring about amazement and confusion; he came to bring people to repentance and belief.

Mark 1:15 ...Repent and believe the gospel!

It's not enough to just listen to Jesus. It's not enough to be amazed and astonished at Jesus. In fact, it's not even enough to be so amazed that you go out and spread the word about Jesus.

28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

That's not enough either. We haven't responded properly until we repent and believe.

Compassion for the Crowds

Ok, so mom is now up and running, she gets a meal together, and they all sit down and enjoy a nice dinner and some fellowship. Then they all watch the Broncos game, or whatever they did in the afternoon until the sun finally went down and they have to light some lamps in the house. But they can't go to bed because there is a knock at the door. Peter's wife opens it, and her eyes get as big as quarters, she loses her breath for a second and takes a couple steps back. Peter runs over and looks out there, and there is a sea of people. Mark says **the whole town gathered at the door**. The whole town shows up. 32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demonized. That's not really a big surprise, once the word got out. If Jesus were in Broomfield somewhere and offered to heal any problem you had, how many of you would go see him? It's no surprise at all that pretty much everyone in town would have showed up. So what does Jesus do?

Personal Attention

Verse 34 says he healed them. And Luke tells us that he gave each one personal attention. He could have just waved his arm over the whole crowd and instantly made them all better. But he didn't do that. He laid his hands on each, individual person. He wanted to meet them face to face and look into their eyes and give that one person his attention at that moment. So again, we see his loving, tender heart.

It is good to have Jesus as the authority in your life because he is not only powerful and wise, but he's loving and compassionate. And if you ever doubt his compassion for you, just remind yourself of the fact that he knows what it's like for you. He lived a human life, and he faced the same kinds of struggles and problems and temptations that we face. That's one of the main points of the book of Hebrews – to remind us of that. And you can see it in his prayers.

Jesus' Prayers

Jesus Our Example

Hebrews 5:7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Jesus subjected himself to the same weakness we have so that he had to cry out to the Father in prayer. And this is an example of one of those times.

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

There is something special about praying in the morning. It doesn't have to be in the morning, but most of the people I know who have a really great daily routine of prayer have it in the morning. It's usually the best time because nothing has happened yet. Any other time of day, things pup up and life intrudes. Generally speaking, the more important something is, the earlier you place it in your day. First things first. So a routine of morning prayer is good, but this was something beyond Jesus' routine. He needs some extended time, so he actually leaves town.

Color

Imagine this. After staying up late into the night healing everyone, they finally go to bed and everyone in the house is fast asleep, including Jesus. But then Jesus wakes, and he's got something on his mind – something important. Something he needs to talk to the Father about. So he slips out of bed, gets dressed, and steps outside. He makes his way through the deserted, pitch-black streets of Capernaum and keeps walking until he comes out into the open fields outside of town. The demons out there shudder as they see their worst nightmare now coming out. But he's not coming after them this time.

Beyond the fields are some hills. And as Jesus gets up into the hills, there's a hollow in the hillside up ahead that's hidden from view. He sees that and thinks, *That's the spot.*

Meeting God in the Desert

It says he went to a **solitary place**. That's the same word he used to describe the desert where Jesus was tested by Satan.¹ The place where Satan attack's us the most and the place where God's presence is most available are very often the same place.

So what did Jesus pray about? Mark doesn't say. He doesn't want us to know what Jesus prayed about; he wants us to focus on the fact that it was really early in the morning, that it was secluded, and that Jesus went way out of his way to do it.

Doing this was very, very important to Jesus. Why? Because he needed guidance and strength. Jesus is almighty God, but he never utilized his divine nature in ways that would give him an advantage in living the life that he calls us to live. If he did, he couldn't be an example to us. So he subjected himself to weakness, and then showed us the way so we could follow in his steps. So his getting away to pray like this is an example for us.

The Various Kinds of Prayer

And what do we learn from Jesus about prayer? Sometimes we see Jesus offer quick, one-sentence prayers. That's one kind of prayer – quick interactions with God as you're going about your day. Jesus

¹ This is a little strange, because there is no desert in that area. It was lush, green, cultivated land. But Mark uses this word to describe a secluded place because he wants us to connect the dots in our minds between this and the last time Mark used this word which was back in verses 12-13 to describe the place where Jesus was tested by Satan. This is the 5th time Mark has used that word in chapter 1. He used it in vv.3,4,12, and 13. Here Mark adds the word **place**. It's a wilderness-type place in the sense that, just like a desert, there are no people there.

also taught us to have a daily routine of prayer – get alone, go into your room and close the door as a regular routine. That’s also important. But here we learn there are some times when you need more than that. Every once in a while something happens in your life that is especially important –

- a really big decision,
- a time of great suffering or loss,
- a threat to your family,
- some major temptation or failure,
- feeling distant from God.

You always need prayer, but there are occasions in your life when you *really* need it. And in those times Jesus taught us to get alone in a secluded place for several hours of uninterrupted, extended, intensive, focused, private communion with God.

Intentional

And that takes some planning. If you’re waiting until this just sort of happens spontaneously – like, you’re thinking one of these times, in a sudden fit of spirituality you’re going to grab your Bible and go off somewhere for a whole morning of seeking after God, just ask yourself – how many times has that happened in the last year? Or decade? Or lifetime? This kind of prayer doesn’t happen spontaneously; it’s intentional and it takes some planning.

Relational

When all we ever offer God is distracted prayer, it’s because we’re forgetting that when we pray, we are talking to a person. The goal is intimacy with God, and relationships become intimate in seclusion. That’s why a guy doesn’t usually say to his girlfriend, “Hey, why don’t we just hang out with your parents and your little brother tonight? They want to be alone, because intimacy requires seclusion.

And that’s true with God too. There are things that need to happen in your relationship with God that can only happen in times of secluded communion with God.

It may be that you need an extended time of contemplating all the various blessings God has given you and responding in gratitude – not just for five minutes, but for a couple hours. Maybe you’ve fallen into self-pity, and five minutes of gratitude just isn’t doing the job. It’s not readjusting your attitudes or emotions. It’s not giving you joy and warming your heart in feelings of love toward God. Getting joy from the presence of God is like getting a tan in the sun. It just doesn’t happen in five minutes.

Maybe there’s a sin in your life, but your repentance is hollow and shallow. Maybe there’s some good thing that you really want, and you’re crying out to God to give it to you. And God wants to give it to you. But he wants to give it to you after a long period of really banging on the door like the persistent widow because if it comes too easy, it’ll do you more harm than good. Maybe there’s a particular attribute of God that just isn’t penetrating your heart, so you need a long time alone with just you and God and the book of Psalms.

It’s like any other relationship. For a married couple, sometimes a peck on the cheek is just fine. But other times you need to go out to a nice dinner or even get away for a week alone somewhere.

It’s so easy to forget the relational aspect of prayer. We can get so caught up in a legalistic, regimented attitude about our prayer time that we forget about God. “Got to have my devotions! I’ve got to get through my prayer list. Got to read my chapter in the Bible” and we forget about God.

Like when a wife says to her husband, “You’re here, but you’re not really present.” What does she mean by that? She means your body is there, but your mind is on other things. You’re not paying attention to her. A lot of men think they can multitask when they are talking to their wives. But there’s actually no such thing as multitasking. The human brain is not capable of ever thinking of two things at once. It seems like it, but what’s actually happening is you are switching back and forth really fast. If he’s talking to her while he’s watching the game, he’s not doing both at once. It’s the game for a little bit, then

a little bit of wife, game, wife, back and forth. But if you really want intimacy, sometimes it requires your full, undivided attention for an extended time.

When you're seeking the presence of God, realize – he's seeking your presence too. Rule #1 for experiencing the presence of God is this: be present. If you want him to be present with you, you be present with him. Stop obsessing about everything else and just turn your attention to him. Take a moment to enjoy the incomprehensible fact that you are, in that moment, *alone with God!* Let the rest of the world fade away, and realize, "It's just you and me right now God." You're looking up to God, and he's looking down upon you. You're attending to him and he's attending to you. You have his full attention, and he has your full attention.

Profitable

And that kind of intimacy with God is worth whatever it costs. You might be saying, "Jesus could do that - he was a young man. He didn't have the difficulties that come along with old age." Or a young mother might say, "Yeah, Jesus could take off whenever he wanted – he didn't have to make the kids breakfast and pack lunches in the morning." Or "Jesus didn't have a job – I can't just get away like that. I've got responsibilities."

That's true – Jesus didn't have all the same problems we have. But don't ever think it was easy for him. It might be hard for us because of physical limitations, or family, or work. And we've got some really important responsibilities. But what about Jesus? How important were the things he had to walk away from to pray like this? I think the least important thing on his schedule was probably more important than the most important thing on my schedule. And Jesus didn't have another 10 or 20 years to live – he only had a couple years left. There were people who were sick and dying, and he had to let them continue to be sick so he could get away for prayer – that's how important it was.

You might be busy, but when is the last time you had so many people pressing in on you that you had to climb into a boat just to avoid being crushed? You may have bills that need to be paid; Jesus had lepers who needed to be cleansed. A young mom might have kids screaming for her; Jesus had demons screaming at him. You have lots of stress in your life; Jesus had lots of people trying to kill him.

It was just as hard, if not harder, for Jesus to get away for a morning for prayer than it is for us, but he found a way to do it because of how valuable this was to him. Extended times of intensive prayer is so incredibly valuable, it's worth whatever it costs you. The more pressure you have in your life the more you need this kind of prayer. We don't pray because God needs it. *We* need it.

The reason we don't do it is because we don't think it's worth the benefit. If some rich person offered to pay you \$10,000 to go spend a half a day alone somewhere, you'd do it in a heartbeat, because the reward is high enough. You won't do this until your soul is convinced that the reward is worth it. Jesus was convinced. It won't cost you as much as it cost Jesus, because his time was worth more than our time, and yet it was worth it to him because of what he got out of it.

Clarity of Direction

So what was the benefit? What did Jesus get out of it? For one thing, clarity of direction. Jesus has a decision to make. What should he do next in his ministry?

37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

That's a great opportunity for ministry. But there are also other towns that need him. So what should he do? How do you know when it's time to stay and when it's time to go? Look how Jesus responds:

38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages so I can preach there also.

There's no hesitation, no equivocation, no collaboration with the disciples – Jesus knows exactly what to do. It's time to leave that place and go to another place – absolute clarity of direction. That's what happens when you seek God like this. It gives you direction because it refocuses you on your calling. 38

let us go somewhere else so I can preach ... That is why I have come. 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching. The crowds in Capernaum clamoring for Jesus seemed like a great opportunity, but after spending a morning in prayer Jesus came away with a strong, compelling sense of why he was here. Those people clamoring for him were clamoring for miracles and healing. But that wasn't what Jesus came for. He came to preach.

When people put pressure on you, it's very easy to get pulled away from your calling. And you can spread yourself too thin. And a time of extended prayer can refocus our understanding of what God has called us to do.

What do you desire most in life? If you truly desire it, you'll pray like this for it. Because God responds to intense, passionate prayer.

James 5:16 ...The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. 17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

The reason God answered Elijah's prayer wasn't because he was Elijah. It was because he prayed really, really hard. And that kind of prayer is available to all of us.

Conclusion

We are under the authority of an awesome, powerful King – the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is wonderful for us, because he not only has awesome power, but he is also loving and compassionate. He has compassion on us as one who has actually experienced the weakness and troubles that we have in life, blazing a trail for us to follow in his steps. And those steps lead us out into seclusion for seasons of intensive, prolonged communion with the Father.