

# Who is Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Open your Bibles to Mark 2, Mark 2, page 837, and so for the next few Sunday nights, next week and Sunday and then a couple of Sunday nights afterwards, we're going to look at kind of big questions, can you give me a reason, one good reason why I should believe, why does God allow suffering, I can't remember what next week is, and this week is, um, uh, and all I want to do is I want to start, I find it sometimes easy, what I find it quite helpful is that when speakers tell you what do they want you to do, um, as a result of this talk, and so I want to give you my aim in this talk, sorry, I'm a little bit jumbled up, what's my aim in this talk, and my aim is, in this talk, is that by the time I finish, probably about 20-25 minutes, I would like you to have joined the family of God, and I would like you to have put your trust in Jesus, maybe you've done that, and so my aim for you is, if you've done that, is that you do it again, and that you would come to the table delighted and thrilled that you were part of the family of God, and I thought I'd flag that out at the start, because I don't want to trick you, and we don't want to play tricks, and we don't want to use deceitful methods, we want to be honest, and we want to be clear as a church about what we're up to.

Now, I want to try and persuade you that you need to join the family of God, and so the question is, who is Jesus, is right at the centre of that, isn't it?

Who is Jesus, and who he claims to be, and that really is the story of Mark's Gospel, we're going to pick the story up in Mark chapter 2, which is an account of the life of Jesus, and we're in the second chapter, And Jesus has just returned, verse 1 of chapter 2, to his home base, a little place called Capernaum, and notice as he comes, everyone in the district flock to see him, for good reason. If you read chapter 1, you'll find Jesus doing his thing, you'll find him demonstrating his power, he sees a man with leprosy, the dreaded skin disease that's neurological and not fungal, and with a word he heals the man.

No medical intervention, just a word. No medical intervention, just a word.

[ 2 : 53 ] No medical intervention, just a word.

No medical intervention, just a word. No medical intervention, just a word. And so because he's got that kind of credibility in Mark chapter 1, they flock to him in chapter 2. They flock to see Jesus. They cram into this house like sardines. Interestingly, not to see him heal, but to hear him preached. And we're told that he preached the word.

I'm sure he said more than one word. It'll be a very short sermon. How are you, how you might long for that to be the case? You come to church and the man preaches the word. But he preaches the word. And you know what the word was.

So in chapter 1, verse 15, what was the word? The word is that time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. God's king has arrived. Repent. Turn your life around and believe in the gospel. In other words, God has begun a revolution.

[ 4 : 18 ] And he's taking charge of a world that has thumbed its nose at him. And as he's preaching, the four men bring their disabled friends to him. The word here is paralytic.

Where I grew up, you'd use the word paralytic of somebody who took us to drink. I think it helps us to think disabled man. What it means here is that he's on a paralysis. He's got a broken back of some sort.

He can't work. He can't walk. So his four friends kindly bring him to Jesus. And these four men cannot force their way through the crowd.

There is no disabled parking space outside this house. And this man is not given a name. But you can bet your bottom dollar, can't you, that this man has got a story to tell.

Every disabled person I know has a story to tell. I think of a young guy in the village I grew up in. His name was Mark. He played rugby.

[ 5 : 18 ] He was strong and fit. He had an attractive fiancé. He had a great job and a lovely car. And he was what everyone wanted to be in lots of ways. At age 21, he was playing rugby for a policy of life for the next village along.

He went into a ruck in completely the wrong position. And he was crushed. He said, I can't feel anything from the neck down. And although there's been some recovery over the years, as far as I'm aware, he's wheelchair bound.

They took him to a hospital actually in Bristol that specialised in spinal problems. They put him through 15 and 20 operations, hoping that the next one would fix things, but it never did.

And so Mark's life was never the same after that. His fiancée stayed with him for a while, but after six months she broke the engagement off. I don't blame him, but that's what she did. Two years later, she married someone else.

He had to wait 30 years before he got married. It was a long 30 years. My sister would go and visit him. People said that he would just weep for hours, that he'd lost everything.

[ 6 : 27 ] But I want to say to you, we need to think behind this story, what the story is. That's how desperate these four guys are to bring their friend to Jesus.

So what do they do? Well, desperate men do desperate things, don't they? They climb up on the roof. It's a flat Palestinian roof.

It may well have been a thatched roof. And they work out which room Jesus is in, speaking in. And which part of the room Jesus is speaking in. And then they punch a hole in someone else's roof.

And they lower him down. You can imagine, can't you, from the inside, as good as a preacher as Jesus is, not even he can keep the attention on himself. Because of the dust in the air.

Because of the hole. And the owner of the house is probably estimating how much this is going to cost, isn't he? And anyway, the hole gets progressively bigger until it's large enough for the man to be lowered and placed at the feet of Jesus.

[ 7 : 32 ] And the guy says at the back, doesn't he? See, they could find space after all. Anyway, there he is. And you think, what is the worst thing that could happen at this point? What's the worst?

The worst is nothing. Imagine Jesus said, I'd like to help you, but I can't. Why don't I pray a little prayer to make you feel better?

But Jesus sees this man. And interestingly, he sees the faith of the four men on the roof. He sees the man lying helpless. And that man was saying to Jesus, wasn't he?

I trust you with my life to do something. So Jesus recognises that they trust him. It is the nature of relationship, whether it is human or divine.

And Jesus says to him, well, what we've grown to expect from Jesus. Take up your mat and walk. Get up. The only thing is, in this event, he doesn't just do that.

[ 8 : 39 ] The shock statement is in verse 5. He says, when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven.

And you would feel like saying, whoopee-doo-dah. That's not why I've come here, Jesus. It's almost like it's a bad joke in verse 5.

It's so obvious why the man is there, is it? Why is the man there? You can answer it yourself. The man is there to be healed. Jesus, are you on some kind of other planet? Are you implying, very offensively, that my disability is connected with some sort of sin?

Is that what Jesus is doing? Of course not. Why did he do that? Well, I tell you, I don't care how much faith this man had, he didn't come in such a dramatic way into the house, running the risk of really looking like an idiot, possibly opening himself up to a rest, to basically have his sins forgiven. This man wanted to do what you and I take for granted. He wanted to be able to stand on his own two feet without the help of his friends. He wanted to walk.

[ 9 : 55 ] So you understand what Jesus is doing in the clearest and strongest and most forceful way. It's a very, very easy passage to understand. He's saying to this man who's lying helpless at his feet, but not just him, he's saying to the four guys on the roof, he's saying to everyone in that crammed house in Capernaum on that day, and he's saying to every one of us here tonight, do you understand that the real problem in your life is not the fact that your mum didn't love you properly?

The real problem in his life is not that your dad didn't respect you. It's not the fact that you can't get the job or keep the partner or keep the job.

It's not the fact that you can't manage your money. It's not the fact that you can't manage your money. It's not the fact that you hate school. Even though each one of those things are worthy of a

quarter of grief, aren't they?

Jesus is saying, you understand what the core problem of humanity is, what your biggest problem is, and it's that simple three-letter word, sin. That which if it's not dealt with will cut you off from God. Sin, that crossing of the line. That failure to be what God has made you to be. God's instructions are very simple, aren't they?

[ 11 : 20 ] Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul. Love your neighbour as yourself. That is the target, the bullseye.

And sin simply means to miss the mark. And if the mark is to love God and love your neighbour, we all keep missing the mark, more or less, some more than others.

But the bottom line is, we have all sinned. We've all fallen short. And wherever you are on the spectrum of morality, if we say, Adolf Hitler is on that side of the room and Mother Teresa is on that side of the room, for want of a better person, I guess, some of us are somewhere in the middle. But God has a case against the lot of us. And whether you feel guilty tonight or not is really not the point. At this point, all I'm asking you to accept is the verdict that God has got a case against the lot of us.

That's all I'm asking you to accept, that God has got a case against the lot of us. And it left undealt with, if our sins remain unforgiven, then it results in a consequence where we shall be cut off from the living God.

[ 12 : 38 ] Forever. And I want to tell you, that is how desperate this man is. And that is how desperate you and I are. We will be judged by everything we've ever said and thought and done.

And Jesus says, into this bleak situation, he says, I've got terrific news for you tonight. I have got the authority and I have got the right and I have got the power to forgive your sins and make them go away.

That is my sole privilege. But the thing about forgiveness is only the person you sin against and wound is really entitled to forgive you.

So for example, if I borrow Robert's MacBook and I absolutely ruin it, I spill coffee on it and it's completely ruined, it is no good you coming up to me next Sunday and say, Paul, I forgive you for what you did to Robert's laptop.

Because I didn't sin against you, did I? I sinned against him. You can say, I forgive you if you want, but it's his forgiveness that I will need.

[ 13 : 54 ] And since you live in God's world and every human being is made in the image of God, when we do the dirty on each other, we are doing the dirty on him.

It is impossible tonight to wrong another human being and not in the very instance wrong God. And so while we may appreciate forgiveness from each other, let me encourage you, it's a very good thing to forgive one another, but it's his forgiveness that he desperately needs.

And so the religious experts in the room, they have worked this out, haven't they? They're not stupid. They have realised that by claiming forgiveness of sins, Jesus is claiming, embedded in that, that he is God.

And that is what they say to him in verse 6 and 7, isn't it? In fact, they don't say it, do they? Look at verses 6 and 7. Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts.

They don't say it to him. Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Some teachers of the Lord, they are not barristers and lawyers, they are theologians.

[ 15 : 15 ] And these kind of theologians, they are thinking to themselves, so you don't say it out loud, why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

And they're absolutely right, aren't they? Only God can forgive sins. And Jesus is claiming an equality to God here. And interestingly, in a God-like way, Jesus knows exactly what they're thinking.

And he says to them, boys, which do you think is easier? He confronts them with a choice to say to this guy, get up, take your mat and go walk, or to say, my son, your sins are forgiven.

To actually say those words takes no effort at all. But both those things, healing and forgiving, they are the prerogative of God.

And so Jesus makes his point very clear in verse 10. He says, I will prove to you that I, the Son of Man, have authority to forgive sins. And the reason why Jesus performs this miracle, the reason he performs this miracle is not first and foremost out of compassion.

[16:22] I'm sure that is there too. What is he doing in this passage? He's making an object lesson out of the healing of this man. He's saying, I'll prove to you that this man's sins are forgiven.

I will do the visible miracle so that you will understand that the invisible miracle of forgiveness has taken place. The visible, in this passage, shows that the invisible has taken place.

So he says to the man, get up, take your mat and get out of here. That's exactly what he does.

Jesus didn't heal the man because it was his biggest problem. He healed the man to make the clear point that you and I need to grasp that we need to be forgiven.

The thing about forgiveness is you don't look any different when you're forgiven. It's not like you get a halo topping up or anything. That guy is forgiven. Look at him.

Christians are often accused of looking in a certain way of looking uncool. But forgiven people don't look any different from unforgiven people.

[17:35] And so my prayer is tonight and over coming weeks there will be some that become Christians and they move from death to life. They move from being an enemy of God to a child of God.

They move from being outside of the family of God to being in the family of God and they're not going to look any different. I can't tell by looking at you. We can't tell by looking at this man that he is forgiven.

So Jesus said let me do another miracle that you can see with your eyes to prove that this man's sins are forgiven. And so he says get up take your mat and walk. Just notice the guy did not limp out.

he walked out. They say if you never walk to build up your muscles when you're in bed for a week you kind of have to spend a few days kind of learning to walk again don't you?

But it's not like that here. It's instantaneous because when Jesus heals he heals completely there is no six months of slowly getting better. This man doesn't go to rehab.

[18:39] No it's instantaneous and complete. And when he heals he heals completely and when he forgives he forgives completely. Isn't that extraordinary? But when Jesus forgives he truly forgets in the sense of not holding our sins against us anymore.

You know I think people battle with the notion that Jesus performs miracles. But if you are the son of God that is nothing. I think the harder one to swallow when you really think about it is can I truly be forgiven?

Because I suspect in fact I know that you don't really have any human experience of this. Let's say you're in a marriage anyone who is married here knows that even when you're forgiven by your partner next time you do it you're going to hear you always do that.

past is always dragged up it's always dragged up into the present but the Bible teaches that when God forgives the past is forgotten we've done children's talks there's lovely images in the Old Testament the Bible says that when God forgives us when he says I forgive you it's like he takes all your sin and he puts it behind your back he puts it behind his back so that you can't see it or the one I love God says when I forgive you I take all your sins and I plunge them at the very bottom sea or when you're forgiven I take your sins as far as the east is from the west which is immeasurable so that you can never find them again never to be brought up there's a guy called George Kishabi and let me tell you a story

George Kishabi is one of these men that when you look at him you think guilty he looks guilty he's got one of those faces now George at 13 watched his mother die and that obviously messed him up a bit then ages 13, 14 and 15 he kind of lost it he broke into other people's homes he stole things and he got in trouble with the police and George Kishabi developed a fairly healthy criminal record at the age of 16 he found the Lord Jesus or more accurately the Lord Jesus found him his life was transformed and for the last 20 years he's been an active member of a church that I know at the age of 21 or 22 he's waiting outside a block of flats for a friend to come out he had to conjunct him and he had sunglasses on and the police drive past and they see George waiting and they think he's got to be guilty so they double back they come up behind him and they drive up next to him and they say excuse me sir what's your name

[21:51] George Kishabi where do you live such and such and such George Kishabi do you have a criminal record the law I think is whatever you do up to the age of 18 is expunged if that isn't true that ruins this illustration it's no longer held against you here's George at 21 knowing what he's done knowing what he looks like and knowing what the law says and he hears the policeman asking George Kishabi do you have a criminal record and with a nice lovely smile he looks at the

policeman and he says no sir guilty as he is because he's no longer treated as guilty that's forgiveness that's what it means to be justified by faith King David a thousand years earlier said blessed is the man who sins the Lord will no longer hold against him that's forgiveness that clean slate that man was lowered into that room that day hoping to be healed but he walked out of that house and something far better had happened to him being healed would affect the rest of his earthly life being forgiven has eternal implications he was right with God if we could bring him back this evening and interview him and say paralegic man because we don't know his name what was the egregious thing that happened on that day he said well it was wonderful

I got my leg restored I was able to run the Ealing half marathon and I was able to play five-a-side football I was able to play football with my kids would he say that no of course he wouldn't he would say the most amazing thing that happened that day is I was forgiven but forgiveness is never cheap and the miracle of forgiveness is so much more costly on that day Jesus handed this man a blank check my son your sins are forgiven but you know the thing about checks if there's no money in the bank they're just a piece of paper and Jesus would have to make that check good and so three years down the tracks Jesus would deliberately lovingly climb onto that cross and he would take this man's sins and have them stapled to his body just like he took the sins of all his people every one of them even the ones who haven't done that yet and have your sins stapled to his body and there at the cross he experienced the punishment for our sins and once that task has been completed he cries out it is finished and God raised this man

Jesus back to life again now as the resurrected lord of the universe and he commands everyone in this room to turn and trust him and to recognise that he and he alone is lord and saviour and there is no one on the face of this earth that has the right to declare you forgiven he is the only one I'm a Presbyterian minister I'm an ordained Presbyterian minister I could do your wedding I could bury you but I can't give you forgiveness no priest can do that for you no church can do that for you you cannot undo what you have done there is only one person on this earth who can declare you forgiven there is isn't there no other name given to men by which we must be saved you cannot go to anyone else and hope to have that done and so can I say can I plead with you I beg you if you've not already done this yet to take the hand of this wonderful saviour he really did live the life that you should have lived he really did die the death that you deserved to die and he really is the living lord and he is the only one he is the solution to your problem and perhaps tonight is a problem that you've not really defined before but if it's not dealt with you will have to experience the full weight of punishment on your own one way or another those sins will get punished it's up to you how do you want it done you will either allow

Jesus to take that punishment on the cross or you will have to experience them yourself and so I'm begging you you do not want to do that you need to entrust yourself to the saviour getting it right about many many things doesn't really matter but getting it right about Jesus does matter it doesn't matter really your exam results I hope you work hard those of you doing exams and I hope you study hard I hope you get good grades but you will revise for lots of things which in the end don't matter but this matters to take this offer of forgiveness from Jesus to be prepared to submit to Jesus lordship to recognise him as your king and saviour understanding that he alone has paid the punishment for your sin and to ask him to forgive you and wonderfully the lord Jesus can say to you tonight son daughter your sins are forgiven let's pray