

## ***The Authority of Jesus (Part 2) – Mark 1:35-45***

Derek Berry  
Calvary Baptist Church  
February 5, 2023

*[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was initially intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions, don't hesitate to get in touch with Pastor Derek at Derek.berry1990@gmail.com.]*

Take your copy of God's Word and meet me in Mark 1:35-45....

Have you ever heard the adage, "you make time for what's important to you?" In other words, your priorities will reveal what you hold dear in life. Often we'll say, "oh, I just didn't have time for such and such." But typically, we're lying. That really means, "I didn't make time for such and such because I was busy with XYZ." Let's start being honest with one another. If going to the gym or working out is a priority, you'll make it fit your schedule. If watching a particular show or spending time on a hobby was crucial enough, it would get accomplished. How often do we say I didn't have enough time to read and pray? And then we consider everything else we accomplished on said day and realize this isn't true. What you prioritize will unveil what you value.

In our text before us this morning, we have examples of what Jesus has authority over and what he values as he prioritizes these elements. We'll consider these verses in three points. Jesus prioritizes:

1. Prayer
2. Preaching
3. Purifying

Let's reread verse 35 to begin with, this first point. We'll start with the theology implied in this text and then move to the application. If you've noticed, that's the pattern of my preaching. It is very Pauline in nature. Whenever writing to the churches, he began with lofty theology and concluded with why theology was necessary for their everyday lives. Therefore, I can't express this enough, never believe the lie that theology is reserved for seminarians. No, it's for local church members! That they may walk in the light of the gospel truths found in the text. So that'll be the formula employed this morning.

So, Jesus rose early in the morning for intimate communion with his Father. This highlights his full deity, along with his full humanity. We'll start with how it magnifies his eternity. Jesus has an intimate relationship with God the Father like none other. Why? Because he has been one with him from eternity past! I recommend you read John 17 in its entirety if you haven't.

*<sup>5</sup>And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

*<sup>24</sup>Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup>O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.*

So, this type of intimate and secluded prayer was somewhat nostalgic to the Lord Jesus because he's been in a personal and loving relationship with His Father before his incarnation. And yet, this prayer also places his full humanity on display. God actually became a man. Jesus didn't live his life on earth as God apart from the Father but as a man dependent upon God. Dear saints, reject the superman heresy. That says that Jesus came as Clark Kent, but when the going got tough, he jumped into the booth and became superman in order to live a victorious life. Here's a little Christology for you this morning. We know that Jesus is God; therefore, he couldn't sin and actually had a perfect prayer life. But is the reason that he was sinless and had a flawless prayer life because he was God, and he appealed to his deity at these times? Or was it because he perfectly submitted himself to the Father? I believe the Bible points to the latter.

Let me give an example that may help. Let's say that one of our students here had a math test. And they were given a calculator so they couldn't flunk the test. Getting a wrong answer was not an option because of their access to a calculator. But let's say they chose not to use the calculator; instead, they did all the work on paper and still received a perfect grade. If that's the case, the why and the how are two different questions. "Why were you unable to fail?" Because I had a calculator. "How did you score a 100%?" Because I worked hard.

Similarly, I would affirm the impeccability of Christ, meaning not only did he not sin, but he was unable to sin. But when asked how he lived a sinless life, the Bible presents that he used the same tools available to you and me. Submission to the Spirit, prayer, intimacy with the Father, and so forth. He humbly relied on God for all things.

*<sup>19</sup>So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father<sup>20</sup> does, that the Son does likewise. - John 5:19*

*<sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. -John 14:10*

So, what does this mean for us? We need prayer! If Jesus prayed in order to live a godly life full of power, so must we!

*<sup>29</sup>And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." -Mark 9:29*

So again, if Jesus is the eternal God incarnate, the Creator of all, who holds everything together by his power according to Colossians 1:16, and yet understood his need to pray, how much more should we? You may have heard some say they've become so in tune with God that all of life is prayer, so they don't need to set aside time for special prayer. But until you exceed the oneness of Christ with the Father, that can't be right!

Prayer is a pride killer. It declares, “God, I don’t have the strength; therefore, I’m relying on you.” It’s God inviting us into the Trinitarian relationship. If you continue reading John 17:

*<sup>26</sup>I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” -John 17:26*

We have access to God the Father through the mediator Christ Jesus by the power of the Spirit. So you must have a private prayer life to walk according to the Spirit. There’s a place for corporate prayer with the saints, but that’s not the point of this text. Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus slips away to get with his Father.

*“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.<sup>2</sup> “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. -Matthew 6:1-4*

This doesn’t mean that everyone will have the same prayer life. Depending on your stage in life, you may get less than your neighbor or less than you have in the past. Regardless, you must have a private prayer life because you’ll be judged based on your situation. Similar to Jesus’ teaching on those given much also being required much. As a pastor, I’m given a reasonable amount of time to pray that I should be utilizing. As a matter of fact, Acts 6 teaches that these two elements, prayer, and preaching, are the primary concerns of the pastor. As parents of little ones with crazy schedules, your prayer time probably won’t be the same as one who is retired. This is not about comparison. It’s about understanding your need for prayer and seeking it out. So, this is a call for introspection. How’s your private prayer life? If it’s non-existent, what is that saying to God? That you have it all figured out and you don’t need something Jesus did to walk by the Spirit? And are you stewarding the time God has given you for prayer? Or is it just extra time for another activity outside of prayer? Who in your life knows about your prayer life? Jesus needed it, and so do you.

Let’s continue to our second point, The Priority of Preaching. Let’s reread verses 36-39.

That phrase, “Everyone is looking for you,” is a kind of rebuke. “Jesus, what are you doing here? This isn’t where you should be! You need to be with the crowds. We’re building a following. Things are beginning to happen. Do you really have time for this prayer?” It doesn’t seem as if they understand the critical place of private prayer. Perhaps that’s why he tells them later that “these only come out through prayer.”

I like what Tim Keller says. “Though he was riding a wave of popular support, Jesus left it behind. Why? He was much more interested in the *quality* of the people’s response to him than in the quantity of the crowd.” So, the idea Peter presented was, “things are going great after last night. Let’s get back and capitalize on it.” But Jesus’ response shows that they didn’t quite

understand his mission. Not yet, at least. He wasn't into riding popularity waves that were devoid of kingdom preaching.

He knew why the people were coming out. They had gotten their taste of healings and exorcisms. But Jesus came down to earth to preach the gospel. This is why he wants to move to the next town. He wasn't simply an itinerant healer. Jesus did heal and still heals today; however, this was secondary to his preaching ministry. The real need is for people to believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins.

Perhaps you're here this morning for a reason apart from relying on Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. We're so glad to have you, and you're welcome anytime. We want you not only here but in our living rooms. But more than that, we want you to understand why Jesus came. He didn't come to fulfill our psychological or relational needs. He came to save his people from their sins!

So there's a priority of preaching in the ministry of Jesus, and there ought to be a priority of preaching in local churches. John Stott once said, "Christianity is, in its very essence, a religion of the Word of God." Luther also said, "Let us consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God, and that where this is no help for the soul in anything else whatever."

We must prioritize the preaching of the Word. We received an advertisement in the mail a few weeks ago that I knew I would one day use as a sermon illustration. On this flyer, the church mentioned that they have concert-like music, TED-like talks, and Networking with professionals. Is that the impression you get after reading these verses? That the way we attract is to remove God's Word and possibly bring it in through the back door? Or does God grow his church through the preaching of the Word? When asked about his ministerial success, Martin Luther said, "I did nothing; the Word did it all."

I agree with John MacArthur here, "Watered-down teaching, platitudes, and sermonettes for christianettes and limp theology and convictionless preaching have replaced strong doctrine, clear exposition of Scripture, profound preaching, and the legacy has been tragic."

Perhaps we should get back to a historically Christian understanding of how to grow, though it may not be the quickest and most explosive way. What you win people with, you have to keep people with. In my experience, I've seen ministries and local churches built off of something other than the Word of God, and once that's removed, so is the church. But since the grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of God endures forever, if we put our hope in God's Spirit using God's Word in God's people, we can't fail. If Jesus were primarily concerned with numbers, he would have remained. But he was concerned with a life change only brought about by preaching the Word.

We see this throughout the entire Bible. God creates and gives life through his Word.

<sup>3</sup> *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. -Hebrews 11:3*

His word has the power to create *ex nihilo*, which means out of nothing.

*By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. - Psalm 33:6*

It's the Word of God that brings spiritual life to the spiritually dead, not TED Talks.

*The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord." -Ezekiel 37:1-6*

So we have to understand what happens when biblical preaching takes place. It's more than just receiving knowledge; you can get that from reading books or conversing. But look at how Paul describes it.

*And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. <sup>2</sup> For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup> And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, <sup>4</sup> and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. -1 Corinthians 2:1-5*

<sup>10</sup> *"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup> so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. -Isaiah 55:10-11*

And this is why preaching must be primary in our churches. It is God doing what he has always done through his word. And his Word will accomplish what it's sent out to do. For this is why he came, and this is why we gather.

Now to our last point, the priority of purifying. Let's reread verses 40-45. For this story to be impactful as it should be, you must grasp the life of a leper. Leprosy refers to skin diseases that cause the flesh to rot. Leviticus 13 sums up the lot of a leper well.

<sup>45</sup> *"The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' <sup>46</sup> He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.*

In other words, the disease was a social death sentence. Can you imagine the humiliation and isolation that lepers must have felt as they were ostracized from society? Many believed this disease to be highly contagious, so they wouldn't want anything to do with a leper. Perhaps we can sympathize with this more than ever in our post-Covid era. There used to be a time when you could cough without feeling judged. Imagine having to shout, "I have Covid, I have Covid" everywhere you went.

By Jesus' time, the rabbinical teachings had made matters worse. It was illegal even to greet a leper, and they had to remain at least 100 cubits away if they were upwind and four cubits if downwind. Josephus, the famous Jewish historian, summarized by saying that lepers were treated "as if they were, in effect, dead men."

There were no illusions in this leper's life about who he was and his condition. And still, this man showed great faith in verse 40. His belief is remarkable because every Jew knew that only God could heal leprosy. Take, for example, the story of Naaman the Syrian in the Old Testament. A mighty man in the Syrian army who had leprosy. The king of Syria sent a letter to the king of Israel asking him to heal Naaman of his leprosy. Here's the king's response:

*7 And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me." -2 Kings 5:7*

So this man has faith that Jesus can do what only God can. He displays no doubt in Jesus' ability to heal; he only wonders whether he will be willing. And look at Jesus' response in verse 41. The word for pity here comes from a Greek word that literally means "guts." We'll continue to see this word used throughout this gospel. If you have the King James Version, it should say "bowels of compassion." So whereas the leper would have turned the stomachs of others with disgust, he turned the stomach of Jesus with love. Maybe you're here, and you need to hear that Jesus' posture is one of love and not one of disgust as others may have had towards you in your life.

Jesus revealed his compassionate heart as he revealed his unparalleled power. Jesus says, "be clean," and once again, the creator's command creates what it calls verse 42. But he also touches the leper, which wasn't necessary for the healing. However, he wanted the leper to feel his willingness and sympathy. Based on his lot in life, we can assume that this man hasn't been touched by a soft, healthy hand in a long time. If he had a wife, he hadn't known her touch or embrace. If he had children, there could be no kiss or touch. He must have longed for contact. And Jesus goes out of his way to provide it for him. Perhaps you've been isolated and pushed away by your family and friends. Maybe you need the soft touch of the Lord Jesus. He beckons you to receive him.

And this story reveals the most extraordinary way he embraces his people by becoming their substitute. Let's reread verses 44-45

So Jesus shows that he is interested in this man reentering society. But he charges him to tell no one about the miracle; however, in his excitement, the man disobeys. So now, instead of the man walking in isolation, Jesus has to. Do you see the great exchange here?

He traded places with the leper. And this is the heart of the gospel—the substitutionary atonement. This is what the story points us to. Consider the words of Kent Hughes. “The nature of leprosy, with its insidious beginnings, its slow progress, its destructive power, and the ultimate ruin it brings, makes it a powerful symbol of moral depravity.”

Similarly, Warren Wiersbe notes, “When you read the ‘tests’ for leprosy in Leviticus 13, you can see how the disease is a picture of sin. Like sin, leprosy is deeper than the skin (v. 3); it spreads (vv. 5-8); it defiles and isolates (vv. 44-46); and it renders things fit only for the fire (vv. 47-59). Anyone who has never trusted the Savior is spiritually in worse shape than this man was physically.”

And that is what we must understand. That we are born with the leprosy of sin, can your own life not attest to the damages of sin? How you can’t meet your own moral standards, let alone God’s righteous and perfect requirements? And just as Jesus traded places with the leper, he switched places with his people on the cross.

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. -Isaiah 53:4-6*

*Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief... -Isaiah 53:10*

This is the good news of the gospel that we receive through repentance and faith to be reconciled to God. And this is the gospel we need to hear every Lord’s Day so that we may be sanctified until his return. And now, because of this good news, we seek God in private prayer, and we preach the Word in our local church.

Let’s pray.