

The Healing King

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Date: 27 October 2019

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[0 : 00] I'd just like to show you a book I got from a friend, 101 Things to Do Before You Die. He really thinks I need to get out a bit more. It says on the book, 101 Things to Do Before You Die is the definitive guide to everything you should do before it's too late.

And basically the book is like a bucket list of goals to achieve, of dreams to fulfil, of experiences to have in life before you die.

So let me just give you some of the suggestions from the book. It says that before you die you should bungee jump, you should milk a cow, you should do a runner from a fancy restaurant, you should drive a car at top speed.

Got quite close to that but not quite. You should invent something and you should be present when your country wins the World Cup, which is probably never going to be happening if you're Scottish.

And actually a whole load of other things, most of which I can't really mention, so I'm not going to. But in this list of things to do before you die, the book is great, it's got some good suggestions, got some awful suggestions, but it mentions out the most important thing to do before you die.

[1 : 17] What is the most important thing that all of us need to do before we die? Why? What is it? Well, it's here in this passage, Mark chapter 2, verse 1 to 12, because according to Jesus, the thing that we need more than anything else in this life before we die is the forgiveness of our sins.

That's what needs to happen before we die. And how does it happen? Well, we've got this story in the Gospel of Mark, it happens because Jesus does that for us. Jesus is the one who forgives our sins. He's the one, ultimately, who heals us.

And so today what I'd like to do is to look at this passage under three headings. First of all, a healing. Secondly, a deeper healing. And then thirdly, the healer. A healing, a deeper healing, and then the healer.

So first of all, let's look at the healing. Jesus, if you've been with us tracking through Mark's Gospel, has been healing loads of people. Everybody comes to Jesus with any problem, and Jesus heals them.

So Jesus has got this celebrity-like status. And so we read in verse 1 and 2 and 3, a few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.

[2 : 25] They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door. And he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man carried by four of them.

A paralyzed man, we don't know whether he was born this way or whether he was like this because of a tragic accident. But we do know he lived in a time when there were no hospitals, there were no social services to help him, and there were no wheelchairs.

But the great thing is that this man had friends. Four friends. And these four friends want to do what they can to help him. It's good to have friends, isn't it?

So they took this man to Jesus, thinking that Jesus would heal him. And the man clearly wanted to be healed. For your friends to open up a roof and lower you down, you must want to be healed.

So verse 4, Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it, and then lowered the mat the man was lying on.

[3 : 27] That's one way to make an entrance, isn't it? Forget arriving fashionably late. The best way is just to come through the roof. I don't know what the owner thought about this act of domestic vandalism, but it had the desired effect.

Because as this man came down, the eyes were on him, and Jesus could see him coming. I can imagine trying to preach with the roof being opened up and people trying to come through.

In fact, normally when I'm trying to preach, people are trying to get out, as opposed to trying to get in. So given the healing power of Jesus that he demonstrated before, these four friends, even the man, were thinking, okay, Jesus is going to heal me.

That seems to be the obvious for what happened next in this story. It would be that Jesus says to the paralyzed man, walk, boom, he gets up, he walks.

But, though that might be the predictable outcome, there isn't what happens. But everybody, I'm sure, can see what this man's pressing need is.

[4 : 32] His need is, his legs don't work, and he needs to walk. So the man, his friends, everybody else is thinking, this is what he needs more than anything else.

It looked like his main problem in life was that his legs didn't work. And so I just wonder, as a question, what do you think your main problem in life is? Just think about it.

What is your most pressing need? What do you think needs to happen in your life more than anything else? For the man, it was surely the healing of his legs.

Surely being able to walk, you'd think, would make him happy, would make him content, would make him complete, would make him satisfied, would make him fulfilled. If only his legs were healed, then everything would be all right.

And I wonder if we sometimes think the same. If only I had healing in my life in this area, if only this thing happened to me, whether it's healing of the body, healing of the mind, healing of a relationship, or if I had this physical ability, or if I had this job, or if I had the right spouse, or if I had the right circumstances, then life would be good.

[5 : 45] Then I'd have what I need, and I'd be happy. Then all my troubles would be gone. I would be complete. But what Jesus shows us here is that what we think we need isn't what we need most.

Isn't it? What we think we need isn't what we need most. So getting what we think we need isn't the ultimate answer in life. Yes, we might be helped. Yes, we might be healed.

Yes, things might get better, but only on the surface, not deep down. There's a great illustration of this in C.S. Lewis's book, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

I wonder if you remember Eustace in the book, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Eustace is a boy. He's selfish. He's difficult. He's always complaining. He doesn't get along with anybody.

And in the book, the *Dawn Treader*, which is the boat, grounds upon an island, well, it lands on an island, and Eustace wanders off away from everybody else, and he ends up being in a cave.

[6 : 46] And the cave's filled with treasure, crowns, coins, rings, bracelets, cups, plates, gems. And so Eustace then starts to think about how he can use all of this stuff to his advantage.

If only he had this treasure, then his life would be far better. He could do what he wanted to do. And yet he falls asleep, but not realizing that he's fallen asleep on the treasure that belongs to a dragon.

And so C.S. Lewis says, in the book he says, he had turned into a dragon while he was asleep, sleeping on a dragon's hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart.

He had become a dragon himself. Only C.S. Lewis can invent words like dragonish. And so for Eustace, this was an obvious problem, because now he was this monster.

He couldn't operate within normal human life, and he realizes that his situation is hopeless, and so what does he do? He starts to cry. And then later, a lion comes to him, a huge lion, which is Aslan.

[7 : 52] And Aslan tells him to undress, meaning he has to peel his skin off, his dragon skin. And so he starts to scratch himself, and the scales come off, and he scratches a little deeper, and he's able to peel off his dragon skin.

And when he peels it off, he realizes that underneath, there's another dragon skin. And so he scratches, and he tears this next dragon skin. Underneath, there's another dragon skin.

For the third time, he gets the skin off, but he's still a dragon underneath. And then Aslan, the lion says, I'll have to do it for you. And so here's how Eustace later tells the story of what happened to him.

He says, I was afraid of his claws. I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now. So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it. The very first tear he made went so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart.

And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. Then he goes on, well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off, just as I thought I'd done it myself the other three times.

[9 : 01] Only they hadn't hurt. And there it was, lying on the grass, only ever so much thicker and darker and more knobbly looking than the others had been. And so he goes on, then he caught hold of me.

I didn't like that much for I was very tender underneath. Now I had no skin on. And he threw me into the water. And then he says, I turned into a boy again.

Now, we can be like the paralyzed man or we can be like Eustace and think that when we get what we want, then everything is going to be fine. And we might even think that we are able to heal ourselves or we are able to solve this problem that we think we have in our lives and when we do it, we'll be fine.

But Jesus is making it clear here with the paralyzed man that we can't help ourselves. We need him to do it for us. If there's any healing going to be done in our life, it's going to be Jesus who comes and does a deeper healing more than just a surface healing.

He wants to go deeper. And so we need to let him. We need to let him, as it were, use his claws to get right down into our hearts and sort us out from the inside.

[10 : 15] And it might hurt and it might be painful, but that's what Jesus wants to do in order to heal us. And so it isn't wrong, don't get me wrong here, it isn't wrong to want our needs in life met.

Just like it wasn't wrong for the paralyzed man to want to be able to walk again. But the problem is that believing in our heads that if we get those needs met then everything will be alright is wrong.

Because we won't be happy, satisfied, sorted, healed just by getting our needs met. Only Jesus will meet our deepest needs in life. And Jesus wants to go deeper.

So let's look at that. Our second point is a deeper healing. Verse 5. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, Son, your sins are forgiven. Now do you think the man, his friends, the crowd, the religious leaders were expecting to hear those words at that moment?

Of course they weren't. And what Jesus says sounds pretty insensitive, but Jesus goes deeper because there's a far more urgent need and deeper problem than this man's paralysis.

[11 : 23] He was there for physical healing but Jesus says he needs a deeper healing and the healing he needs is that his sins are forgiven. So Jesus was meeting this man's deepest need even if the man didn't realize it at the time.

Now we're not denying his suffering, Jesus was going to get to that, but what he needed most was to have his sins forgiven. That's the priority for Jesus for his life because that's why Jesus came.

Well, what is sin and why is sin such a big problem? Sin's not a word that anybody uses much these days or if it is used maybe in the tabloid newspapers it's normally referring to something really evil, something that society in general deems as being pretty bad like murder or paedophilia or terrorism, any kind of killing is seen as being sin.

But for most people sin isn't that serious at all. Certainly nothing to worry about. But Jesus clearly implies here that sin is our biggest problem.

It isn't paralysis, it isn't terrorism, it isn't poverty, it isn't poor education, it isn't climate change with extinction rebellion, it isn't political instability with Brexit.

[12 : 42] Sin, according to Jesus, is our biggest problem in life and that's why there needs to be a deeper healing, a healing that we can't do ourselves. And so when the Bible talks about sin, it's not just referring to the bad things that we do like murder, lying, greed, adultery or whatever else.

Sin is ignoring God in the world that he has made. It's living life as if God didn't even exist. It's deciding that we know best how to live our lives better than God does.

And so we think, well, we don't need to listen to God and we don't need to obey him. And yet, treating God, our loving creator, in this way is disgraceful. And so sin is our main problem because it separates us from God.

And if we continue to live life insisting on our independence from the God who made us, then it's only going to lead to a separation from God forever. And that's what the Bible calls hell.

I used to love Charlie Brown as a kid. Remember, Charles Schultz, Peanuts, comic strip. There's one of them where Lucy says to Charlie Brown, she says, you know what the whole trouble with you is, Charlie Brown?

[13 : 57] Charlie Brown, exasperated as ever when Lucy talks to him. He says, no, and I don't want to know. Leave me alone. And then he just walks off away from Lucy. But Lucy yells back at him as he's walking off and she says, the whole trouble with you is, that you won't listen to what the whole trouble with you is.

And isn't that what the trouble is with the human race? We don't want to listen to what the trouble with us is. We don't want to really seriously and honestly look at ourselves and see how deep the trouble goes, which is all the way right down into our hearts.

Because we just don't view our sin as being the biggest problem in our lives. but every one of us is separated from God. Every one of us is broken by sin.

Every one of us is suffering and in pain and every one of us needs to be healed. And so this story tells us that Jesus wants to forgive. That's part of the healing process is being forgiven for our sin.

Because he wants to get to our main problem and give us what we really need. And that is the forgiveness of our sins. And so no matter what we might prescribe to ourselves to give ourselves a better life, it might heal us on the surface, we might look better, but it won't give that deeper healing.

[15 : 19] And so Jesus here, like a good doctor, prescribes what we actually need. And he's prepared to give it to us even though it might hurt us. But in reality it hurt him as he died on the cross.

So Jesus is the only one who can fix us. So a healing first of all, a deeper healing, and then thirdly the healer. It's obvious that Jesus is the healer. So just notice the responses of the people here.

Mark takes the camera off the paralysed man for a moment and he focuses not on his reaction but on the reaction of the religious leaders instead. So verse 6 and 7 say, now some teachers of the law were sitting there thinking to themselves, why does this fellow talk like that?

He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? So these religious teachers, they knew, because they were smart guys, only God can forgive sin.

But that's what Jesus was claiming that he could do. And so that's why they regarded it as blasphemy, which deserved death. Because you can only have the authority to forgive sin if it's against you.

[16 : 28] So just imagine I crashed your car. Okay, so Victor has a car. And just imagine I say to Victor, Victor, you know I'm a great driver, can I borrow your car?

Give it back to you in a week's time. So I drive off with Victor's car, he's very trusting, he knows how clear of a driver I am. And then I crash Victor's car into a wall and it's a write-off.

I'm fine. But Victor's car, I'm fine. So what happens? Well, a mutual friend, in fact, St. Vincent, Victor's brother, comes along and Vincent says to me, it's okay Jonathan, don't you worry about it.

You've crashed Victor's car, but it's fine, it's okay, just forget about it. What's Victor going to say after he's calmed down? He's going to say to Vincent, you can't forgive him, for crashing my car.

You're not in any position, you don't have any authority to forgive him. I'm the one who's got the right to forgive him. It can't be you. I'm the one he's wronged, not you.

[17 : 38] So only the wrong party has got the right to forgive. And so when Jesus says here, son, your sins are forgiven, he is claiming an authority that belongs only to God, nobody else.

And so by forgiving this man's sins, Jesus is claiming something monumental. He is claiming to be God Almighty. And the religious leaders knew it, and that's why they're so furious.

So they were spot on with their theology, only God can forgive sin, but they were wrong on their conclusion about Jesus. Because Jesus was right to claim the authority of God.

That's why when he told the paralyzed man to get up and walk, he did. So look at verse 8. Immediately, Jesus knew in his spirit, this is what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, why are you thinking these things?

Which is easier, to say to this paralyzed man your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up, take your mat, and walk? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

[18 : 37] So he said to the man, I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home. And so Jesus challenged them with a question, didn't he? He said, which is easier? And the simple answer would be to say that your sins are forgiven.

It's easier because nobody can check whether you've pulled that one off. Whereas it's harder to say, get up and walk. Because if you say that and the person can't, it's easy to prove that you can't do it.

So that's a simple reading of it, but Jesus could be making the point that both the forgiveness of sin, plus the power to heal, are both impossible except to God alone.

And so this episode is anticipating what Jesus would do. He can forgive sin and he can heal because he's God. And so Jesus here is behaving in a way that fulfills what all the Old Testament prophets said about what the Messiah would be like and what the Messiah would do.

So when he says in verse 10 that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, Jesus is associating himself with this great Son of Man figure that we read about in the Old Testament.

[19 : 44] So in Daniel chapter 7, the Son of Man is the one to whom God gives authority, glory, sovereign power, and strength. And so Jesus is showing in his words and then in his actions that God is present on earth.

So we began the service by some words from Isaiah chapter 35 that say, when the Messiah comes then we'll delay and leap like a deer. And isn't that exactly what's happening here with this paralyzed man?

He gets up, he takes his mat and he's off. And so with the paralyzed man, Jesus was acting with God's power to offer healing that only God can offer.

And so he proves his identity by making the man walk again. Now let me just give you an illustration which I thought was great. Dick Lucas, who's an Anglican minister, he preached a sermon on this passage and I'll never forget the illustration he used.

He said, just imagine we were able to get this man into church and get him to share his testimony. In other words, interview him about what happened to him on that day.

[20 : 53] Imagine we could speak to him after he'd been in heaven for 2,000 years. And Dick Lucas suggests that he'd say something along these lines. He'd probably say, as you can imagine, what you've just read about was the greatest day in my life.

I didn't quite understand why Jesus said he would forgive my sins because I didn't think that was my greatest need. If I'm honest, at the time, I was annoyed that Jesus said that to me.

And then there was an argument in the corner between the religious leaders and then I'm not sure what they were talking about, but then Jesus healed me so I jumped up and I ran out of the house.

And he goes on, the man, I've lived for a number of years and I was grateful to be able to enjoy a normal life again with legs that worked before I died. But I want to be clear with you because now I've been with Christ for over 2,000 years and I didn't realise it at the time, but now I know that the two great problems in my life that Jesus sorted out on that day, the most important was the forgiveness of my sins because that's what gave me eternal life because being able to walk did change the rest of my life for a while, but having my sins forgiven changed my life forever.

And so, Dick Lucas in this illustration says, the man went on, if I had to choose either the healing of my body or the forgiveness of my sins, with what I know now, I'd have chosen the forgiveness of my sins.

[22 : 29] So as we wrap this up, Jesus is the healer who came not just to give us the life we want now, but to give us what we need for all eternity.

He transformed us forever by forgiving our sins. So Jesus is not like some kind of divine genie who grants our wishes Jesus. Jesus is the saviour who came to save us from our sins that will take us to hell forever if they aren't forgiven.

And so through Jesus' death on the cross, that's how we find forgiveness. And so if you're here and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, let Jesus do that deeper healing in your life by having him take away your sins.

Being a Christian isn't about being a good person. It isn't about being sorted or fixed because none of us are. Being a Christian is about being forgiven by Jesus.

And if you would call yourself a Christian, then thank God that Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins. and don't take your sin lightly. Don't think that it's okay to sin because Jesus has forgiven it.

[23 : 40] Fight against it. And then finally, be a great friend. What do I mean be a great friend? Well, in the story, these four friends took their friend to Jesus.

And so for all your friends and all my friends who don't understand that their biggest problem in life, the thing that needs to get sorted out before they die, is that their sins are forgiven.

For all those friends that you know and I know, let's be great friends and take them to Jesus, to the one who can heal, not just on the surface but deep down in our hearts.

He's the healer that we all need.