

## Mark 1:29-39

### Why Jesus Heals And Prays

Feb 2018

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<sup>29</sup> And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. <sup>30</sup> Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. <sup>31</sup> And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. <sup>33</sup> And the whole city was gathered together at the door. <sup>34</sup> And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

#### *Jesus Preaches in Galilee*

<sup>35</sup> And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. <sup>36</sup> And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, <sup>37</sup> and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." <sup>39</sup> And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

### Intro

#### Message

Why Jesus Heals and Prays

It's Kingdom Stuff

This is the third of three sermons expounding 'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' which is the opening of Mark's gospel.

We heard that Gospel began to unfold in Jesus' first words when he appeared in Galilee saying:

Mark 1:15

"The time is fulfilled,  
and the kingdom of God is at hand;  
repent and believe in the gospel."

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

This is Jesus saying; "The long awaited presence of God's right-making power has come close enough to reach out and take hold of, so do it!" - Salvation is near.

Last week we read the first account of the right-making power of the Kingdom being seen at work when Jesus delivered a man described as having an unclean spirit who reacted to his presence as he taught in a synagogue on the Sabbath.

Another word for this right-making power is 'salvation'. In awareness that there is so much wrong, we look to the creator to be gracious and faithful to a world that cannot put itself right and needs his salvation. This is the background and framework of Jesus' Gospel as he declares it. The longed for right-making and saving power and authority of God has come. The accompanying instruction is that we are to reach out and take what is announced through repentance and faith.

This week the story of this gospel proclamation continues. What Jesus does after he has spoken illustrates and illuminates the nature of the Kingdom he brings. Jesus will be healing and praying and I'll be considering these actions as Kingdom actions that open up the nature of what he was proclaiming.

### Taking hold of this Kingdom



Well?

Before we get there let me clarify something.

Consider this glass of water. In terms of water, is it half-full or half-empty?

This question is often related to differences in temperament; optimist verse pessimist or idealist verse realist etc.

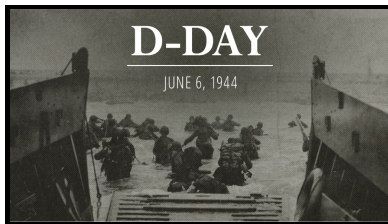
But now I want to consider it reflecting the presence of the kingdom that Jesus declares as present. Is it there or not?

If we consider the water as representing everything we seek from God we have a taster in some way. But, it is present enough to be either seen or not seen and ignored. The choice is yours.



Here is water come and drink. You can either say “Yes, I’ll reach out for what there is.” or, you could say, “That’s not enough to reach out for, I’ll reach out when its full and indisputable.”

In our world it’s common for people to want proof or irrefutable evidence before they believe. That is sometimes built on a wrong appreciation of how science works. Real scientists know that absolute positive proof does not exist. In reality we understand that which we embrace, after we embrace it.



Let me give another illustration: It’s June 6 1944 and you are in Normandy hours after the first waves of allied invasion. France has been occupied for 4 years and a new kingdom is invading. For a few hours everything is in the balance. This is how regime change works.

As someone on the ground you have a choice. Do you do what you can in those critical hours to weaken the occupier to support the invader or do you undermine the invasion? What guides you in that decision? Which Kingdom do you embrace and support? It’s a matter of the heart.

We actually proceed by looking at situations assessing them and then, here it comes: following our true heart on the matter. Our heart determines what we are dedicated to and if we are serious about water even with a bit of water in the glass we will reach out and take it.

My best example of this is marriage. At age 22, after 8 months of courtship, I committed myself for richer and poorer, better or worse, in sickness and in health to having and holding Barbara as my wife.



Through the years I have wondered, how did I do that? How was I able to make this momentous decision? Did I know what I was doing? I don’t think so. What I do know was that my heart was in it. I was 100% clear that I was willing and committed even though I did not know the full contents of the glass so to speak. I liked what I saw and believed the rest would be OK.

From when I met Barbara my future wife was ‘at hand’. She was within reach. I did not know the full contents of the ‘Barbara glass’ but my heart was drawn.



So it is with the presence of the Kingdom of God. There is no absolute proof of it being here. The Kingdom glass may be half empty or half full, you will need to decide. There may be evidence either way for how the battle will turn. And like a good marriage you will only know the measure of it after...10, 20 or 30 years or so. *Anyone need more time than that?*

The ‘Way’ to learn about the presence of God’s reign as a reality in the world is by following, obeying and trusting Jesus as being the Kingdom personified in a mode we can appreciate. We only know

God's Kingdom when we reach out and take hold of it in faith, as I did with Barbara in marriage 35 years ago.

The things Jesus does throughout the Gospels are signs calling for this assessment and response. But they are all glass half-empty / half-full offerings leaving us to follow our hearts on the question. For people who want to evaluate the evidence or sift the clues before committing, the outcome will always be inconclusive until we entrust ourselves and come to know personally. Meanwhile preachers like me keep presenting the glass and repeating Jesus' call to come, take hold, repent and believe.

### **Text**

Last week Jesus displayed the Kingdom's saving power in delivering a man from the unclean spirit that oppressed him. Today Jesus does a home visit to his first disciple in Capernaum. He goes to the home of Peter. *Archeologists think they have found the remains of Peter's house under a Byzantine church.*

So after the deliverance drama at 'church', the bearer of God's Reign goes to the home where Peter's mother-in-law was found to be burning with fever. What happened?

<sup>31</sup> And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

Let me ask why Jesus did this?

**Q:** What was his greater purpose in releasing Peter's mother-in-law from the fever that day?

**A:** My best answer is that this action was part of his gospel proclamation. It demonstrated an aspect of God's Kingdom coming to put right what was wrong and save people from the consequences of the fall in a lost world held captive by manifestations of evil. Sickness is not right. It has no place in God's Kingdom.

- Would Peter's mother-in-law never get sick again?
- Was she now some how special, perhaps future relic material??

She was not special in herself but was a walking testimony to the saving power of God's Reign in Jesus.

A story like this does not stay quiet. The message of the Kingdom in signs like this is something people are very open to so we read: (v.32)

That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. <sup>33</sup> And the whole city was gathered together at the door. <sup>34</sup> And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

People came to Jesus for healing and deliverance which Jesus provided but his bigger purpose was the message he would later bring to John the Baptist when he was in prison wondering whether the Kingdom of God was really coming or not.

Hear this from Matthew's gospel (11:2-5)

<sup>2</sup> ... when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" <sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news (*Gospel of the Kingdom*) preached to them. <sup>6</sup> And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

These healings and deliverances filled out the declaration of God's saving purpose to lift off all that oppresses.

But is the Kingdom glass half-full or half-empty?

What about those not healed, what about times Jesus himself could not heal?

The issue is, has the Kingdom come close enough and more importantly, are you enough in love with God or anguished by your life to reach out and risk trusting him?

Jesus takes people to that point again and again and says; “Come – repent and believe”.

That’s why Jesus’ one-liner is, as we sang earlier: Matthew 6:32-34

<sup>32</sup>For the Gentiles seek after all these things, (*material needs etc*) and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. <sup>33</sup>But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

That is Jesus’ simple advice. Be focused on the saving righteousness of God’s Reign. Consider yourself, look at the world, look at the church and see its need for right-making and call on God to do that. That is salvation as Jesus proclaims it.

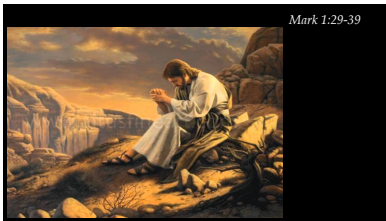
So where we see sickness, we may pray for restoration to health. God, bring your right-making saving power as demonstrated in Jesus to this person oppressed by sickness and we may see God work.

As said before, sometimes, yes, sometimes, not. But unless we reach out we will never know. Are there fish in that river? I will only know after fishing for a while.

John Wimber was asked: How you can know if you have healing ministry? His answer was “Pray with 50 people and then you will know.”

Jesus had a healing ministry for the purpose of demonstrating the Kingdom being present as he proclaimed.

Then after visiting Peter’s home Mark tells of Jesus going off to pray.



And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. <sup>36</sup> And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, <sup>37</sup> and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” <sup>39</sup> And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Again let’s ask the question:

**Q** Why did Jesus go out to pray like this?

**A** What would the Kingdom referenced answer be?

What would the purpose of prayer be for people seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness?

I believe the purpose of prayer is primarily to align ourselves with God’s reign and commit ourselves to his saving power in the world. I believe Jesus went out away from people to be with his heavenly Father and sit in his throne room simply to rest in who he was as God’s Son.

Do you pray like this?

This is very different from bringing God the shopping list or reminding him to sort out A, B and C. This is more like be still and know that He is God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 46.10 - Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

The people who pray like that may then find their days shaped by that intimacy with the King of Heaven. What Jesus did as a Son of the King flowed out of his relationship that was fed in this prayer.

Jesus' first disciples had yet to find this out but God's Kingdom flows through people who are close to the King. They were now still spectators but soon those close to Jesus would become active agents of the Kingdom as they took hold of it as Jesus instructed them.

### **Application - Conclusion**

I have talked about the Kingdom Jesus brings as his gospel in positive terms. To finish I will say a few things Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom is not about.

- This is not primarily about getting to heaven when we die.
  - Eternal life is a feature of the Kingdom as it will one day come but Jesus was not bringing a gospel about saving us from hell.
- This is not about empowering us to be happy and successful.
  - We are only in the first chapter of Mark but the cross will come. Repenting and believing is not easy. It is about empowering us as God's children to choose the right and love God. The Kingdom is not a blessing cult or a way of squeezing blessings from heaven.
- This is not about providing a better religion for people wanting to develop spiritually.
- It's not contained in church but ranges bigger and beyond. Note that God's action in the world is not limited to the Church even though the church is his physical presence.

The kingdom declaration is good news for people seeking God's righteousness in a broken world.

What we can do here as Trinity Church is be a community that seeks God's righteousness in the pattern of Jesus. I am going to start promoting that by asking the question in various discussions:

What would God's Kingdom require here? What is God's righteousness here?

Next time you ask me for something, I may reply with that question: What would God's Kingdom require here? Let's go for that then.