

How Can Jesus Help Me?

Mark 1:14-31

How many times have you asked someone who is undergoing significant problems such as a serious illness, operation, or even a death in the family “Is there anything I can do to help?” The only reason we would ask that is that we care about the person who experiencing the problem.

Usually the answer to such a question is “I don’t know of anything at this time.” Does this answer mean that they don’t have any needs? I don’t think so! With a little thought you can figure out what is needed: healing, health, money, food, comfort in their grief, clean their house, mow the lawn, someone to be there to listen, etc.

When you think about such an exchange, you have to conclude that there are interesting dynamics in interpersonal relationships going on. First, the person with the problem probably doesn’t have a lot of confidence in your ability and/or willingness to really do anything to help. Another possibility is that the person with the problem does not think they are worthy or deserving of help from anyone. A third possibility is that pride will not allow them to accept help from anyone. From the standpoint of the person who is offering to help, why not just do something? We may know several possibilities of helpful things that could be done, but no action is taken. When we examine “why” then the reasons could be many. We may doubt our ability to help with healing, health, money and comfort. We may be concerned about how efforts in these areas would be received.

Take this same dynamic and expand it to a more universal or cosmic scale and consider mankind as the person with the problem and God being the One Who can help. God saw our need and He took action to help by bringing to us **salvation, leadership, freedom and enablement**. Some of the same interpersonal relationship dynamics mentioned earlier are present even in this interaction between God and man. From the human standpoint, some people may doubt that God can help (or even reject the existence of God) and some may have the same pride or humility issues we mentioned before. From God’s standpoint, He has no doubts as to His ability to help in any and all areas of need and He does not let the fact that some will reject the help stand in the way of His taking action. The gospel records tell us what God did on our behalf. We will look at Mark’s record and learn how we can live successfully. We will start with how Jesus helps with the need of **salvation**.

Summary Statement of Jesus’ Message

¹⁴ Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Mark 1:14-15 (NASB95)

Warren Wiersbe notes that Mark was not recording the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, since He had already ministered in other places (John 1:35–4:4). He is telling us why Jesus left Judea and came to Galilee: Herod had arrested John the Baptist, and wisdom dictated that Jesus relocate. To get an idea the time frame during His ministry, it was during this journey that Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1–45).

It may be helpful to consider a broad-brush outline of the three and a half year ministry of Jesus. Starting in late A.D. 29 Jesus was baptized by John. This was followed by the wilderness temptation. After that He met some of those who would later be appointed as Apostles. In early 0030, the first miracle at Cana happened and a few months later He had a meeting with Nicodemus. Toward the end of 0030, John was arrested and Jesus relocated to Galilee and on the way encountered the woman at the well. Early in 0031 Jesus experienced the rejection from

the people at Nazareth. About mid year in 0031 the Apostles were named from among those who followed Him. The Sermon on the Mount followed closely after that. Toward the end of that year, the 12 were sent out. Early in 0032 Jesus fed the 5000 and a couple of months later He fed 4000. The transfiguration happened about mid-year 0032. At the start of 0033 the 70 were sent out and that was followed a couple of months later by Lazarus being raised. Not long after that He was arrested and crucified.

29	30		31		32		33
Baptized by John	1 st Miracle	John Arrested	Jesus rejected at Nazareth	Sermon on Mt Sent 12	Fed 5000	Fed 4000	70 Sent Arrest
Temptation	Nicodemus	Woman at Well	Named Apostles		Transfiguration		Lazarus Raised

Jesus' message was fourfold:

(1) The time had come

God had promised to send the Messiah to Israel to usher in the Kingdom of God. Many devout Jews had looked for the coming of this Leader and yet when Jesus came on the scene, hardly anyone recognized Him. When He comes back for the second time, we will have no trouble recognizing Him, since it will be as evident as lightening in the sky.

(2) The Kingdom of God was near

This is not an external Kingdom, as many thought it would be, but it is spiritual in nature and is a result of having the King (Jesus) ruling and reigning in our hearts. This Kingdom was described by the Apostle Paul as "Righteous, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost."

(3) Repent

Man's natural tendency is away from God. That tendency results in spiritual death as well as physical death (the wages of sin is death). Repentance is simply turning around and heading back toward God. Actions are preceded by thoughts. This means that repentance must take place in our hearts and minds which will result in our actions being changed. The idea of "repentance" carries with it the implication of what we would say in today's vernacular "turn your back on something." It is total abandonment of what you were trusting in and not just adding on another option to something else in which you are putting your trust.

(4) Believe the gospel

If I were to ask you to tell me what putting your faith and confident trust in the good news meant to you, I'm sure that you will tell me about Christ dying on the cross in payment for your sins, that He rose on the third day and that you now have eternal life that is secure in Him. You would probably also mention that we have the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life and that He guides you and teaches you. That is the "gospel" or the good news as we understand it today.

When we see the words "Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel" do we think that He told them about His dying on the cross and about His resurrection and the forgiveness of sin and eternal life? I don't see that in the scripture passage! So what did He announce? "The reign of God was about to commence." That was the "good news." We are more familiar with the words, "The kingdom of God is at hand." So, what does that mean?

To the Jews who were looking forward to the establishment of a renewed Davidic kingdom and a return to the glory years of the time when David and Solomon were on the throne of Israel, it was the ultimate hope for the nation. According to Matthew Henry, they had great expectations that the Messiah would appear in external pomp and power, not only to free the

Jewish nation from the Roman yoke, but to make it have dominion over all its neighbors, and therefore thought, when that *kingdom of God* was *at hand*, they must prepare for war, and for victory and prominence, and great things in the world.

So, what did they need to do to be a part of what was about to happen? According to the message that Jesus proclaimed, they were to “Repent and believe the good news!” Literally, they were being asked to “stop trusting in whatever they were depending on” and start trusting in the sovereign rule of God in their lives and in the world. Since that did not make sense in the context of their preconceived ideas about the kingdom of God, then they ignored the instructions given and kept looking for evidence of a power play that would overthrow the Romans and dominate their neighbors.

Jesus had talked about the Kingdom of God earlier in His meeting with Nicodemus. He told Nicodemus that people cannot experience (see or enter) this Kingdom without being born of the Spirit. To experience the Kingdom was more than just realizing the existing of the Kingdom of God and what it stands for. It is becoming part of that Kingdom. A person in Africa may realize that the United States exists and may know the principle for which it stands and may even desire to be here; however, all that kind of belief does **not** result in citizenship in the USA. Likewise, many people think because they know about the Kingdom of God and they “believe in its principles” that they are, therefore, a part of it. One must enter the Kingdom and the only way is via the New Birth. Unless you are born again of the Spirit of God, you cannot even see the Kingdom of God. There is nothing more important for us to do on earth than to make sure that we are in the Kingdom of God by putting our complete trust in the good news of the reign of God in our lives.

Providing Leadership

¹⁶ As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “**Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.**” ¹⁸ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. ¹⁹ Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. ²⁰ Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him. Mark 1:16-20 (NASB95)

Jesus started out getting others involved in the ministry He had. He walked by some guys working in their boats and said “Follow Me.” Does it seem strange that Peter, James, John and Andrew would just drop what they were doing and take off to follow this Preacher? Many times the scene is presented that way and we get the impression that it was almost magical – like the Pied Piper that people would just follow Him because He said to do it. This was NOT their first encounter with Jesus. They had talked with Jesus following His baptism by John approximately a year earlier. Andrew and John were followers of John the Baptist and upon hearing John proclaim “Behold the Lamb of God” started following Jesus and spend some time with Him. Andrew brought Simon his brother and Philip was there also. Philip found Nathanael and introduced Him to Jesus. These five were probably the disciples that were mentioned as being with Jesus at the wedding in Cana.

So here we are a year later and Jesus came to Galilee and started gathering those people whom He had come to know over the past year and called them to leave what they had been doing and follow Him and be fully committed to the good news that the Kingdom of God was being revealed. Their decision to leave the fishing for fish and to become fishers of men was not a spur of the moment decision but something they had been wrestling with for many months. Their previous exposure to the ministry of Jesus had convinced them that He was not an ordinary person. In fact, when Nathanael was first introduced to Jesus, he made a declaration, “Rabbi,

you are the Son of God.”

So are there lessons to be learned regarding leadership with what we see in the life of Jesus? There are a few things that stand out as good examples to follow if one is to be a leader. Jesus demonstrated ability and competence. He was visionary. He cultivated relationships with those who would be following Him. He challenged them to make a sacrifice for a cause. He also invited specific people to follow Him.

Providing Freedom

²¹ They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach. ²² They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, ²⁴ saying, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” ²⁵ And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “**Be quiet, and come out of him!**” ²⁶ Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. ²⁷ They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” ²⁸ Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. Mark 1:21-28 (NASB95).

The synagogues were places where the Jews gathered to study, worship and pray. It was common place that the reading of scriptures and teaching was done by someone other than a priest. Visiting rabbis or teachers were invited to speak and Jesus did so on this occasion. When He taught it was completely evident that His teaching was different from what they had heard before from anyone else. His teaching was “with authority” which was contrasted to the teaching of the scribes. Apparently, the scribes would review a passage of scripture or a point of the ceremonial law as a reminder of what the word said. There was no application to life issues or spiritual implications of what had happened in the physical world. The teaching of the scribes was without substance. When Jesus taught, it caused the people to be amazed. It was interpretative and meaningful to everyday life. When you consider some of the examples of His teaching that said things such as “You have heard it said, “do not commit adultery,” but I say unto you that whosoever looks with lust upon a woman has committed adultery already,” then you can realize why the people were amazed. He was also proclaiming the reign of God in the lives of people, and was calling for people to turn from trusting in themselves and calling for complete trust in God Himself.

Such teaching drew a reaction from a man who was demon possessed and was in attendance at the synagogue that day. Most Christians get very uncomfortable when anyone talks about demons and unclean spirits. Jesus dealt with such situations openly and He recognized it for what it is. He did not try to find another name for it. He didn't call it a fixation, or an obsession or any other of the other names we have tried to use to cover up the reality of the spiritual world.

The unclean spirit could speak through the person and, amazingly enough, it recognized Jesus and knew that the final judgment on unclean spirits was destruction by Jesus. They just did not know when. We can also see that the unclean spirit was powerless against Jesus and had to do as He commanded. When Jesus said, "Shut up and get out," that was what it did.

If the way we are to minister in the world today is to let Jesus work His works through us, then we ought to be about the business of teaching the Word of God with authority and ministering to spiritual needs of people as these needs arise.

How does the teaching of Jesus (as opposed to the teaching of the scribes) and the casting out of unclean spirits create freedom for a person? Jesus emphasized the rule and reign of God in the lives of people. Consider this: if God is not reigning in our lives, then something else is.

The alternatives are the world, the flesh and/or the devil. There may be addictions or we may be driven by ambition or any number of things that force us to do things that are not in our best long term (eternal) interest. The oppression by unclean spirits is very obviously a non-starter when it comes to real freedom and those things which are in our best interest. Some scriptures that come to mind that influence this “setting free” would be Romans 8:28 and John 8:31-32.

Jesus Enables

²⁹ And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. ³¹ And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them. Mark 1:29-31 (NASB95)

One commentator said that a lesson to be learned from this passage is that after the worship service we should not leave Jesus at the church but take Him home with us. On a more serious note, those of us who have embraced the salvation offered through Jesus have the Holy Spirit with us and He does go home with us. Jesus had ministered to people at the “worship center” by teaching and liberating those who are bound up by evil in their lives. That ministry did not end when He left the “worship center” but continue on out into the community and into homes.

There are people all around us who really need help. Not only are there issues of “who we worship” and related spiritual concerns, but there are also physical needs that people have. If you attend any church-related activity and prayer requests are discussed, we find a multitude of physical issues that really disable people. People need healing and while we ourselves cannot heal, the Great Physician can and we can tell others about His healing power and we can certainly pray for the healing of those who are hurting regardless of the source of the illness and whatever creating inability in their lives.