



Note: For those using the included presentation files, the manuscript progression to each slide is denoted with [Slide #].

[Slide 1] As a culture, we paint Jesus in many different colors. Literally.

[Slide 2] I found this collection of paintings of Jesus online. We don't have any photos of Jesus, but it's safe to say he wasn't a white, blue-eyed guy, growing up in the middle east 2000 years ago. The darker skinned examples here are far better guesses. But that isn't the only way we paint Jesus, is it? We might picture Him as a social action Jesus, Democrat or Republican Jesus, or a meek and mild Jesus. It all reminds me of that scene around the dinner table in Talladega Nights.

[Slide 3] Will Ferrell's character is praying over the meal and opens it by saying, *"Dear Eight Pound, Six Ounce, Newborn Infant Jesus, don't even know a word yet, just a little infant, so cuddly, but still omnipotent."*

This triggers some debate as his wife points out that Jesus grew up and it's weird to pray to a baby. He replies, *"Well, look, I like the Christmas Jesus best when I'm sayin' grace. When you say grace, you can say it to Grown-up Jesus, or Teenage Jesus, or Bearded Jesus, or whoever you want."*

This causes his friend Cal to weigh in, *"I like to picture Jesus in a Tuxedo T-shirt, 'cause it says, like, 'I wanna be formal, but I'm here to party, too.' I like to party, so I like my Jesus to party."*

[Slide 4] It's ridiculous and kind of disrespectful. But it does illustrate just how inappropriate it is to single out just one piece of who Jesus is and ignore the breadth of what Scripture gives us. So, at different points, we like to look at the different attributes, or characteristics that are in Jesus. Today, we're looking at one of them: His astonishing authority, and the Gospel of Mark takes that on directly.

Our passage begins with Jesus and his companions arriving at Capernaum, a small town of around a thousand people.¹ In other words,

¹ Warren Carter, *Mark* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2019), Kindle location 1817.

everyone knew everyone. It was the Sabbath and Jesus began teaching in the synagogue, the local place of worship.

[Slide 5] *Mark 1:22-27 (NLT) ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority—quite unlike the teachers of religious law.*

It reminds me of the first time that I saw Michael Jordan playing basketball. It was wild. [Leader tip: Just say, “one of my friends told me about a time when his family were missionaries” and then share the illustration] Here’s how big Michael Jordan was: in 1992, my parents were missionaries and moved to the Manjui tribe in Paraguay. This was a primitive people group with their own unique language, no tv, no phone, no technology, living on the ground in the Paraguayan desert. The tribe was a twelve-hour drive from the nearest town. The Manjui only knew about two things from the outside world: Coca-Cola and Michael Jordan. I kid you not. It didn’t even make sense for them to know about him! That’s how amazing he was. When you saw him play, whether you were into basketball or not, you knew immediately he was beyond anyone else in the game.

That’s how it was when Jesus began teaching. It was shocking. Here was this – to their perception – outsider. He wasn’t from Capernaum, as a carpenter he was a low-status man,² and yet His authority was in stark contrast to the local religious leaders. When they heard Him speak, they knew immediately He was beyond anyone else in the game.

²³ Suddenly, a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, ²⁴ “Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

It is no coincidence that the first miracle Mark recorded was an exorcism.³ Jesus came to destroy the powers of darkness with the good news.

The demon’s words were telling, he sensed in Jesus’ authority a threat to his very existence.⁴ This was a cry of terror.⁵ He didn’t question Jesus’ intent, it was a declaration, “you have come to destroy us.”⁶

² Carter, *Mark*, Kindle location 1841.

³ Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2001), Kindle location 1388.

⁴ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), Kindle location 1492.

⁵ Ibid, Kindle location 1495.

⁶ Ibid.

[Slide 6] ²⁵ *But Jesus reprimanded him. “Be quiet! Come out of the man,” he ordered.* ²⁶ *At that, the evil spirit screamed, threw the man into a convulsion, and then came out of him.*

²⁷ *Amazement gripped the audience, and they began to discuss what had happened. “What sort of new teaching is this?” they asked excitedly. “It has such authority! Even evil spirits obey his orders!”*

Can you imagine being at this scene? Of course, they were amazed. There have been moments in my life where I have been confronted by the divine, moments that I just couldn't explain, where God was clearly at work, which shook me, and they were nothing like this.

They were blown away by the authority Jesus displayed in silencing and simply commanding the demon to leave. Exorcists at the time relied on elaborate spells and incantations to cast out demons – and were not always successful.⁷ Jesus performed no magic, He didn't use elaborate incantations, He simply gave a command, without invoking the name of any deity or power, and the demon obeyed. In other words, His authority required no need for any theatrics, and it certainly left no wiggle room.

Jesus left the synagogue and went to Peter's home where He then healed Peter's mother-in-law who was suffering from a fever, a busy day for the miracle-working Jesus. Meanwhile, the news about what He did at the synagogue spread everywhere and soon a crowd was at the house.

[Slide 7] *Mark 1:32-34 (NLT)* ³² *That evening after sunset, many sick and demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus.* ³³ *The whole town gathered at the door to watch.* ³⁴ *So Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases, and he cast out many demons. But because the demons knew who he was, he did not allow them to speak.*

Jesus came to proclaim the good news; He silenced the demons because He didn't want the good news coming from such an evil source.

The next morning, Jesus went out into the wilderness to pray, but Peter and the others went to find Him. From their perspective, the previous day had been a success; crowds followed Jesus all day! Why was He hiding when the crowds wanted more? There were still sick people, still miracles

⁷ Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark*, Kindle location 1514.

to perform. But that wasn't the barometer for success in Jesus' eyes; He came to spread the good news, and these people just wanted a show. So, He answered them in verse 38,

[Slide 8] Mark 1:38 (NLT) "We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too. That is why I came."

He left and traveled all throughout Galilee preaching and casting out demons, bringing us to the next example of authority.

[Slide 9] Mark 1:40-42 (NLT) ⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. "If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean," he said. ⁴¹ Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" ⁴² Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed.

Do you get the sense that this region and time was overwhelmed with those who were sick? Up until a couple years ago, I think it would have been hard for us to relate. These passages hit a little differently now. The people were so desperate to be cured they were missing the real reason Jesus had come. In times of desperation, we need to be on guard against hearing what we want to hear or reacting in fear instead of Christlikeness.

This leprous man was the walking dead.⁸ Leviticus 13 details what his condition demanded; he had to wear torn clothes and let his hair hang loose, his mouth had to be covered, and he had to live isolated, away from the community. When he was around those who were well, he had to yell, "unclean, unclean," to warn them off. Not only was he dead socially, he was dead religiously (unclean), a devastating status. His desperation drove him to do the unthinkable, to approach Jesus, to risk making Jesus unclean in his plea for healing. The onlookers would have been horrified.

Jesus' response was far more shocking. Jesus touched him. After such isolation, this contact must have been electric for the man with leprosy. Over and over, Jesus was unworried about becoming unclean or sick in His ministry to those in need.⁹ Jesus' authority is far beyond disease or religious expectations.

⁸ Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark*, Kindle location 1568.

⁹ Ibid, Kindle location 1470.

[Slide 10] *Mark 2:1-12 (NLT) ¹ When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home.*

Here, we find Jesus back at Peter's house.¹⁰

² Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them, ³ four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat.

[Slide 11] *⁴ They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head.*

The house would have had a flat roof made of mud and straw, or perhaps tiles.¹¹ It points to it being an unimpressive house, a poor man's home.¹²

Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus.

⁵ Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven."

The dedication of these friends is incredible. The miracle was incredible, but Jesus' words were even more shocking. The onlookers would have been wondering if Jesus was claiming to forgive the man, or if He was claiming to speak on behalf of God, like a prophet. Either way, it was enough to anger the religious leaders.

[Slide 12] *⁶ But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, ⁷ "What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!" ⁸ Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts?"*

As these teachers sat there outraged at the possibility of Jesus claiming Godhood, Jesus displayed God-power and God-authority, by knowing and addressing their thoughts. I'd love to know what went through their minds at that point! Clearly, Jesus did.

[Slide 13] *⁹ "Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk'? ¹⁰ So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins."*

¹⁰ Carter, *Mark*, Kindle location 2267.

¹¹ Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark*, Kindle location 1715.

¹² Carter, *Mark*, Kindle location 2324.

Often times, Jesus turned the tables on His challengers by asking questions. And at first glance, the answer seems obvious: performing a miracle and healing this paralyzed man must be the harder task, right? Anyone can say words. The miracle would prove the authority of the words.

[Slide 14] *Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, ¹¹ “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!” ¹² And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, “We’ve never seen anything like this before!”*

Here’s the incredible thing: the granting of forgiveness is the greatest demonstration of authority Jesus has performed yet. The healing is far easier than the forgiveness, and yet, Jesus had the authority to do both.

Over the course of these verses, Jesus demonstrated astonishing authority over and over.

[Slide 15] **Jesus has authority greater than humanity.** There’s no mistaking it. It doesn’t matter the education, the work, the wealth, the political status; there is no human with authority even close to that of Jesus’. As important as you may be, in His presence you will be reduced to the alarming amazement displayed here over and over.

[Slide 16] **Jesus has authority greater than spirits.** Mark highlighted these encounters with the demonic to make this simple point: there is no force, human or spirit, good or evil, that has the power of Jesus. Jesus’ authority is complete; when He speaks, the conflict is over.

But most importantly,

[Slide 17] **Jesus has authority over death.** The crowds kept missing the point; they wanted the show, they wanted the healing from disease. But that wasn’t why Jesus came; when He healed people of their sickness it was simply a picture of the perfect healing we would one day have in eternity with God. When Jesus healed the man with leprosy, Jesus gave him life. But far more important was the spiritual life Jesus gave him. His confrontation of the demons was the beginning of His assault on disease, decay, and death.¹³ In Christ, we find true life through His perfect authority.

¹³ Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark*, Kindle location 1456.

Which brings us to our response. What do we do with these incredible moments in Mark's Gospel?

[Slide 18] **Live Under Jesus' Authority.** If we begin to understand who Jesus is, then we will live under His authority. His authority will impact every aspect of our lives; how we worship, how we treat others, how we prioritize prayer, Bible study, and gathering with believers. If we live under Jesus' authority, it impacts our reputation at school, our reputation on the sports team or in the cast of the play, how we view and handle money, how we handle conflict.

Part of the challenge in reading these passages is seeing that recognizing Jesus' authority is not the same as living under it. The demons recognized Him, but they didn't have faith. The crowds were impressed and amazed at His authority, but they weren't followers. Living under Jesus' authority transforms our lives into reflections of Him, and until we hand over every area of our lives, we are not truly living under His authority.

And here's the exciting reality of living under Jesus' authority; it means that we can [Slide 19] **Live With Jesus' Authority.** We are called to be like Jesus; to be shining lights in a dark world pointing others to Him. God has placed each of you in your school, your neighborhood, your family, your sports team, your theater club, wherever it is so that you can live with Jesus' authority, so your mission can be the same His: to proclaim the good news, the gospel, pointing people to Him. What will you do this week to reflect that? Who is someone you can begin praying for right now that you will share good news with this week?

I want to challenge you to write their name down. Text it to a trusted leader or friend. Let us know how you will respond to what this passage is calling us each to.

Close in prayer.