

Jesus' Authority

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Mark 3:1–12

To Be Seen

One of the deepest longings of the human heart is not simply to be helped, or even to be loved, but to be seen. To be truly seen, not glanced at or assessed or reduced to a role or a problem, but to be known. Known in our strengths and in our weaknesses, in what we show and in what we keep hidden.

We live in a world of being looked at constantly, yet rarely being truly seen for who we are. We are visible on screens and systems, measured by targets and statistics, recognised for what we produce rather than who we are. Many people quietly carry a sense of being unseen.

Into that longing, today's readings speak with tenderness and authority. Psalm 93 proclaims with confidence that the Lord is king. Mark 3 shows us what that kingship looks like when it steps into an ordinary space, meets an ordinary person, and chooses mercy.

Authority that is Unshaken

Psalm 93:1 begins with a declaration: "The Lord reigns." God's authority does not need defending. God does not panic or scramble to regain control. His throne is established from all eternity.

The psalm paints a picture of chaos using the image of the sea (v3). In the ancient world, the sea symbolised danger, disorder, and everything humans could not control. That image still resonates.

Our world feels loud with conflict, fear, uncertainty, and personal overwhelm. Yet the psalm insists that the Lord on high is mightier. God's authority is not shaken by the noise of the world.

With that vision of eternal authority in mind, we turn to Mark's Gospel, where the same authority walks quietly into a synagogue.

Seen and Brought Forward

Jesus enters the synagogue on the Sabbath (Mark 3:2). It is an ordinary setting for worship and teaching. There is a man there with a withered hand (v1). Mark does not tell us his name, only his condition. People are often known by what is wrong with them.

There are others present too. Religious leaders watching closely, not hoping for healing but waiting for a mistake. Here we see a collision of authority. The authority of compassion versus the authority of control.

Before Jesus speaks about the law or performs a healing, he does something deeply significant. He calls the man forward. He brings him into the centre.

This was not necessary for the healing. Jesus could have healed quietly and discreetly. But he chooses not to. He refuses to let the man remain unseen. The man is not a distraction from worship. He becomes the heart of it.

This is the first way Jesus exercises authority. He sees the man. And this is how Jesus exercises authority in our lives. He sees us, not as problems to be managed, but as people who matter.

Psalm 93 speaks of holiness adorning God's house (v1). In Mark, holiness is revealed not through distance but through attention and presence. Holiness looks like bringing someone from the margins into the centre.

Withered Places

The man's hand limits him. It shapes his daily life. Most of us do not have withered hands, but most of us have withered places. Hopes that did not unfold. Relationships that never healed. Faith that feels tired. Grief that has settled quietly.

We learn to manage. We adapt. We present safer versions of ourselves. We often assume that God sees the strong and useful parts of us, and we hope he does not see what we keep hidden.

Mark's Gospel tells us otherwise. Jesus sees the withered hand. He sees what others avoid. He sees what we have learned to live around. And he does not turn away.

The Question of the Sabbath

Jesus asks whether it is lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill. It is a simple and devastating question. At its heart, it asks what God's law is for.

The religious leaders remain silent. Their silence reveals hearts more concerned with control than with life. The Sabbath, given as a gift of rest and restoration, has become a tool of judgement.

Jesus looks around with anger and is deeply distressed. This matters. His authority is not cold or detached. He is grieved when hearts harden against mercy. God's strength is not brittle. It is strong enough to feel sorrow.

Stretch out your Hand

Jesus turns to the man and tells him to stretch out his hand (v5). It is an impossible command. The hand does not work. Jesus does not force or manipulate. He invites.

This tells us how Jesus' authority works in our lives. He calls us to trust him. The man could have refused. But as he responds, healing comes. Authority over chaos flows through a simple invitation and a human response.

The hand is restored. No spectacle. No display. Just a life made whole.

The healing happens on the Sabbath. The day of restriction becomes a day of restoration. Jesus does not abolish the Sabbath. He fulfils it.

Compassion vs Control

The response is not joy. The religious leaders begin to plot Jesus' destruction (v6). This is what happens when authority is built on control. Compassion feels threatening.

Mark is already pointing us toward the cross. Jesus' authority will not be secured by force, but by self giving love. The Lord declared eternal in Psalm 93 will reveal his kingship through suffering.

Authority in the Midst of the Crowd

As the passage continues, Jesus goes down to the lake and crowds gather from everywhere (vv7-8). The psalm speaks of roaring waters, but here Jesus stands steady and unafraid, drawing people to himself.

Even the unclean spirits recognise who he is, but Jesus silences them (v11). He will not be defined by noise, fear, or spectacle. Even in the crowd, he does not lose sight of individuals. The one who reigns over the floods still sees the single person.

Seen and Restored

What does this mean for us? It means that Jesus sees us. The Lord whose throne is established from old sees us, not as problems to be fixed but as people to be loved.

He sees the tired parts of us. The wounded parts. The withered places we never mention. His authority is not about condemnation but restoration.

Jesus still says, come forward. He still says, stretch out your hand. He does not do this to expose us, but to heal us.

To be seen by Jesus is not to be judged. It is to be loved into wholeness. This is an authority we can trust, not just with our heads, but with our lives and our hearts.

Amen.