

The King Comes Like Rain on Parched Grass

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Mark 1:29-39

In the gospel of John, Jesus opens his ministry with the miracle of water into wine at the wedding of Cana. The kids and I talked on Tuesday about how this miracle reminds us that Jesus came to bless.

This first miracle of Jesus mirrors Genesis chapter two. Just as God freely gave Adam and Eve a garden full of every good thing to eat, so Jesus gave to this wedding couple good wine to drink. Just as God blessed Adam and Eve with marriage, so Jesus blessed the marriage of this couple in Cana. Jesus came for this purpose to shower us with his blessing.

In Mark's gospel we see the same truth right away at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. This outpouring of God's gifts. Look at all the blessings he pours on the people in our text.

Last week we talked about the difference between Jesus' preaching and that of the Rabbis. Last week we talked about how Jesus' teaching was with authority, authority drawn from scripture and not ancient Rabbis. Another difference was the content of his preaching. Mark summarized the content of Jesus preaching with this simple phrase "The Kingdom of God is at hand." Or better translated as "the kingdom of God has come."

But what does it mean that the kingdom of God has come? It means that Jesus has come among us as our King to bless us. This is exactly what we see in our text today. Jesus as king among his people pouring out his blessing upon them.

Solomon foretold the out pouring of God' s blessing through the coming of the king in Psalm 72.

Psalm 72:1 Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king's Son.

Psalm 72:6 He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing, Like showers that water the earth.

The coming of the king is like rain on parched grass. Our text today demonstrates both the great need of the people and the great outpouring of Jesus' blessings.

Verses 29-31 29 Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. 31 So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them. .

He took her by the hand. Jesus is not afraid to reach out his hand to touch and bless. In Matthew 5 Jesus took the dead girl by the hand and called her to life. In Mark 9 Jesus casts a demon out of a boy, then he takes him by the hand and lifts him up. In Matthew 14 Peter is sinking in the waves, Jesus stretched out his hand to the drowning Peter and pulled him from the sea. In Matthew 9 Jesus touches the eyes of the blind men and they can see.

Jesus is never afraid to reach out his hand to those in need. Whether we are talking about a fever, leprosy, or a dead girl.

I remember this one time in Africa we went to a house. It wasn't just dirty, it was filthy. It was smelly and sticky, and there were piles of garbage. I didn't want to be there. I didn't want to sit on any of the chairs or the ground. I didn't want to touch anything.

Jesus however never hesitates to touch, regardless of disease, or uncleanness, or filth. Jesus has come down into our filth to touch and make clean. This is what it means that the kingdom of God is among you. That the king has come down among our filth to bless us.

Jesus reaches out, he offers his hand to those who are drowning, unclean, full of filth or disease. He is not afraid to touch us with his blessings.

Verses 32-34 32 At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

In India a typical village day went like this. While the sun was up, the villagers were out in the fields working hard. Around 6pm the sun would set, at this time they would come in from the fields and go shopping. Then it was time to make supper and eat. Only when supper was finished were you free. This is why we would go to the villages late in the evening. The people would come around 9 or 10pm and gather for worship.

Similarly, in our text the people come in the evening when their work is done to receive Jesus blessing. Here and in many other places as well it is at evening when they come to find Jesus. Having finished all the duties of their day they are now free to seek out Jesus. They come to Jesus and Jesus blesses them. He heals their sickness. He casts out their demons.

Remember what Matthew says about Jesus' visit to Nazareth:

Matthew 13:58 Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

In Nazareth the people did not believe. Because they did not believe they did not come to him. Because they did not come to him, they did not receive his blessings. Here the people come to him, and many receive his blessings.

The power is in Jesus' word not in the faith of the people. But faith is the difference between people who come to Jesus and those who do not. Jesus calls us to come to him so he can bless us.

Jesus says "come to me and I will give you rest."

Verse 35-37 35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. 37 When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."

Everyone is looking for Jesus. Everyone comes looking for the gifts of Jesus kingdom. Like the wise men who so eagerly sought Jesus, so also the people seek the king to receive his blessing.

The Rabbis taught that the Messiah would come when they the Jews created the kingdom of God by their obedience to the Torah. All four gospels emphasize that the people didn't prepare the way of Jesus coming, rather God prepared the way through John and baptism.

The Rabbis taught that the blessings of God came to those who proved themselves worthy. The gospels and especially our text emphasize that the kingdom of God is not a reward for those who do what is right, rather the kingdom is Jesus coming to freely give his blessings to those who do not deserve it.

This is also emphasized in our text. Jesus pouring out the gifts of God on all the people, not because they were ready but because of his grace.

Edersheim explains that the Jewish understanding of Isaiah 61 was that the coming of the messiah would bring light which bring full understanding to the Torah. He would teach them to be even better at keeping every detail of the law. He would explain in minute detail every step they had to take.

Rather than an outpouring of more detailed laws, we see Jesus pouring out the blessing of God on the people, so that all the people like the wise men, eagerly seek Jesus greatly desiring his blessings.

Verses 38-39 38 But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." 39 And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons

Jesus begins our text with many physical blessings. He ends our text with the preaching of the word. He gladly gives everything we need for this life but he wants us most of all to receive everything we need for the life to come.

Although Jesus gladly gives such blessings as 150 gallons of wine, the healing of the sick and the casting out of the demons, nevertheless he makes it clear that the true blessing is the word of God.

In Africa it's not abnormal for officials, like customs and immigration officers, to ask for a "gift," especially if you're white. David Koenig tells the story of one official asking for such a little something. Koenig offered her a small bible. Her face immediately looked a little disappointed, but she took it anyway. Koenig told her to open it and inside was a \$20 bill.

How often we are disappointed when Jesus showers us with spiritual blessings instead of earthly ones. Even though we know we ought to prize them more than the physical.

In our text Jesus pours out the physical blessing but he also makes it clear what we need the most. The physical blessings are only a down payment on the true blessing Jesus came to give. God gave us all the blessings of this earth when he created the earth, but these things are only a shadow of the greater blessings of his kingdom to come.

His earthly blessings prove his goodness so that we will follow him to the greater blessings. Jesus wants us to have all blessing both physical and spiritual, but the forgiveness of sins and eternal life always come first for Jesus.