

Christ the Servant of All

Text: Mark 1:1; 10:42-45

Introduction:

1. Mark's Gospel the shortest of the four Gospel writers.
2. Mark is the most translated Book of the N.T. Often translators start with Mark as it gives a concise and powerful overview of the life, ministry and sacrifice of Christ.
3. In this introductory lesson, we will endeavor to acquaint ourselves with the background and theme of the Book under four headings.

I. The Authorship of Mark's Gospel

A. The Human Instrument – Mark

1. New Testament Biography
 - a. His name
 - i. John = Jewish name meaning "grace of God"
 - ii. Mark = Roman name meaning "a hammer". "The use of such a Latin (or Greek) second name was quite common among Greek-speaking Jews." (Edmond Hiebert)
 - b. His family background
 - i. His Mother – her name was Mary, a dedicated and sacrificial woman in the Jerusalem church. She was obviously a woman of some means as she owned a home that could accommodate church prayer meetings (Acts 12:5, 12)
 - ii. His Uncle – Barnabas was Mary's brother and thus Mark's uncle. Scripture indicates that he was also a man of some wealth (Acts 4:36-37).
 - c. His ministry development
 - i. Accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to deliver the love offering from the church at Antioch to the church at Jerusalem (Acts 11:30; 12:25)
 - ii. Accompanied Paul and Barnabas partway on Paul's first missionary journey then turned back (Acts 13:5, 13). Reason not stated but possibly fear. Cyprus was familiar territory (Uncle Barnabas was from Cyprus) but Perga was the gateway to the unknown and dangerous. Mark's desertion of the missionary team lead to a division between Paul and Barnabas at the commencement of the second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-41). Barnabas fades permanently from the Inspired Record and Mark does not reappear on the scene until some 10 years later.

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- iii. Influenced by Peter the Apostle. Peter, writing from Rome, sends greetings from “Marcus my son” (1 Peter 5:13). From this it would appear that Peter was instrumental in Mark’s salvation and also had a mentoring role in his life. Peter was to Mark what Paul was to Timothy. Peter’s association with this family clear from Acts 12:12. Peter was in a good position to help Mark as he personally knew what it was to fail the Lord and be restored to a place of fruitful service.
 - iv. Reconciled to Paul after a time of growth and maturing. Paul sends greetings from Mark during his first imprisonment in Rome in Col. 4:10 and Philemon 1:24. From these references it is clear that Mark ministered to Paul in prison and acted as his special envoy to the church at Colosse. He is described in Philemon 1:24 as a ‘fellowlabourer’. Paul’s last reference to Mark is in his final Epistle where he refers to Mark as being “profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Tim. 4:11)
 - v. Used by God to author the second Gospel. What a testament to the grace of God bringing usefulness out of failure!
 - vi. Challenge: Mark’s failure and recovery should serve as an encouragement to us that God is the God of the second chance and that defeat in service does not have to remain permanent. God can grow us and restore us to a place of fruitful service for His glory.
2. Testimony of church history (Extracts from Hiebert’s commentary)
- a. **Papias**, bishop of Hierapolis, who wrote about A.D. 140 is the first direct witness to the Gospel of Mark in church history. Eusebius (A.D. 326) quoted his testimony as follows: “And the elder (John the Apostle) used to say this: Mark, having become Peter’s interpreter, wrote accurately as many things as he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things spoken and done by the Lord. For he neither heard the Lord nor did he follow Him, but afterwards, as I said, he followed Peter, who used to give his teachings according to the needs...”
 - b. **Justin Martyr**, about A.D. 150, quoted Mark 3:17 as found in the “Memoirs of Peter”.
 - c. **Irenaeus** bishop of Lyons in Gaul, in his famous work Against Heresies, written about A.D. 185 said, “Now after the death of these (i.e. Peter and Paul), Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself also transmitted to us in writing the things preached by Peter.”

B. The Divine Inspiration – the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)

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II. The Audience of Mark's Gospel

A. The Place - Rome

1. Early church testimony mentions 'Italy'. From Peter's reference in 1 Peter 5:13 it is clear that Mark spent time in Rome.
2. A.D. 60 or 68. More than one early church testimony mentions that Mark wrote after the death of Peter. This would make a date of around A.D. 68 probable but it may have been earlier.

B. The People – Romans (Gentiles)

There is strong internal evidence for this in Mark's Gospel. For example:

1. Mark translates Aramaic expressions for the benefit of his readers
 - a. Mark 5:41 "And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; **which is, being interpreted**, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise."
 - b. Mark 7:34 "And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened."
 - c. Mark 15:34 "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? **which is, being interpreted**, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
2. Mark explains geographical details and customs of Palestine unfamiliar to his readers. E.g. Jordan was a river (1:5); the Pharisees used to fast (2:18) and the Mount of Olives overlooked the temple area (13:3)
3. Mark uses a number of Latin words such as 'centurio' for "centurion" (15:39, 44-45) and 'census' for "tribute" (12:14)

III. The Attributes of Mark's Gospel

A. The Style

1. Action – Mark focus is on the work of Christ.
 - a. 'and' appears over 1,300 times in Mark's 678 verses. Events unfold in rapid succession.
 - b. 'straightway', 'immediately' and related words occur 42 times in this short Gospel.
 - c. Mark's Gospel is "brief, abrupt, forceful, vivid and straight to the point." (Hester)
 - d. Mark generally omits the lengthy discourses of Christ (except chapter 13) and focuses more on what Christ did.
2. Emotion – Mark touchingly highlights the humanity of Christ in a number of areas
 - a. His anger and grief (3:5)
 - b. His weariness (4:38)
 - c. His wonder (6:6)
 - d. His sighs (7:34; 8:12)
 - e. His affection (10:21)
 - f. His eyes (3:5; 10:21; 11:11)
 - g. His hands (1:31; 5:41; 7:32; 8:23-25)
 - h. "Mark's Gospel gives prominence to the human reactions and emotions of Jesus. It mentions His compassion (1:41; 6:34; 8:2),

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His sighing (7:34; 8:12), His indignation (3:5; 10:14), His distress and sorrow (14:33-34). It takes notice of His sweeping gaze (3:5, 34; 5:32; 10:23), the touch of His hand (1:31, 41; 7:33; 9:27), His warm interest in little children (9:36; 10:14-16).” (Hiebert)

- i. “...men may look into human eyes, capable of human tears, the gleams of human laughter, and the tragedy of human sorrow; and yet see shining through them the light of essential Deity. Jesus, the anointed One, Son of God.” (G. Campbell Morgan)

B. The Structure

1. Historical quotes above indicate Peter’s influence in the content of this Gospel. This would account for the vivid language of Mark’s Gospel, the language of an eye witness.
2. Gospel seems to follow the general outline of Peter’s sermon to Cornelius in Acts 10:34-43.
 - a. The ministry of John the Baptist
 - b. The empowerment of Christ by the Spirit at his baptism
 - c. The ministry of Christ (e.g. healing)
 - d. The crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Christ

IV. The Aim of Mark’s Gospel

A. To present Christ as Servant (10:45a)

1. This verse contains Mark’s statement of purpose. It is the key verse of the Book.
2. This would captivate the Romans who typically had many slaves. To think that the Son of God would come and serve man was an amazing truth!
3. References in O.T. prophecy to the servanthood of Christ
 - a. Isaiah 42:1 “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”
 - b. Zech. 3:8 “...*behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.*”
4. Christ’s attitude of a servant was a rebuke to the pride and quest for position of the disciples.
5. Phil. 2:5-8 – Christ took upon him the form of a servant

B. To present Christ as Saviour (10:45b; 1:1)

1. His death on the cross would be the highest point, the supreme act of service.
2. ‘ransom’ = the price paid to effect the release of prisoners and captives
3. We are bound by sin and Satan but Christ died to set us free! Christ did not leave the glories of heaven and suffer the cruel, humiliating death on the cross to support your sinful lifestyle. He died to rescue and change you!

Conclusion:

1. Are you saved?
2. Are you serving?

The Fiery Forerunner

Text: Mark 1:1-8

Introduction:

1. Context: 400 silent years have passed without any direct revelation from God. John the Baptist, enters the scene abruptly as a fiery herald of the Son of God.
2. John's ministry was a ministry of transition (Luke 16:16). Like Samuel who concluded the era of the judges and ushered in the era of the kings, John concluded the age of the law and prophets and ushered in the N.T. age of grace. "He was ordained to be the clasp of two covenants." (F.B. Meyer)
3. John's ministry was for about 6 months to a year at most.
4. John's mission was to be a herald, a voice, a messenger and a preacher of the Christ to prepare the way for the public ministry of Messiah.
5. We will study John's ministry as forerunner of Christ under four headings:

I. The Prediction of the Forerunner (the mandate) (Vs. 1-3)

A. The Person for which he was forerunner (Vs. 1)

1. 'beginning' = origin, the person or thing that commences. A kind of title. Each Evangelist has a different starting point. Matthew begins with the ancestry and birth of the Messiah, Luke with the birth of the Baptist and John with the preincarnate Word. (Wuest)
2. 'Gospel' = the good news. Word found in 9 B.C. subscription as "glad tidings" referring to the birth and reign of Caesar Augustus
3. "Son of God" = he did not become a son in time but rather is the eternal Son, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; He is the Son by nature. "He proceeds from God the Father in a birth which never took place because it always was." (Wuest)

B. The Prophecy of the Forerunner (Vs. 2-3)

1. Mark quotes from Malachi 3:1 written 400 years before (Vs. 2) and Isaiah 40:3 written 700 years before (Vs. 3) (Butler)
2. The role of a forerunner in the ancient world: "The idea of preparing the way for someone comes from the ancient practice of heralds going before royalty, or other important people, and telling folk to prepare the way for the coming dignitary by clearing the roads and making them smooth and safe. Today, we see this principle practiced by the Secret Service who go before the president and prepare the routes he will travel on to make sure they are safe and secure." (John Butler)
3. He prepared the way for Christ by calling on men to prepare their hearts. He prepared the way for Christ by proclamation. This is still the way hearts are prepared to receive Christ.

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II. The Profile of the Forerunner (the man) (Vs. 4, 6)

A. His Abode – the wilderness (Vs. 3 & 4; Luke 1:80)

1. The place of his preparation (Luke 1:80)
 - a. Private communion with God is the key to public usefulness in ministry. John had a solitary place where he met with God.
 - b. He was a man prepared and trained by God in obscurity. God often uses the unnoticed and unknown to do great things for Him. Some suggest John spent up to 10 years in the wilderness before his public ministry. God is not in a rush with preparing his servants.
2. The place of his preaching (Vs. 3 & 4)

B. His Attire – coat of camel's hair (Vs. 6a)

1. The material of his clothing
 - a. "camels hair" = rough cloth woven of camel's hair
 - b. "girdle of a skin" = a leathern belt or sash
2. The message of his clothing
 - a. He was a prophet of God
 - i. 2 Kings 1:8 *"And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite."* (See also Mal. 4:5-6; Luke 1:17))
 - ii. Zechariah 13:4 indicates a "rough garment" was the typical attire of a prophet
 - b. He was separated unto God

C. His Appetite – locusts & wild honey (Vs. 6b)

1. Locusts allowed under O.T. law (Lev. 11:22) and wild honey found readily in rocky outcrops and crevices of the wilderness.
2. This was the diet of the poor. John was not a worldly man given over to the ideals and appetites of the flesh. He knew what it meant to have his body under subjection.

III. The Preaching of the Forerunner (the message) (Vs. 4, 7-8)

A. The Style of his preaching (Vs. 3 & 4b)

1. Passionate preaching (3)
 - a. 'crying' = to cry out for a purpose, manifesting feeling
 - b. Christ described John as a burning and shining light. His preaching was aglow! (John 5:35)
2. Pointed preaching (Vs. 4; Matt. 3:7-8)
 - a. 'preach' = to proclaim or herald with authority. John's message came with the backing of heaven and was to be heeded and obeyed.
 - b. John was bold and uncompromising in his declaration of the truth. He preached hard against sin.

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B. The Subjects of his preaching (Vs. 4b; 7-8)

1. He preached repentance (Vs. 4)
 - a. The best way to prepare the hearts of men for Christ is to preach repentance from sin.
 - b. 'repentance' = a radical change in one's mind and attitude towards sin and one's standing before God (Acts 20:21). It is a turning from sin to God (1 Thess. 1:9)
 - c. Christ preached the same message at the commencement of His public ministry (Vs. 14-15)
 - d. Ironside: "It is useless to preach the gospel of the grace of God to men who have no realization of their need of that grace."
2. He preached judgment (Matt. 3:7-12; Luke 3:7-17)
 - a. He preached on the wrath of God
 - b. He preached on the fire of judgment
3. He preached Christ (Vs. 7-8)
 - a. The exaltation of Christ (Vs. 7a)
 - i. "latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy..." = the shoes worn at that time where typically a sandal with a leather sole fastened in place with a leather thong or strap. The task of loosing the strap and removing the shoe was given to slaves. John places himself below the level of a slave, so high was his view of Christ. John had a strong sense of unworthiness. Christ declared that John was the greatest man to be born of women (Matt. 11:11; Luke 7:28) yet he had a humble view of himself.
 - ii. The preaching God blesses to the salvation of souls is preaching that is Christ-centered and Christ-saturated.
 - iii. The men God uses those who make much of Christ and little of self. Refer John 3:26-31. In effect John says, "Christ needs to be made more of, I need to be made less of." (Vs. 30)
 - iv. When the self-life becomes intertwined and intermingled with our service for Christ, we become unusable. The 21st century obsession with all things 'self' is the complete antithesis to the heart and spirit of N.T. Christianity and the call to a crucified life. We are called to deny self and to die to self; not to self-obsession and self-promotion (i.e. the social media culture)
 - b. The salvation of Christ (Vs. 8)
 - i. Spiritual re-birth of Christ (baptism of the Holy Spirit) – John's baptism was a symbol of the spiritual baptism by Jesus (See 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3-4). His was ceremonial; Christ's was supernatural.
 - ii. Sacrifice of Christ – John 1:29 "*The next day John seeth*

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*Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.***” (also Vs. 36)

C. The Sway (power) of His Preaching (Vs. 5)

IV. The Practice of the Forerunner (Vs. 4a & 5)

A. The Requirement for baptism – “baptism of repentance”

1. “of repentance” = a baptism arising out of repentance; a public declaration of their repentance; a baptism connected with the repentance of the individual.
2. ‘for’ = in this context has the idea of “because of” or “on account of” rather than “in order that”. Same word translated ‘because’ in Matt. 12:41. Remission of sins not the result of baptism but the occasion of it.
3. “If heaven could be secured by submitting to a rite, ‘multitudes’ would come for it, but the crowd thins quickly when the administrator of the rite becomes the vehement preacher of repentance.” (Maclaren)

B. The Review for baptism – “fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8)

1. ‘meet’ = suitable, proper, fitting, worthy.
2. The Apostle Paul required the same thing – *“But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”* (Acts 26:20)
3. Note: John and Paul are not calling on them to reform their own lives through works but rather are looking for the **result** of repentance which is a changed life (2. Cor. 5:17) wrought in us by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.
4. John examined candidates for his baptism for genuine fruit of repentance, not just a verbal confession. Read Luke 3:7-14 where John addresses four distinct groups in society, requiring evidence from each of their repentance.
5. Religious leaders refused John’s baptism as they were merely interested in outward form and ceremony rather than genuine repentance of the heart (Luke 7:29-30)
6. Note: We would do well to follow this precedent and look for fruit of salvation before administering the ordinance of baptism.

C. The Revealing before baptism – “confessing their sins”

Conclusion:

1. Have you repented of your sin and turned in faith to Christ for salvation?
2. How much do we exalt the Lord Jesus in our service for Him? Is it all about Christ or all about us?

The Inauguration of the Son

Text: Mark 1:9-11

Introduction:

1. Passing from Mark's brief description of the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner, he then gives a snapshot of the baptism of Christ with its attendant supernatural events. This marked the Divine commencement of Christ's public ministry.
2. Christ's baptism marked the dividing line between His private and His public life (Hiebert).
3. Christ was approx. 30 years of age at the commencement of His public ministry (Luke 3:23)
4. We will note Christ's inauguration to public ministry under 3 headings:

I. **The Example of the Son (Vs. 9)**

A. **The Purpose of His Baptism (Matt. 3:14-15)**

1. To obey as perfect man – “for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness...” (Matt. 3:15)
2. To identify with sinful man – John's baptism was the baptism of repentance. Christ never sinned but He willingly identified with the sinners He came to save.
3. To prophecy of his coming sufferings – See Mark 10:38 & Luke 12:50 where Christ refers to His coming sufferings on the cross as “his baptism”
4. Challenge: Have you followed the example of Christ in believer's baptism?

B. **The Praying at His Baptism (Luke 3:21)**

1. Christ was praying as He was baptized. We are not told exactly what He prayed but it seems likely that as perfect man, He was praying for empowerment upon His ministry because as soon as He was baptized, the heavens are opened and the Holy Spirit descends.
2. Challenge: We would do well to seek heaven's anointing prior to any service for the Lord

C. **The Process of His Baptism (Vs. 9-10)**

1. The mode is clearly immersion by the language employed:
 - a. “was baptized”
 - b. “And straightway coming up out of the water”
2. The word baptize comes from the root word ‘bapto’ which means to dye. You do not dye a garment by sprinkling it!

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II. The Empowerment of the Son (Vs. 10)

Christ's baptism was accompanied by two supernatural signs. The first was the **visible** descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him. The second was the **audible** declaration of the Father concerning Him. Note: This is was a Trinitarian scene

A. The Emblem of the Spirit (Vs. 10a)

1. The dove is one of the symbols of the Holy Spirit in Scripture along with others like oil (Acts 10:38); wind (John 3:8; Acts 2:2); fire (Acts 2:3) and water (John 7:7-39).
2. "like a dove" = not "as a dove". The Holy Spirit was visibly manifest some way "in a bodily shape like a dove" (Luke 3:22)
3. Similar picture to Gen. 1:2 where the Spirit of God "moved (brooded, fluttered) upon the face of the waters"
4. The dove noted for its qualities of gentleness and purity.
5. The dove was principally the bird of sacrifice in Scripture (Lev. 1:14). Christ "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." (Heb. 9:14)

B. The Enduement of the Spirit (Vs. 10b)

1. The explanation of enduement (definition)
 - a. The English word 'endue' means to be endowed with something.
 - b. Word appears in Luke 24:49. Same Greek word translated as follows:
 - i. "put on" – e.g. Eph. 6:11 "**Put on** the whole armour of God..."
 - ii. "clothed with" – e.g. Mark 1:6 "*John was **clothed with** camel's hair...*" or Rev. 1:13 "*...**clothed with** a garment down to the foot...*"
 - c. Enduement therefore refers to being clothed with the Spirit's power for service. Note words "upon him" (Vs. 10)
2. The extent of Christ's enduement
 - a. Christ was the only One who knew the Holy Spirit's filling and anointing "without measure"
 - b. John 3:34 "*For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: **for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.***"
 - c. Luke 4:1 "*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan...*"
 - d. Acts 10:38 "***How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.***"
 - e. This was Heaven's Anointing of the Son of God for His three-fold office of Prophet, Priest and King, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1 (See also Luke 4:18)
3. The essentiality of enduement

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1. We can never have the Spirit's power to the degree as the Sinless, Perfect, Son of God but we DO need the enduement of power for effective witness!
2. Luke 24:49 *"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be **endued with power from on high.**"*
3. Acts 1:8 *"But ye shall receive power, after that **the Holy Ghost is come upon you:** and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*
4. NBC Doctrinal Statement on the Holy Spirit (note text in bold)

We believe that the Holy Spirit is God and hence to be loved, worshipped, and obeyed. He is the agent who, through the Word of God regenerates men. He indwells the bodies of believers teaching, comforting, chastening, imparting gifts and producing the fruits of the Spirit. **We believe in the enduement of power for the purpose of winning the lost to Jesus Christ.** (Acts 1:8; John 14:6; Eph. 4:30)

III. The Endorsement of the Son (Vs. 11)

Note two truths conveyed in the Father's declaration concerning the Son:

A. The Father's Affection for the Son (Vs. 11a)

1. "a voice from heaven" = Both the visible and audible sign came from heaven. The Father's voice would again be heard at the transfiguration (9:7) and during Passion week (John 12:28)
2. "thou art" = an abiding reality. This was not a newly established relationship but one that existed from eternity past and will continue into eternity future.
3. "beloved" = the highest word for love in the Greek language. The Father loves the Son above all others. "Oh perfect love, all human thoughts transcending..."
4. 'Son' = he did not become a son in time but rather is the eternal Son, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; He is the Son by nature. "He proceeds from God the Father in a birth which never took place because it always was." (Wuest) Jesus is both God and with God (John 1:1).

B. The Father's Approval of the Son (Vs. 11b)

1. "well pleased" = word means delight, pleasure and satisfaction. The Father was perfectly satisfied with the Son. The Son of God perfectly and fully satisfied all of the righteous demands of God.
2. Note: The only way to become an object of the Father's love and favor is to be in a right relationship to the Son (in Christ)! *"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."* (Isaiah 53:11)

The Training of John the Baptist

Text: Luke 1:5-25;39-45;57-80

Introduction:

1. The Lord Jesus declared that John the Baptist was the greatest man born of women (Matt. 11:11; Luke 7:28).
2. In this lesson, we will study an overview of how John the Baptist was trained and prepared for the calling of God with particular emphasis upon the role his parents played in His upbringing.
3. We will note a number of important, formative influences operating in John's early life.

I. The Prenatal Development of John

A. A Miraculous Conception (Vs. 7, 18)

1. Zacharias and Elisabeth carried a significant and painful trial – they had no child. For an Israelite, this was a great reproach (Vs. 25, 58). Scripture presents children as an unqualified blessing not a curse to be banned and avoided!
2. This painful trial had been a frequent matter for prayer for this couple (Vs. 13). The answer to their heart's cry was delayed until it became humanly impossible. This would create an occasion whereby God could demonstrate His power in a greater way and also bring John the Baptist into the world according to God's perfect timetable
3. "It is not impossible that prayers that we have ceased to pray, and are in despair about, will yet return to us with words, "Thy supplication is heard," endorsed on them in our Father's handwriting." F.B. Meyer
4. God did a miracle for Zacharias and Elisabeth, similar to the miracle that He did for Abraham and Sarah with the conception and birth of Isaac.

B. A Mother's Voice (Vs. 39-45)

1. Scripture reveals long before modern studies were completed, that babies can hear in the womb.
2. Current studies reveal that babies begin hearing sounds from approx. 18 weeks old in the womb. "The most significant sound your baby hears in the womb is your voice. In the third trimester, your baby can already recognize it. They will respond with an increased heart rate that suggests they are more alert when you're speaking."¹

¹ <https://www.healthline.com/health/pregnancy/when-can-a-fetus-hear#1>

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3. Research also indicates that babies begin early language development from their mother's speech during the last 10 weeks of the pregnancy.²
4. Elisabeth spoke Spirit-filled words with a loud voice (Vs. 41-42). What kind of words does your baby hear in the womb? What are the first sounds that enter their newly formed ears? Do they hear mum singing or praying? Do they hear the sounds of a Spirit-filled voice or the sounds of a flesh-dominated voice (e.g. anger, carnality) Do they hear pounding, worldly music or Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs?

C. The Spirit's Touch (Vs. 15)

1. The hand of God was upon John from his earliest moments. Like everyone else, he would have to come to a personal experience of salvation but his life was under God's gracious influence from the womb.
2. Do we pray and seek for God's Divine influence upon our children from their earliest moments?

II. The Parental Development of John

John was privileged to be born into a godly home to godly parents who would play a significant role in preparing him for God's calling upon his life. Observe 7 attributes of this godly couple.

A. Saved Parents (Vs. 6)

1. Note they were righteous "before God".
2. This is the starting point for successful parenting. How can we help our children to know God if we do not know Him ourselves?!

B. Submitted Parents (Vs. 6)

1. 'walking' = the pattern of their lives
2. "all the commandments" = they followed the Lord fully and were submitted to him in every area of their lives. No partial obedience!
3. 'blameless' = not faultless but above reproach.
4. Challenge: If we are going to require obedience from our children, we need to be obedient to the Lord ourselves! Children are quick to detect hypocrisy in the home. When a challenge is given from the pulpit, what sort of conversation do they hear in the car on the way home?

C. Serving Parents (Vs. 5, 8)

1. Both Zacharias and Elisabeth had a godly heritage.
2. At this time in Israel, the priesthood was largely corrupt due in part to its being controlled by wicked King Herod. But there was still a godly remnant dotted amongst the corrupt ranks of self-motivated

² <https://www.webmd.com/baby/news/20130102/babies-learn-womb#1>

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religious practitioners who yearned for the coming of the promised Messiah (e.g. Simeon, Anna, Mary, Joseph)

3. John's parents served the Lord in sincerity and truth. What is our level of commitment to the service of the Lord? Do our children know that the work of God is priority 1 for mum and dad?

D. Supplicating Parents (Vs. 13)

1. The altar of incense is a picture of prayer in the Word of God. David prayed in Psalm 141:2 *“Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”*
2. Zacharias' official offering up of the incense was a picture of the prayers that ascended up before the throne of God from this couple regularly. It was while Zacharias was praying that God revealed the special news to him about John.
3. To be raised in a home to praying parents is inestimable blessing. Does the atmosphere of prayer pervade our homes? Do our children every see mum or dad on their knees? Do they hear them pray over them when they are tucked into bed at night?

E. Surrendered Parents (Vs. 15-17; 60-63)

1. Surrendered concerning his naming (Vs. 13, 59-64)
 - a. 'John' = Jehovah shows grace. Significant as John would be used to prepare the way for age of grace.
 - b. Consider giving your child a godly name instead of a trendy one!
2. Surrendered concerning his calling (Vs. 15-17; 76-79)
 - a. Zacharias and Elisabeth did not thwart God's Divine plan for John. Rather, they were surrendered and committed to it wholeheartedly.
 - b. As parents, do we seek to be in tune with how the Lord is leading and directing our children's lives? Or do we allow our natural affection to overreach its bounds to where in practice we ignore the fact that our children are not really ours but God's?
 - c. Do we live with a consciousness that God has a Divine plan for their lives or is it all about our vision for our children? (e.g. career, money etc....)
 - d. Does our training reflect godly priorities? Do we seek above all else to prepare our children to be servants of the Lord?
 - e. Do we surrender all earthly claims to our children? John would die as a young man on account of his calling.

F. Spirit-filled Parents (Vs. 41; Vs. 67)

1. A Spirit-filled mother **AND** father (Vs. 41)
2. This was not lopsided family with one parent spiritual and the other carnal.
3. The fruit/result of the filling of the Spirit in both cases was godly speech. What comes out of our mouths tends to reveal the measure of how much we are filled with the Spirit.

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4. Eph. 5:18-20 *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be **filled with the Spirit; Speaking** to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;”*

G. Scripture-filled Parents (Vs. 39-45; 67-79)

1. Elisabeth clearly knew and believed in the prophetic promise of the Messiah (Vs. 43)
2. Zacharias’ prophecy reflected a good grasp of the O.T. Scriptures. He makes reference to the prophets (Vs. 70); to God’s promise to Abraham (Vs. 73) and to the promised kingdom of Messiah.
3. “He would be also taught carefully in the Holy Scriptures. Like the young Timothy, he would know them from early childhood. The song of Zacharias reveals a vivid and realistic familiarity with the prophecies and phraseology of the Scriptures; and as happy parents recited them to his infant mind, they would stay to emphasize them with impressive personal references. What would we not have given to hear Zacharias quote Isaiah 40 or Malachi 3, and turn to the lad at his knee, saying – “These words refer to thee” (F.B. Meyer)
4. That they taught John the Scriptures is clear from John’s preaching. God’s Word flowed from his lips like a river! He could quote prophets like Isaiah with ease. He proclaimed great, Scriptural truths like repentance, faith and Christ as the sacrifice for the sins of the world.

- H. F.B. Meyer - “How ineffaceable (enduring/lasting) are the impressions of the Home! What the father is when he comes back at night from his toils, and what the mother is all day; what may be the staple of conversation in the home: whether the father is willing to be the companion of his child, answering his questions, and superintending the gradual unfolding of his mind; how often the Bible is opened and explained; how the weekly rest day is spent; the attitude of the home towards strong drink in every shape and form, and all else that might injure the young life, as gas does plants – all these are vital to the right nurture and direction of boys and girls who can only wax strong in spirit when all early influences combine in the same direction.”

III. The Supernatural Development of John

Above all, John was a man Divinely prepared and equipped for his calling.

A. The Power of God (Vs. 15)

1. From an early age, John knew the shaping, molding influence of the Holy Spirit in his life.
2. John’s preaching was clearly anointed by the Holy Spirit.

B. The Presence of God (Vs. 66)

1. God’s hand was resting upon this man! How we should covet and plead for this in our lives and the lives of our children.
2. Jabez prayed “...*Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and **that thine hand might be with me...**” (1 Chr. 4:10)*

C. The Preparation of God (Vs. 80)

1. The location of his preparation

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- a. An obscure place – John was not prepared amidst the upper crust of the corrupt priesthood but in the wilderness alone with God.
- b. A difficult place – John obviously learned survival skills in the wilderness. Very likely his parents died while he was still a young man due to their age (“both well stricken in years” Vs. 7)
2. The length of his preparation
 - a. “until the day of his shewing unto Israel” = time period not exactly defined but we know John was 6 months older than Christ and Christ was baptized around the age of 30 (Vs. 23). So, this means John would have been around the age of 30 when he commenced his public ministry.
 - b. God is not a rush in preparing His servants! John first went through home-schooling. Graduating from there he went through desert-schooling (with God) and then on to wilderness-preaching.

Conclusion:

1. Parents, are we seeking to train our children in a godly fashion to prepare them for what God has for them?
2. Young people, are you surrendered to whatever God has in store for you?

The Temptation of the Son

Text: Mark 1:12-13

Introduction:

1. Christ's temptation immediately followed His baptism and heavenly anointing for ministry. Great tests often follow spiritual high points!
2. Christ, as the second Adam and as perfect man, had to go through this period of testing in the will of the Father to demonstrate His power over Satan. The purpose of the Father was not to defile Christ (James 1:13) but rather to prove the Holy character of Christ.
3. Christ came out the other side of this vicious battle with Satan victorious and thus is our perfect example on how to conquer temptation.
4. We will note 5 truths about the temptation of Christ.

I. The Planning of the Temptation (Vs. 12a)

A. The Orchestrator of the Temptation – The Holy Spirit

1. 'driveth' = strong word meaning to "throw or cast out, to force out." Indicates the strong compulsion Christ sensed from the Spirit. Matthew & Luke use the word 'led'. Christ, as perfect man during His earthly ministry, was under the complete control of the Holy Spirit in all things.
2. This test was in the will of God. Christ was not the helpless victim who came under provocation from Satan against His will. Rather, Satan was summoned by Almighty God to this test. "Jesus Christ was the Aggressor. He forced Satan to put Him to the test so that His character might be revealed." (Pentecost)

B. The Opponent in the Temptation – Satan

1. Satan is a real personality; not just a force or principle of evil. He actually exists as a fallen angel along with the other demonic spirits who rebelled with him. *"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."* (Rev. 12:9)
2. Satan personally tempted Christ rather than giving the task to one of his demons. Similarly, Satan himself entered Judas to ensure Christ's betrayal.

II. The Place of the Temptation (Vs. 12b)

A. A Desolate Place

1. The wilderness was a harsh and hostile area with few inhabitants apart from "wild beasts". It was a solitary place. The battle with

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temptation is most keenly felt when we are alone and it is here when the battle is won or lost.

2. The first Adam was tempted in a perfect paradise and failed, ushering in Satan's reign over the world as prince of the power of the air. Christ, the second Adam, was tempted in a harsh wilderness bearing all the marks of the curse and prevailed!
3. The fact of Christ's victory in the wilderness and the defeat of Adam and Eve in the beautiful garden of Eden will "forever brand as false the teaching that all man needs for the development of the goodness within him is a suitable environment." (Scroggie)

B. A Demonic Place

1. The wilderness is associated in the N.T. with the abode of demons
 - a. Luke 8:29 "For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil **into the wilderness.**")
 - b. Luke 11:24 "*When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through **dry places**, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.*"
2. Some geographical areas are strong holds of Satan – "*And he (the demon) besought him much that he would **not send them away out of the country.***" (Mark 5:10)
3. Christ challenged Satan right in his very strong hold.

III. The Period of the Temptation (Vs. 13a)

A. The Sum of the Days – forty days & nights

1. Christ was tempted throughout this entire period of forty days. 'tempted' is in the present tense.
2. The three temptations recorded in Matthew and Luke came at the end of this period when Christ was exhausted and at his weakest point. These were the climactic temptations (Butler)
 - a. "...and when they (the forty days) were **ended**..." (Luke 4:2)
 - b. "*And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was **afterward an hungered.***" (Matt. 4:2)
 - c. Note: This seems to be a tactic of Satan to subject us to prolonged, sustained periods of temptation culminating in a fierce barrage of attacks to try and overwhelm and overcome us when we are worn and weary.

B. The Significance of the Days – number of testing

1. 40 is clearly the number of testing in the Scriptures.
2. Examples
 - a. It rained for forty days and forty nights during the flood (Gen. 7:4)

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- b. Moses was forty days and forty nights upon Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 9:11)
- c. Spies searched Canaan for forty days (Num. 13:25)
- d. Goliath challenged Israel for forty days (1 Sam. 17:16)

IV. The Points of the Temptation (Vs. 13b)

Read Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 for further details of the specific points of temptation. Satan tried the same three super weapons against Christ that he uses against us: The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Christ defeated every one of them!

A. Temptation # 1 – Physical (Luke 4:2-4)

- 1. Satan tried to lure Christ away from perfect obedience to the will of God. “Satan sought to get Christ to satisfy a material need without reference to the will of God.” (Morgan)
- 2. Christ was in the wilderness in the will of God and so all that He endured there, including hunger, was a part of God’s will for Him.
- 3. To turn stones into bread would appear to be a legitimate exercise of Christ’s power but Christ had willingly laid aside his right to exercise such powers and would live as perfect man in entire dependence upon the Father (Phil. 2:6-7).
- 4. In the same way, Satan tries to get us to fulfill God-given appetites outside of God’s will and leading. He targets our physical appetites, subtly mixing right and wrong.

B. Temptation # 2 – Temporal (Luke 4:5-8)

- 1. In some sort of vision, Satan causes Christ to see all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and then promises to give it all to Christ on one condition – he bow down and worship him.
- 2. Christ does not dispute Satan’s claim in Vs. 6 to the kingdoms of this world. Satan is called the “prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30); the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4) and the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2).
- 3. Satan craves worship, especially from God. It was his desire to be “*like the most high*” that had caused him to fall in the first place (Isaiah 14:14)
- 4. Satan tried to offer Christ a crown without a cross. In effect he said, “Why wait when you can have it now? Why go through all that suffering when there’s an easy way? You can have instant gratification!”
- 5. Satan does the same to us. He has a way of making sin look so glorious and attractive. He only gives a one-sided view of sin. He promises us fame and progress but it comes with a very costly price tag.

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6. Christ's response draws a link between worship and service. The one you worship is the one you will serve!

C. Temptation # 3 – Spiritual (Luke 4:9-12)

1. Alfred Edersheim describes the scene: "Jesus stands on the watch-post which the white-robed priest has just quitted. Fast the rosy morning light, deepening into crimson, and edged with gold, is spreading over the land. In the Priest's Court below Him the morning sacrifice has been offered. The massive Temple gates are slowly opening, and the blast of the priests' silver trumpets is summoning Israel to begin a new day by appearing before their Lord. Now then let Him descend, Heaven-borne, into the midst of priests and people. What shouts of acclamation would greet his appearance! What homage of worship would be His! The goal can at once be reached, and that at the head of believing Israel."
2. In the previous two temptations Christ had demonstrated total submission to the revealed will of God. Christ had quoted Scripture in defense against Satan's attack. Now Satan quotes Scripture and tries to tempt Christ to do something that on the surface appears spiritual.
3. When Satan quotes Scripture, he quotes it selectively, leaving out parts that do not suite his agenda. Satan quoted from Psalm 91:11-12 but omitted "in all thy ways" from the verse he quoted and also avoided making any mention of verse 12 – "*Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*"
4. When Satan fails to defeat us in the realm of the carnal, he will try to tempt us in the realm of the spiritual. This is one of Satan's secret weapons that he uses with great success on the strongest of Christians.
5. To put God to the test reveals a lack of real faith and trust. "The moment a man begins to tempt God, to prove trust; he proves that he does not trust. Perfect trust is quiet, and waits." (Morgan)
6. "Spiritual pride, the belief that we may venture into dangers either to our natural or to our religious life, where no call of duty takes us, the thrusting of ourselves, unbidden, into circumstances where nothing but a miracle can save us-these are the snares which Satan lays for souls that have broken his coarser nets." (MacLaren)

V. The Prevailing over the Temptation (Vs. 13b)

There were at least three keys to Christ's victory over Satan.

A. Submission to God – Obedience

1. Christ was totally surrendered to the will of the Father. This put Him on victory ground! When we are committed with all our hearts to the will of God, we are in a position to resist the devil's attacks.
2. James 4:7 "**Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**" We are in no position to claim the second part of the verse if we haven't obeyed the first half!

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3. The central questions we are confronted with in temptation is: To whom will I yield? Whose word will I obey?

B. Supplication to God – Fasting

1. Fasting and prayer sometimes needed to overcome certain Satanic battles.
2. Matthew 17:21 *“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”*

C. Sword of the Spirit – Bible

1. Christ struck down the three temptations with the words, “it is written”.
2. Ephesians 6:17 *“And take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:**”*
3. The sword is both an offensive and a defensive weapon. There are times when we go on the offense and storm enemy territory with the truth of the Gospel. Then there are times when we use the sword to ward off the blows of temptation that come to us at the hand of the enemy.
4. As believers, we need to be trained and skilled in the use of our sword! If we are weak in Bible reading, study and memorization, we will be weak and ineffective in the battlefield of temptation.
5. If you are battling with a particular temptation, arm yourself with some relevant Scriptures that deal with that temptation and be ready to quote them when Satan comes.

Conclusion:

1. Are you battling temptation? Be encouraged! Because Christ defeated Satan, He can strengthen and help you to defeat Satan also – Hebrews 2:18 *“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, **he is able to succour them that are tempted.**”*
2. Are you losing to temptation? Be challenged! Are you fighting the battle with spiritual weapons (I.E. The sword of the Spirit)? Are you fully submitted to God and His Word?
3. Are you saved? Christ is perfectly qualified to be your Saviour. He is sinless!

The Proclamation of the Son

Text: Mark 1:14-15

Introduction:

1. The three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) focus on Christ's ministry in Galilee. John's Gospel in the early chapters provides details of the first year of Christ's public ministry that preceded this point. Some have called this the "year of obscurity"
2. Having described the baptism and temptation of Christ, Mark now gives a summary of the preaching ministry of the Messiah.
3. Often in the Gospels we have reference to Christ 'teaching' but we also have references like this one that reveal that Christ was also a preacher. He proclaimed the truth with authority and anointing.
4. In this lesson, we will consider three things in relation to Christ's ministry of preaching.

I. The Time of His Preaching (Vs. 14a)

A. The Imprisonment of John (Vs. 14a)

1. Christ commenced His Galilean ministry after John was incarcerated by king Herod. The details of the events that lead to John's imprisonment are recorded in 6:14-29 and will be the focus of a later sermon but in summary, John was imprisoned for two reasons:
 - a. Due to his bold denunciation of sin – John was not afraid to rebuke the highest ruler in the land for his sin. There is a price to pay for being faithful to the truth!
 - b. Due to his purpose being fulfilled – John's ministry was to prepare the way for the Messiah. God, in His sovereignty, used John's imprisonment to bring about the transition from John's ministry to Messiah's ministry. The ending of John's public ministry marked the beginning of Christ's public ministry in Galilee.

B. The Appointment of the Father (Vs. 15a)

1. 'time' = not a reference to time in general but to a season or epoch; a special time with a special event, a particular time. It was "time heavy with eternal significance." (Hiebert)
2. Christ entered the world at the exact time ordained by God.
3. Galatians 4:4 *"But when **the fulness of the time** was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."*

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II. The Topography of His Preaching (Vs. 14b)

A. The Location of Galilee

1. The northernmost of the three main divisions of Palestine. Palestine was divided into three provinces at the time of Christ – Judea, Samaria and Galilee
2. Unger's description: "Galilee occupied the upper part of the land, being the NW province. In the time of Christ, it included more than one-third of western Palestine, extending from the base of Mt. Hermon on the North to the ridges of Carmel and Gilboa on the South, and from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea, about fifty by twenty-five miles in extent. Solomon once offered the tract to Hiram, who declined it, after which Solomon colonized it. It embraced a large norther portion of the tribe of Naphtali and was called Galilee of the Gentiles."

B. The Population of Galilee

1. Galilee was a populous and fertile region. Christ went to where the people were!
2. Galilee was made up of a mix of Jew and Gentile, hence its name "Galilee of the nations". "Galilee was cosmopolitan. It was a region where Roman, Greek and Jew mixed and intermingled because the population of Galilee was as much Gentile as it was Jewish" (John Phillips). While much of Christ's earthly ministry was focused on Israel, at the same time, He came to be the Lamb for the "sin of the world" (John 1:29).
3. Galilee was a somewhat despised and disregarded area as it was far from the religious center of Jerusalem. Nathanael said, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)

C. The Prediction of Galilee

1. Christ's ministry in Galilee was the fulfilment of prophecy.
2. Matthew 4:12-17 – Matthew quotes from Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 9:1-2 & 42:6-7). Christ entered this area covered in spiritual darkness as the light of the world (John 8:12). The "sun of righteousness" had finally arisen! (Mal. 4:2)

III. The Topics of His Preaching (Vs. 15)

A. The Revelation of the Kingdom (Vs. 15a)

1. "gospel" = good news
2. "the kingdom of God" = the long anticipated Messianic kingdom foretold in the O.T. Christ offered the kingdom to Israel but they rejected and crucified their king. The kingdom of God will still be fulfilled literally in the future in the Millennial reign of Christ.
3. "time is fulfilled...at hand" = Christ's message contained a sense of urgency. "at hand" means "is now near."

B. The Requirements of the Kingdom (Vs. 15b)

1. Repentance

- a. Repentance was a keynote of N.T. Gospel preaching

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- i. The example of John the Baptist (Vs. 4)
- ii. The example of Christ (Matt. 4:17; Mk. 1:15)
- iii. The example of the disciples (Mark 6:12)
- iv. The example of Peter (Acts 2:38)
- v. The example of Paul (Acts 20:21)
- b. Repentance is essential for salvation (Luke 13:3 & 5)
- c. Repentance is a part of the Great Commission (Luke 24:47)
- d. Repentance defined
 - i. What repentance is not
 - It is not reformation. This would be works. A change of life is the result/fruit of genuine repentance
 - It is not mere remorse. Sorry for sin is a part of repentance but remorse in and of itself is not repentance. Regret for the consequences of one's actions is distinct from repentance for the sinfulness of one's actions. Judas is an example of one who was remorseful but did not truly repent (Matt. 27:3-4)
 - ii. What repentance is
 - Repentance is a change of mind that **results** in a change of life. The Greek word is μετανοεω (metanoeo) which is made up of two words: 'meta' (after) and 'noeo' (to think) so "to think after".
 - David Cloud:

"Biblical repentance as preached by John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles, is A CHANGE OF MIND TOWARD GOD AND SIN THAT *RESULTS IN A CHANGE OF LIFE*. IT IS A SPIRIT-WROUGHT CHANGE OF MIND THAT LEADS TO A CHANGE OF LIFE. It is not a change of life. That would be a works salvation. It is a radical, Spirit-wrought change of mind toward sin and God, such a dramatic change of mind that it changes one's actions."

- C.H. Spurgeon:

"Just now some professedly Christian teachers are misleading many by saying that 'repentance is only a change of mind.' It is true that the original word does convey the idea of a change of mind; but the whole teaching of Scripture concerning the repentance which is not to be repented of is that it is a much more radical and complete change than is implied by our common phrase about changing one's mind. The repentance that does not include sincere sorrow for sin is not the saving grace that is wrought by the Holy Spirit. God-given repentance makes men grieve in their inmost souls over the sin they have committed, and works in them a gracious hatred of evil in every shape and form. We cannot find a better definition of repentance than the one many of us learned at our mother's knee: 'Repentance is to leave the sin we loved before, and show that we in earnest grieve by doing so no more'" (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "The Royal Saviour," Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England, Feb. 1, 1872).

- e. Repentance illustration: Parable of the two sons (Matt. 21:28-32)
- f. Baptist Theologian B.H. Carroll on repentance

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The preacher who leaves out repentance commits as grave a sin as the one who leaves out faith. I mean he must preach repentance just as often, and with as much emphasis, and to as many people as he preaches faith. To omit repentance, to ignore it, to depreciate it, is rebellion and treason. Mark its relative importance: You may make a mistake about baptism and be saved, for baptism is not essential for salvation. You may be a Christian and not comprehend fully the high priesthood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 5:11), but “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” So said the Master Himself. Repentance is a preparatory work. For thus saith the Lord: “Break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns.” I submit before God, who will judge the quick and the dead, that to preach faith without repentance is to sow among thorns. No harvest can be gathered from an unplowed field. The fallow ground needs to be broken up. The most striking instance on record of repentance as a preparatory work was the ministry of John the Baptist. He was sent “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” He did it by preaching repentance, and Mark says his preaching was “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Here is the true starting point...When true repentance was preached and emphasized, there were not so many nominal professors of religion. To leave out or minimize repentance, no matter what sort of faith you preach, is to prepare a generation of professors who are such in name only. I give it as my deliberate conviction, founded on twenty-five years of ministerial observation, that the Christian profession of today owes its lack of vital godliness, its want of practical piety, its absence from the prayer meeting, its miserable semblance of missionary life, very largely to the fact that old-fashioned repentance is so little preached. (B.H. Carroll, 1889)

2. Faith

1. The definition of ‘faith’
 - a. Faith means to think to be true (mind)
 - b. Faith means to trust or rely on (heart) (Rom. 10:9-10) “To believe means more than to give credence to the message; it involves a personal commitment to, and reliance upon, that which is believed.” (Hiebert)
 - c. Faith means to receive (will) “*But as many as **received** him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, ever to them that believe on his name.*” (John 1:12)
2. The focus of ‘faith’
 - a. Faith in “the gospel” – Christ’s death on the cross for sin, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
 - b. Faith in Christ himself – “...**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.**” (Acts 16:31)

Conclusion:

1. Have you truly repented of your sin and your own way and trusted in Christ for salvation?
2. As believers, are we boldly proclaiming the timeless, unchanging message of repentance and faith to a lost world?

The Three Calls of Discipleship

Text: Mark 1:16-20

Introduction:

1. Occasion & setting: Christ is walking by the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is a large freshwater lake approx. 13 miles long (21 km) and 7 miles wide (11 km) and was a significant location in the ministry of Christ. It is called by four different names in Scripture: the “Sea of Chinnereth” (word means “harp-shaped”); the “lake of Gennesaret”; the “Sea of Tiberias” and the “Sea of Galilee”
2. The account: Christ calls two sets of brothers as His first full time disciples. But this was not the first call from Christ in their lives. In this study we will consider the three calls of Christian discipleship in these men’s lives and the challenges they present to us.

I. The Call to Salvation (John 1:35-42)

It is important to note that the call in the passage before us was not a call to salvation. Some misunderstand this and teach a “just follow Jesus” Gospel which is superficial and vague. These men had already accepted Christ as the Messiah prior to this event under the influence of the ministry of John the Baptist. Salvation is the start of true discipleship.

A. They Had Repented of Sin

1. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist (Vs. 35). John was the famous preacher of repentance, administering the baptism of repentance. To become a disciple of John, Andrew would have repented and received Christ as Messiah and Saviour.
2. Andrew goes and finds his brother Simon (Peter) and leads him to Christ.

B. They Had Received the Saviour (Vs. 29, 36, 41)

1. John’s preached Christ as Messiah and Saviour of the world. John described Christ as “the Lamb of God” who would take away the sin of the world. Christ was the fulfilment of all the O.T. types and pictures.
2. You cannot start on the journey of discipleship until you respond to this first call to repent of sin and receive Christ as Saviour!

II. The Call to Service (Vs. 16-17, 19-20)

Generally, all of God’s people are called to a life of service for the Lord but the call of these men was more specifically a call to full time Gospel ministry. Not all receive a call of this nature but all should serve the Lord faithfully in whatever vocation He has placed them in.

A. The Men of the Call (Vs. 16 & 19)

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1. Their Identity
 - a. Simon & Andrew
 - i. Not much is known about their background. Peter would become the more visible of the two and was vocal and outgoing in personality. Andrew was more of a behind the scenes man but a man who quietly brought people to the Saviour.
 - ii. Appears they were partnered with James & John in the fishing trade (Luke 5:10)
 - b. James & John
 - i. Their father – a man named Zebedee. Appears to be a man of some means as he had “hired servants” (Vs. 20) and his son John was known to the High Priest at Jerusalem (John 18:15)
 - ii. Their mother – a lady named Salome (Matt. 27:55-56) who was sister to Mary, Jesus’ mother (Mk. 15:40; John 19:25) making James and John cousins of Christ according to the flesh.
 - iii. James would become the first Apostle to be martyred (Acts 12:2) whereas John would go on to be the longest living Apostle.
2. Their Industry
 - a. They were humble men – God calls ordinary men to serve an extraordinary God. God calls insignificant men to do significant things for Him. Christ did not seek out his disciples in the halls of Herod’s palace or the hierarchy of the High Priest but amongst the humble fishermen of Galilee. So far as the world was concerned, these were “unlearned and ignorant men” (Acts 4:13)
 - b. They were hard working men. “When God looks for someone to use in a special mission, He looks for the person who is already busy, the energetic individual” (Wuest). Consider some other examples of men who were called whilst engaged in activity:
 - i. Moses was called whilst keeping sheep
 - ii. Gideon was called whilst threshing wheat
 - iii. David was called while keeping his father’s sheep
 - iv. Elisha was called while he was plowing a field
 - v. Saul and Barnabas were called while actively serving in their local church (Acts 13:1-2)

B. The Mandate in the Call (Vs. 17, 20)

1. **The Duty of the disciple – to be a follower of Christ**
 - a. “come ye after me” = this figure of discipleship based on the respectful practice of disciples’ allowing their master to walk

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ahead as they passed along (Hiebert). The disciples whole focus is to be upon following the lead of Christ

- b. How different this is to running ahead of Christ with our own ideas and plans and then seeking to compel Him to endorse and bless them!
 - i. To be a good leader, you must be a good follower (a submissive spirit)
 - ii. To be a good teacher, you must be a good learner (a teachable spirit)

2. The Destiny of the disciple – to become a fisher of men

- a. “I will make you” = this is a promise from Christ. He is the one who equips and enables His servants to do what He has called them to do. These men would be shaped, molded and prepared by the hands of the Master for the great task of reaching others for Christ.
- b. “to become” = they weren’t fishers of men yet but through a process of training they would become fishers of men. While we never stop learning and growing the Master’s School, we note the principle laid down by Christ of a definite period of intensive training for full time ministry. “Their call was to enter upon an intensive course of training to be made ready for this work” (Lenski). This training was more than just development in knowledge. It involved the shaping of the whole man for the task.
- c. “fishers of men” = they would become soul-winners for Christ
 - i. Christ used terminology they would readily understand as fishermen.
 - ii. Fishing required patience, skill, care and hard work. In the spiritual realm, these same qualities would be needed. It would involve reaching (‘casting’) souls and then building (‘mending’) lives. The work would be both evangelistic and pastoral.
 - iii. Becoming a soul-winner is a by product of faithful discipleship with Christ. This leads to a challenging question: Are you a soul winner? If not, this highlights a problem in our discipleship because if we follow Christ fervently and closely, we cannot but catch Christ’s fire and passion for the lost.

III. The Call to Sacrifice (Vs. 18, 20)

This call is implied in and connected with the call to Christian service and covers two main areas:

A. The Finances (Vs. 18)

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1. 'straightway' = these men were responsive to the Saviour's call. There was immediate surrender.
2. "they forsook their nets" = They held the things of this life loosely. There was a definite separation from the fishing business to the preaching of the Word of God. A call to full time Christian service means the work of God takes precedence over all other secular employment. This does not mean that a man may not need to do some tent making (e.g. Apostle Paul) from time to time but his priority and passion will be the ministry and wherever possible, it is preferable he be able to give his full time and attention to the Gospel ministry.
3. This involves the walk of faith (i.e. learning to trust God for the supply of daily needs)

B. The Family (Vs. 20)

1. For the Individual
 - a. The ministry call meant James and John had to leave the family business and much of what was familiar to them.
 - b. The ministry call would mean embarking on a life where the family had to learn to trust God for the supply of basic needs.
2. For the Spouse
 - a. We know that Peter was married as he had a mother in law (Mk. 1:30)
 - b. Peter's wife would participate in her husband's step of faith to obey the Lord. She would miss his presence when he was away on a preaching tour with Christ. She would find it difficult when he came home late for tea after a busy day of ministry. She would share his burden of trusting God to supply their family's needs.
3. For the Parents
 - a. There is no protest from Zebedee despite the fact this would have been difficult for him. We get the sense from Scripture that Zebedee and Salome were godly people who supported their sons in their high calling.
 - b. "As for the parents of these apostles, they represent all mothers and fathers who generously give their sons and daughters to Jesus, even though they are their pride and joy, partners in their daily affairs, and the anticipated support of their old age." (John Phillips)

Conclusion: Have you heeded Christ's three calls? Have you responded to the call of salvation? As a Christian, are you following Christ to serve Him faithfully? Is there any sacrifice made for the Lord in our lives?

A Day of Miracles

Text: Mark 1:21-34

Introduction:

1. In this section we have the first miracles recorded by Mark. There is a suite of miracles in these verses that all take place on one the Sabbath day. It was a day of miracles!
2. These Messianic miracles were a fulfilment of Bible prophecy and demonstrated that Christ was who He claimed to be. “What Jesus Christ did, reveals Who He is.” In the passage before us, we have the authority of the Son of God emphasized (note ‘authority in Vs. 22 & 27) in three areas.

Look firstly at His...

I. Authority in Doctrine (Vs. 21-22)

A. The Revelation of His Doctrine (Vs. 21)

1. ‘Capernaum’ = located on northern end of Sea of Galilee. Was to be Christ’s ministry head quarters for much of His Galilean ministry.
2. “entered into the synagogue” = was Christ’s regular practice to attend the synagogue. Luke 4:16 “...as his custom was...” A synagogue was a Jewish meeting place used for Sabbath worship as well as a school during the week for the teaching of the law. It also functioned as a court for handling certain offences.
3. ‘taught’ = Christ was both the Master Preacher and Teacher. What He taught we are not told by Mark but from His other recorded teaching, we can probably guess that it included the great themes of repentance from sin, the coming kingdom etc....

B. The Reaction to His Doctrine (Vs. 22)

1. ‘astonished’ = A strong word meaning “to strike out” (Wuest) “to be exceedingly struck in mind” (Vine) “Jesus teaching struck the people like a blow, knocking them out of their normal state of mind.” (Hiebert)
2. ‘for’ = reveals the reason for their amazement
3. “he taught them as one that had authority” = Christ’s message was authentic. Christ’s message came with authority because:
 - a. He preached as the Son of God (His Person)
 - b. He preached the truth. Christ was truth incarnate, the living Word (John 1:1,14; 14:6). The scribes preached man made tradition, Christ preached the eternal truth of God’s Word.
 - c. He preached with power. Christ’s whole being was under the control of the Holy Spirit. His preaching came with Holy Ghost

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unction (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1) "...Never man spake like this man." (John 7:46)

4. "not as the scribes" = the teaching of the scribes was dry as dust and came from corrupt, hypocritical lives (Matt. 23:13-29) Matt. 23:23 "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have **omitted the weightier matters of the law...***" "Christ cut through this tangled mess of religious red tape." (Phillips)
5. Challenge: The people were moved by Christ's message but admiration and astonishment are not the same thing as saving faith. Many were awe struck by the power of Christ's words who did not submit to Him in faith to receive Him as Lord and Saviour. Illustration: Christ's sermon at the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:16-30). First, they wondered at His gracious words (Luke 4:22) but by the end of the sermon they "were filled with wrath" (Vs. 28).

Look secondly at His...

II. Authority Over Demons (Vs. 23-28)

A. The Reign of the Demon (Vs. 23)

1. "unclean spirit" = the character of evil spirits. They are unclean morally and bring defilement into the life of an individual.
2. "he cried out" = he screamed, shrieked. Luke adds "with a loud voice". Appears that this took place while Christ was preaching. His anointed words brought the evil to the surface.
3. Demons actively seek to possess people and bring them into bondage (Matt. 12:43-45). Satan seeks to hold the lives of men and woman captive. He is the murderer and destroyer of lives.

B. The Resistance of the Demon (Vs. 24)

1. "let us alone" = 'alone' translated from an interjection arising from a spirit of anger and fear (like "Ah!" or "Oh!").
2. "what have we to do with thee" = essentially, he is saying "I don't want anything to do with you!"
3. "art thou come to destroy us" = not annihilation but ruination. Messiah would ruin their power and activity. He also the possibility of being thrown into the bottomless pit (Luke 8:31). But Christ came to bring destruction to Satan's kingdom! 1 John 3:8 "*...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*" (1 John 3:8)
4. "thou Jesus of Nazareth...the Holy One of God" = this demon knew who Christ was! He clearly acknowledges Christ's Deity and Purity. Remember, this demon was once a godly angel who basked in the presence of God in heaven until he followed Lucifer's rebellion and became a fallen angel.

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5. “It was His holiness, however, that burned like fire in the soul of the poor man’s tormenting demon. It was like lightning, which both burns and sheds dazzling light. His Holiness, before which even the shining seraphs shrink (Isaiah 6:2), exposed the abysmal vileness and wickedness of this foul spirit. He shrank from it, called out against it, and writhed beneath its glare.” (John Phillips)

C. The Release from the Demon (Vs. 25-26)

1. “hold thy peace” – Christ rebuked the demon. Christ basically said “shut your mouth!” Christ does not tolerate a testimony from a polluted source, even though that testimony be true (See Paul’s example also in Acts 16:16-18) Note: This debunks the idea that “so long as the words are true” it doesn’t matter what medium is used to communicate them (e.g. Christian rock and roll).
2. “come out of him” – Christ removed the demon. Christ had absolute power and authority over this demon. He could do nothing but release his hold on this man’s life. Christ can still set captives free today!
3. “when the unclean spirit had torn him and cried with a loud voice” = reveals the total rebellion and opposition of the demon to Christ. He had no choice but to leave but he releases one final display of Satanic rage before departing. Luke’s account reveals that the man was thrown down in the midst of the people (Luke 4:35). “Satan tempts, plagues, and buffets none so fiercely as those who are in the act of being delivered from his tyranny forever.” (Trench)

D. The Response after the Demon (Vs. 27-28)

1. Amazement (Vs. 27)
 - a. ‘amazed’ = means “astonishment passing into awe” (Hiebert). They were thunder struck, dumfounded and staggered.
 - b. “What thing is this?” = in Luke’s account “what a word is this!” (Luke 4:36)
 - c. “What new doctrine is this?” = ‘new’ in the sense of quality rather than time. Christ proclaimed “timeless truth, stripped of all traditionalism and error, truth backed by a life in touch, moment by moment, with heaven.” (Phillips) “It was fresh with the dew of heaven upon it.” (Wuest)
 - d. “for with authority commandeth he” = Christ’s authority was demonstrated both in words and in deeds. His miracles added further weight and power to His claims.
2. Announcement (Vs. 28)
 - a. The word soon spread like wildfire across the region. ‘fame’ comes from the word ‘hearing’ or ‘report’
 - b. So rapid was the spread of the news that by night fall, most of the city of Capernaum was at Christ’s door step (Vs. 33)

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Look thirdly at His...

III. Authority Over Disease (Vs. 29-34)

A. Christ Heals a Mother (Vs. 29-31)

1. Her location – Peter’s house (Vs. 29)
 - a. ‘forthwith’ = immediately. Here we have miracle following miracle in quick succession
 - b. “house of Simon and Andrew” = appears to be Peter’s home which became a base of operations for our Lord
2. Her languishing – sick of a fever (Vs. 30)
 - a. “sick of a fever” = ‘fever’ comes from the word ‘fire’. She was lying prostrate, burning up with fever.
 - b. “they tell him off her” = Luke says, “they besought him for her” (Luke 4:38)
3. Her lifting – Jesus’ touch (Vs. 31)
 - a. Luke as a Physician adds a touching detail – “he stood over her” Pictures Christ bending over the patient as the Great Physician.
 - b. “took her by the hand” = the touch of the Master’s Hand
 - c. “immediately the fever left” = instant and total healing
 - d. “she ministered unto them” = having received of Christ’s grace and mercy, her response was to serve Christ and His servants. Many receive of God’s healing grace but then go on to live self-centered lives. Not so with Peter’s mother in law. Her gratitude for Christ’s goodness in her life drove her to loving service.

B. Christ Heals a Multitude (Vs. 32-34)

1. The setting for the crowd – sunset (Vs. 32)
 - a. “they brought unto him” = impf. Tense “they were bringing” Pictures the steady stream of people making their way to the house
 - b. “diseased” = physical sickness
 - c. “possessed with devils” = spiritual sickness (sometimes physical diseases and ailments associated with demon possession also)
2. The size of the crowd – whole city (Vs. 33)
3. The saving of the crowd – Christ healed them (Vs. 34)
 - a. “divers diseases” = Christ’s power was sufficient to meet every individual need. He healed many people of with many different problems.
 - b. “cast out many devils” = like the man described in Vs. 21-28, these people also experienced Christ’s deliverance.

Conclusion: Have you been delivered from the disease of sin? Have you been delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan? Are you saved, born again? For those of us who have been saved, do we serve our Saviour with love and gratitude?

The Mission of the Son

Text: Mark 1:35-45

Introduction:

1. Mark now describes a preaching tour of Galilee that took place over “some days” (compare 1:39 & 2:1)
2. This account will give us insight into the prayer life of the Saviour, His philosophy of ministry and his power to transform lives.

Look firstly at...

I. The Praying of His Mission (Vs. 35)

A. The Period of His Praying (when?) (Vs. 35a)

1. The time – “in the morning...a great while before day” = this would have been the last watch of the night between 3 to 6 am when it was still dark (Wuest). Literally “at night very much” (Hiebert)
2. The length – ‘prayed’ is in the imperfect tense (repeated action). This means Christ prayed for some length.
3. Context: A busy ministry day the day before and a busy preaching tour about to commence. If Christ, the Son of the Living God, took time to be alone with His Heavenly Father, how much more should we! As perfect man, Christ lived in dependence on His Father’s power through the Holy Spirit to minister. Christ prayed after service to be refreshed and before service to be prepared.

B. The Place of His Praying (where?) (Vs. 35b)

1. ‘solitary’ = a quiet, secluded place. Word translated previously in chapter as ‘wilderness’. It was “a quiet and uninhabited spot somewhere in the vicinity of Capernaum” (Hiebert).
2. Elsewhere we find Christ praying in a garden (John 18:1-2; Matt. 26:36) and in a mountain (Matt. 14:23)
3. Illustration: Daniel prayed in his bedroom (Dan. 6:10)
4. Christ needed **solitude** and **silence** for prayer and so do we!

C. The Pattern of His Praying (how?) (Vs. 35c)

1. ‘prayed’ = general, most frequent term in the N.T. Carries the idea of worship and reverence. Comes from a compound word: ‘towards’ (προς) & “I wish” (εὐχομαι). Verb is imperfect (repeated action) and pictures Jesus as praying through the early morning hours.
2. Prayer involves both worship and petition.
3. “Prayer is an attitude of complete dependence upon God.” (Pentecost).
4. Christ’s whole ministry was bathed in prayer.

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Look secondly at...

II. The Priorities of His Mission (Vs. 36-39)

A. Priorities in Relation to People (Vs. 36-38)

1. Peter and “they that were with him” (presumably Andrew, James and John – Vs. 29) came looking for Christ on account of the multitudes that were seeking Him. Luke adds that “the people sought him”.
2. The reason they sought him was so “that he should not depart from them.” (Lk. 4:42). They wanted this One who could work such miracles to stay and keep ministering to them. However, Christ understood the motives of the “crowd” were often superficial. They often sought Him for temporal gains (miracles and food) rather than for spiritual reasons.
3. Example: John 6:26-27 *“Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because **ye did eat of the loaves**, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”*
4. Practical implications for ministry
 - a. We need to be wise in the use of our time as we minister to peoples needs lest we end up spending all our time on one group of people to the neglect of others with needs. There are those who will pursue the preacher or Christian worker for help with their needs and thus detain him from helping others.
 - b. Christ discouraged an emphasis on disciples that were merely there for the miracles (Matt. 12:38-39). His miracles came from His compassionate heart and also authenticated His claims as Messiah (John 14:11) but they were secondary to the greater and more important task of preaching the truth (1 Cor. 1:21). Christ’s first concern was the salvation of men’s souls before the healing and feeding of their bodies. We need to take care to maintain the same order of priority!

B. Priorities in Relation to Preaching (Vs. 38-39)

1. “I may preach there also...And he preached in their synagogues” = reveals the primacy of preaching in our Lord’s ministry
2. “for therefore came I forth” = reveals the purpose for which Christ came. He came to preach the Gospel and to call me to repentance and faith (remember Vs. 14-15).
3. Luke 4:18 *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me **to preach the Gospel to the poor...**”*
4. Luke 19:10 *“For the Son of man is come **to seek and to save that which was lost.**”*

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Look thirdly at...

III. The Power of His Mission (Vs. 40-45)

Mark now records an example of one of the many lepers that were likely healed by Christ during this preaching tour (Matt. 11:5). It serves as a powerful analogy of salvation.

A. The Condition of the Leper (Vs. 40a)

1. He was defiled – “a man full of leprosy” (Luke 5:12)
 - a. Description of leprosy by Geikie: Leprosy was “a disease at all times terrible, but aggravated, in the opinion of that day, by the belief it was a direct “stroke of God,” as a punishment for special sins. It began with little specks on the eyelids, and on the palms of the hand, and gradually spread over different parts of the body, bleaching the hair white wherever it showed itself, crusting the affected parts of the body, bleaching the hair white wherever it showed itself, crusting the affected parts with shining scales, and causing swellings and sores. From the skin it slowly ate its way through the tissues, to the bones and joints and even to the marrow, rotting the whole body piecemeal. The lungs, the organs of speech and hearing, and the eyes were attached in turn, till, at last, consumption or dropsy brought welcome death.”
 - b. Lev. 13 outlines the laws concerning leprosy. The word ‘unclean’ comes through repeatedly.
 - c. Lev. 13:45-46 *“And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, **Unclean, unclean.** All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be **defiled**; he is unclean: **he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.**”*
2. He was condemned – the law had no cure for the leper, it could only pronounce him unclean.
3. He was separated – the leper had to abide alone without the camp, away from the comfort and fellowship of family and friends.
4. What a picture of the lost condition of the sinner! “Leprosy is a remarkable type of sin and its fruits...The visible effect on the body illustrates the effect of sin upon the soul. Sin, like leprosy, is a most loathsome, polluting, deforming, unclean thing. Leprosy is God’s language by which he describes sin as it appears in his sight.” (F.N. Peloubet)

B. The Petition of the Leper (Vs. 40b)

1. The focus of his petition – he came to Christ
 - a. “came to him”
 - b. “beseeching him”
 - c. “kneeling down to him”
 - d. “saying unto him”
 - e. 1. Tim. 2:5 – Christ is the only Mediator. No one comes to the Father except through Christ (John 14:6)
2. The reverence of his petition – he was humble and respectful in his posture and words
 - a. His posture – “kneeling down” (Mk. 1:40); “worshipped him” (Matt. 8:2); “fell on his face” (Luke 5:12)

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- b. His words – “if thou wilt” He did not demand or command Christ. His was a respectful and reverential plea.
3. The faith of his petition – “thou canst make me clean”
 - a. He believed in Christ’s Person – this was a clear acknowledgement of Christ’s deity and Messiahship.
 - b. He believed in Christ’s Power – He believed Christ had the authority and ability to heal him.

C. The Transformation of the Leper (Vs. 41-42)

1. Transformed because of the Heart of Christ – “moved with compassion”
 - a. Christ’s compassion is mentioned frequently in the Gospels. E.g. Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mk. 6:34; 8:2; Lk. 7:13)
 - b. ‘compassion’ = a suffering with another; painful sympathy; a sensation of sorrow excited by the distress or misfortunes of another (Webster). Verb denotes not only a pained feeling at the sight of the suffering but also a yearning to relieve it (Hiebert).
 - c. There was nothing in this leper that could merit Christ’s favour. It was solely of God’s grace and mercy. Salvation is by grace alone!
2. Transformed by the Hand of Christ – “and touched him”
 - a. Probably the first time this man had felt the touch of another human since he contracted the disease.
 - b. Imagine the scene. He lies prostrate, face to the ground, pleading for mercy and all of a sudden, He feels the firm yet compassionate grip of Christ’s hand.
 - c. Note: Normally touching a leper would make someone unclean according to the law. But instead of Christ being defiled by touching the leper, the leper was cleansed by Christ.
3. Transformed by the Word of Christ – “and saith...I will; be thou clean”
 - a. Christ’s promise comes to this man with power. This is the Living Word, the Word that spoke the universe into existence!
 - b. The cleansing was instantaneous and complete – Vs. 42

D. The Instruction to the Leper (Vs. 43-45)

1. The Directive of the Lord (Vs. 43-44)
 - a. To be silent on his way to the priest. Luke 5:15 seems to indicate reason for the command. Many sought him to be healed of their infirmities, thus hindering Christ’s ministry of preaching.
 - b. To show himself to the priest in obedience to the O.T. law
2. The Disobedience to the Lord (Vs. 45)
 - a. Highlights that effective Christian witness needs to be connected with a submissive Christian walk.
 - b. This man’s failure to follow our Lord’s instructions damaged the Lord’s ministry at that time.

Conclusion:

1. Christian: How is your prayer life? How much time do you spend in the secret place?
2. Unsaved: Have you come to Christ in faith for cleansing from sin?

Christ has the Power to Forgive Sins

Text: Mark 2:1-12

Introduction:

1. Christ's conflict with the religious leaders comes into focus in chapter 2 & 3. In this chapter they will issue a direct challenge to His Divine right to forgive sins.
2. This account records one of the miracles of Christ He performed in healing a paralyzed man. Christ's Deity is powerfully demonstrated through this miracle. It also provides a wonderful illustration of salvation.
3. Let's look at this miracle under five divisions

I. The Context of the Miracle (Vs. 1-3)

A. The Multitude (Vs. 1-2a)

1. "it was noised" = word soon spread that the Saviour was in town
2. "in the house" = Likely Peter's house (Mk. 1:29). Matthew mentions Christ "came into his own city" (Matt. 9:1). So, Capernaum and Peter's house had become a base of operations for the Lord. What a good example Peter was to open his home for the Master's use! What blessings came to that home on account of Christ's presence being there!
3. "many were gathered together" = a large crowd arrives. The house quickly fills to capacity and many more stand outside the door.

B. The Message (Vs. 2b)

1. "he preached the word unto them" = Christ seizes the opportunity to proclaim the truth to the gathered crowd.
2. Luke uses the word 'teaching'. So, it was more of a conversational, teaching style of preaching in this context.
3. The truth was always the priority with the Saviour, not healing! The greatest need men have is for the Word of God.

C. The Man (Vs. 3)

1. "sick of the palsy" = he was a paralytic (paralyzed). Palsy is, "*The loss or defect of the power of voluntary muscular motion in the whole body, or in a particular part; paralysis.*" (Webster's)
2. Obviously, his condition was severe as he had to be carried by four men on his bed.
3. Picture: This man's lame condition is a picture of the sinner before salvation – totally helpless and unable to do anything to save himself. "*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*" (Rom. 5:6) The four men could represent the ministry of soul-winning. We have no power cure men of their sin

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condition, but we can seek with all our hearts to bring them to the One who can!

II. The Confidence for the Miracle (Vs. 4-5)

The faith of these men had some wonderful qualities. Consider...

A. The Compassion of their Faith (Vs. 3)

1. These men were clearly driven by a spirit of compassion for this poor, suffering man. Do we have any compassion for men and women, paralyzed by the disease of sin?
2. God uses human instruments to bring souls to Christ. Illustration: Ethiopian eunuch – “How can I, except some man should guide me?” (Acts 8:31)

B. The Action of their Faith (Vs. 4)

1. “uncovered the roof” = houses had flat roofs in Bible times. Flat roof design still used in some parts of the world.
2. “broken it up” = to dig up or through. Luke adds “they let him down through the tiling” (Lk. 5:19)
3. Description by Hiebert:

The flat roof of an ordinary house would be constructed by laying beams about three feet apart from wall to wall. Short sticks were laid closely together across the beams and covered with a thick matting of thorn bushes. At other times, as seems the case here, stone slabs or plates of burnt clay were laid across the beams. A coat of clay was spread on top of this and rolled hard to keep out the rain. They would be readily able to dig out a hole large enough for the purpose without damaging the rest of the roof. Having cleared away the clay, they lifted the tiles to make the opening.

4. Their faith in the power of Christ to heal drove them to overcome the obstacles that stood in their way. They overcame the obstacle of the crowd and the ceiling that stood in the way to getting this man to the Lord Jesus. Any attempt to bring a soul to Jesus will be met with difficulty and opposition.
5. To bring a soul to Christ, requires effort and labor (e.g. prayer, time, sacrifice). Paul used birthing language to describe it – “*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.*” (Gal. 4:19) And as this account shows, it often takes more than one person! To get this man to Christ required 4 sets of hands!
6. True faith is expressed in our works – “*...I will shew thee my faith by my works.*” (James 2:18)

C. The Attention of their Faith (Vs. 4)

1. Christ was the focus of their faith. They believed in His power to transform this man’s life!
2. True faith is directed to the Person of Christ.

D. The Commendation of their Faith (Vs. 5a)

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1. Christ was pleased with the faith of these men. Faith moves the hand of God.
2. “their faith” = this would include the faith of the paralytic as well as the faith of the four men who carried him there.

III. The Cleansing of the Miracle (Vs. 5b)

A. The Release of Forgiveness – “thy sins be forgiven thee”

1. ‘forgiven’ = means to send away, to pardon. Word used in Matt. 18:27 of the forgiving of a debt.
2. Illustration of forgiveness: The two goats on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:7-10; 15-22). The first goat sacrificed as a sin offering. The second goat bears the sins of the nation away into the wilderness. Reveals two aspects to Christ’s redemptive work on the cross. His blood was shed for the payment of our sin (pictured in the first goat) and as a result, our sins can be sent away, forgiven (pictured in the second goat).
3. Col. 1:14 *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the **forgiveness** of sins.”*
4. Psalm 130:3-4 *“If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is **forgiveness** with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”*
5. Would you be free from your burden of sin, there’s power in the blood!
6. Illustration: Pilgrim’s progress – burden came off his back at the cross.

B. The Relationship from Forgiveness – “Son”

1. Through salvation, we become a child of God.
2. *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”* (1 John 3:1)

C. The Rejoicing from Forgiveness – “be of good cheer” (Matt. 9:2)

1. Joy is the consequence of being released from the weight of sin.
2. Obviously, this man was weighed down with his sin and was the foremost thing in his mind. He was coming to Christ for more than physical healing and there appears to be some connection between his condition and his sin.

IV. The Criticism of the Miracle (Vs. 6-9)

A. The Scribes Reasoning (Vs. 6-7)

1. The Pharisees and doctors of the law present from “every town of Galilee, and Judaea and Jerusalem.” (Luke 5:17)
2. The scribes believed that only God could forgive sins. Their logic was sound on this point!

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3. The scribes believed that Christ blasphemed by claiming a prerogative of Deity. On this, they were wrong! Christ is “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16), co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.
4. A genuine work of God will meet opposition, particularly from those steeped in religious pride.

B. The Saviour’s Rebuttal (Vs. 8-9)

1. The Lord immediately sensed the spirit of hostility and resistance, though the religious leaders didn’t speak any words. Jesus knew their thoughts (Matt. 9:4) and categorizes their thoughts as ‘evil’ (Matt. 9:4)
2. Note: The attitudes and thoughts you harbor towards the preaching of the Word of God have an affect on the atmosphere of the house of God, even if you don’t say a single word! Let’s not forget Who is walking in our midst, observing the attitudes of our heart with His all-seeing, all knowing eyes (Rev. 2:1)
3. Christ exhibits another attribute of Deity – Omniscience
4. Vs. 9 – Whether Christ said “thy sins be forgiven thee” or “arise and walk” amounted to the same thing as the religious leaders believed sickness was a result of sin, so in order to be able to heal someone, the sin had to be forgiven. So, if Christ healed the man, it would demonstrate His power and authority to forgive.
5. In verse 9 He “states the test as a challenge to his critics...Jesus implied that neither is to be said without authority to do so. The scribes might insist that His claimed right to forgive sins was easier to declare since it was an inner matter which could not be verified by outward observation. But His authority to say “Arise, and take up they bed, and walk” could at once be validated by the visible test of success or failure.” (Hiebert)

V. The Completion of the Miracle (Vs. 10-12)

A. The Lord’s Claim (Vs. 10)

1. “Son of man” = one of our Lord’s favorite designations of Himself. Appears at least 15 times in Mark’s Gospel. This title comes from Daniel 7:13-14. Christ used this title predominately in connection with two themes:
 - a. His suffering & death (e.g. Mark 8:31; 9:9-13,31; 10:33,45; 14:21,41)
 - b. His future return in glory (Mark 8:38; 13:26, 32; 14:62)
 - c. This title is precious as it reveals our Saviour’s connection to the human race. He is both Son of Man (humanity) and Son of God (Deity)

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2. “hath power...to forgive sins” = Forgiveness of sins the rightful exercise of His Sonship. ‘power’ speaks of two things:
 - a. Authority
 - b. Ability

B. The Lord’s Command (Vs. 11)

The Lord gives this man a threefold, impossible command:

1. Get up – Christ is in the business of lifting people up (1:31)
2. Pack up
3. Go home – We are sent back as transformed people to be a light in our homes.

C. The Lameman’s Compliance (Vs. 12)

1. The power of his obedience – the Word of Christ imparted the power to do the impossible. Christ’s Word brought healing and strength to his paralyzed body.
2. The perfection of his obedience – he obeyed all of the three command implicitly. He didn’t go out the same way he came in!
3. The people’s response to his obedience – they were amazed and glorified God
4. The praise in his obedience – he “departed to his own house, glorifying God.” Praise is our response to the healing of Christ.

Conclusion:

1. Challenge to the saved: Are we seeking to bring sin sick souls to the Saviour?
2. Challenge to the lost: Have you come to Christ in faith for healing from the disease called sin? Christ has the power to forgive sins!

Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners

Text: Mark 2:13-17 (read also Matt. 9:9-13 & Lk. 5:27-32)

Introduction:

1. Christ's conflict with the religious leaders comes into focus in chapter 2 & 3.
2. This account reveals the love and compassion of Christ for the lost and the fact that His ultimate purpose for coming into the world was to save sinners!
3. We are also challenged in the area of Evangelism by the example of Matthew (Levi) who opened his home as a venue to reach out to fellow publicans and sinners.
4. We will consider the text before us under 3 divisions:

I. The Order of the Saviour (Vs. 13-14)

These verses record the Saviour's calling of Levi (Matthew) to be one of his disciples.

A. The Setting of the Call (Vs. 13)

1. "by the sea side" = the Sea of Galilee. One of our Lord's favorite places to minister
2. "the multitude resorted" = crowds gathered again to the Lord
3. "he taught them" = Christ again takes the opportunity to proclaim the truth. Christ was a Herald before He was a Healer!

B. The Servant of the Call (Vs. 14a)

1. The Man
 - a. His identity – Levi. More commonly known as Matthew (Matt. 9:9) Matthew means "gift of the Lord." May have been given to him by the Saviour or adopted by Levi after his salvation and call to ministry. Mark uses the name 'Matthew' in his list of the 12 disciples in 3:18.
 - b. His industry – publican (tax collector)
 - i. "receipt of custom" = a toll/taxation booth. Likely the customs office at Capernaum which was the landing place for many ships that traversed the Sea of Galilee (Wuest). "He would collect dues on exports from Capernaum and import taxes on goods passing through.
 - ii. Tax collectors (called publicans in the Bible) were despised and hated by the Jewish people on account of their collaboration with the hated Romans and their greedy misuse of their position to extract extra money for themselves. (See Luke 19:8)

2. The Mandate

C. The Submission to the Call (Vs. 14b)

1. The speed of his obedience – "and he arose"

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- a. The disciples are a good example to us in their responsiveness to the Lord's call to discipleship. We do not find them hesitating or objecting. Christ called, they followed!
- b. The time to be surrendered is now, before a call of this nature comes to you!
2. The sacrifice of his obedience – “And he left all” (Luke 5:28)
 - a. “Unlike a fisherman, a publican who abandoned his position could not later return to it.” (Hiebert)
 - b. A call to ministry is a call to sacrifice.

II. The Outreach of the Saviour (Vs. 15)

A. The Place of the Outreach (Vs. 15a)

1. Matthew's house – “And Levi made him a great feast in his own house...” (Luke 5:29) Appears he was a man of some means. His house probably had an Eastern style dining hall or court yard to accommodate the great crowd.
2. The purpose was obviously for Matthew to introduce his acquaintances to the Lord Jesus. “...and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.” (Luke 5:29) For Levi, “having been graciously delivered from the bondage of sin, he wished others also to be set free.” (J.C. Ryle). A desire to see others saved is a good sign of the new birth.
3. It seems Levi's conversion and call to ministry had impacted those within his previous industry. “...for there were many, and they followed him.” (Mark 2:15)
4. Practical lessons:
 - a. God can use us to impact others within our sphere of influence (e.g. family, friends and work contacts)
 - b. The home is a great place for ministry, including soul-winning. Why not invite an unsaved visitor back for a meal and share Christ with them!
 - c. While never compromising on the message and methods of biblical Evangelism, there is a lot of scope for being creative in our outreaches to the lost. In Matthew's case, he basically had a work luncheon and invited the Saviour to be the guest speaker!

B. The People of the Outreach (Vs. 15b)

1. “publicans and sinners” = the word ‘publicans’ comes from the same root word translated “receipt of custom” in Vs. 14.
2. “there were many” = a large number, a “great company” (Luke 5:29)
3. Christ's love and compassion for sinners so beautifully highlighted in this verse. Here we have the Lord of glory, the incarnate Word, the Creator of the Universe, the One who is the embodiment of all that is holy and pure, surrounded by sinners!

III. The Opposition to the Saviour (Vs. 16-17)

A. The Men of the Opposition (Vs. 16)

Look at their...

1. Religiosity – the scribes and Pharisees were full of religious pride and arrogance. They considered themselves not only the custodians of the Scriptures, but also the guardians of the so called “oral law” that eventually would be contained in the Mishnah. Their faith was in law-works for salvation. Works based religion has never been a friend of the Saviour and of salvation by grace alone.
2. Hostility – they were watching Christ, not with a humble spirit to learn from Him but with a critical spirit to attack Him. They ‘saw’. The Pharisees were fault finders, looking for something they could lay hold of to discredit the Saviour. Note: A Pharisaical, fault-finding spirit is very damaging in a local church. Godly, Spirit-filled discernment and watchfulness is to be encouraged. If there is sin it should be exposed lovingly and dealt with but that is very different to the Pharisee spirit that is motivated by ungodly motives.

B. The Method of the Opposition (Vs. 16)

1. Subtlety – they targeted the disciples, rather than the Lord Himself. This was due to the fact it is easier to target the follower rather than the leader and also to try and undermine the disciple’s relationship to the Lord.
2. Butler makes an insightful comment on this point:

The faultfinders did not come to Christ personally and make their criticism; rather they went through Christ’s disciples. This was not cowardly as some think but cunning. It was a cunning technique of evil critics to drive a wedge between the disciples and Christ. This divisive technique is also a practice of church dissidents which often succeeds well. It is why, as an example, dissidents will go to a board member of the church to criticize the pastor rather than go to the pastor. Going to the board member is to get the board member dissatisfied with the pastor and on the side of the dissident. If the dissident simply went to the pastor to criticize, he would not accomplish nearly as much in stirring up people against the pastor as the dissident does when going to some other member of the church, especially some influential member of the church. (Pg. 42; Jesus Christ: His Parables)

IV. The Objective of the Saviour (Vs. 17)

Christ silences the opposition by explaining His purpose with...

A. A Quotation – (Matt. 9:13)

1. Matthew’s account includes the Lord saying, “go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.” This was a quotation from Hosea 6:6.
2. G. Campbell Morgan:

Jesus looked at these men who thought they knew the law and the prophets, and said to them: You do not understand the God who is revealed in your own writings. He was talking to the teachers, to the men who were interpreting the prophets, and He said, “Go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” Go and learn what the heart of God is; go and find out, that according to your own writings, God is far more anxious to have mercy than He is to receive any offering that a

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man brings to Him. When you have learnt this, then you will understand why I sit down with publicans and sinners, why I recline and eat in the midst of them.

B. An Illustration (Vs. 17)

1. “They that are whole have no need of the physician” = this was truth or maxim no one could deny and a well-known proverb at the time.
2. “I came not to call the righteous” = the Pharisees were full of self-righteousness. Their “righteousness” was not something that existed in reality but was a delusion in their own minds. In John 9:40-41 the Pharisees asked Christ, “Are we blind also?” (Vs. 40). Christ replied, “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.” (Vs. 41) Religious pride is one of the biggest obstacles to salvation.
3. “but sinners”
 - a. We need to be convinced of our disease before we can appreciate the cure Christ offers. Here Christ is pictured as the Physician seeking out the sick, the reverse to what normally occurs. Some of the most dangerous sicknesses are the ones that develop subtly undetected (e.g. cancer).
 - b. The universal sinfulness of man is clearly spelled out in Scripture (Ecc. 7:20; Rom. 3:10-18, 23; 5:12)
 - c. The good news is that Christ came for sinners! That means you and that means me! 1 Tim. 1:15 “This is a faithful saying...” Rom. 5:7-8 “For scarcely for a righteous man...” 1 Cor. 15:3-4 “...Christ died for our sins...”
4. “to repentance”
 - a. Christ did not come to confirm and support men in their wicked, sinful ways. He came to rescue and transform them!
 - b. This refutes the idea that Christ compromised on holiness in order to reach people. We do not find Christ boozing around the wine pots or loafing in the harlots’ dens. The setting He was in was not a compromised one and His purpose and intent was to see souls delivered from their sin, not encouraged in it!
 - c. “There is a companionship with sinners which confirms them in their sin – this must be avoided. There is a companionship with sinners that lifts them out of their sin – this was the type of companionship here.” (Lockyer)
 - d. This refutes the idea that repentance not required from salvation.

Conclusion: Will you come to Christ who is calling you out of a life of sin to repentance? Whose attitude do we have towards the lost? Christ’s or the Pharisees? Are our homes open to the Lord Jesus for ministry use?

Truth Vs. Tradition

Text: Mark 2:18-28

Introduction:

1. Christ's conflict with the religious leaders intensifies in chapter 2 & 3. In this chapter (2), the religious leaders raise 4 objections/challenges to the Lordship of Jesus Christ:
 - His power to forgive sin (Vs. 7, 10)
 - His compassion sinners (Vs. 16-17)
 - His apparent disregard for fasting (Vs. 18)
 - His alleged disobedience to Sabbath regulation (Vs. 24)
2. In this message, we will look at the last two objections above.
3. The central issue is Divine truth Vs. human tradition; salvation by grace Vs. salvation by works. In these verses Christ slams into their false, works based system of salvation, exposing it for the sham it was.
4. We will consider the text before us under 3 divisions:

I. Christ Vs. Man-Made Standards (Vs. 18-20)

A. The Criticism (Vs. 18)

1. The practice (Vs. 18a)
 - a. "used to fast" = question concerns the practice of fasting
 - b. In Matthew 6:16-18, Christ denounced hypocritical fasting that was motivated by a desire to be admired by others.
 - c. Christ was not against fasting itself and even encouraged it as a sometimes-necessary companion to victorious praying (Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29). Fasting is also cast in a favorable light on numerous occasions in the O.T. (e.g. Esther, Daniel etc...)
2. The people (Vs. 18b)
 - a. John's disciples – motive behind question hard to determine. It may have been one of ignorance. John ministered to vast multitudes and Paul even came across a group of John's disciples approx. 30 years after Jesus' baptism who still didn't know that Christ was the one to whom John's ministry pointed (Acts 19:1-7). Motive may have even been one of envy on account of Christ's popularity (See John 3:26). If this was the case, they failed to heed the message of John, the very man they claimed to follow.
 - b. The Pharisees – clearly the motive for their question was one of outright animosity and opposition to Christ and His ministry. The Pharisees had added their own manufactured traditions to the law of God (Matt. 15:9). They would fast twice in a week (Luke 18:12) on Monday's and Thursdays.

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3. The point (Vs. 18c)
 - a. The question came from a process of comparison. They were comparing themselves with Christ's disciples.
 - b. Context is feast at Matthew's house. Could be that this feast day fell on one of the days of fasting the Pharisees required.

B. The Counter question (Vs. 19-20)

1. Interesting that Christ used the illustration of a bridegroom, one to which John the Baptist himself had alluded – *“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”* (John 3:29)
2. Just as it would be inappropriate for a groom's attendants to fast at a wedding feast, so it would be inappropriate for the disciples to fast and mourn when Christ was then present with them.
3. “days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them” = allusion to the coming crucifixion
4. Central point: They had failed to discern the time. While they were focusing on man-made traditions, they missed the fact that the Messiah, the truth incarnate, was standing right before them! How many people miss out on Christ on account of their focus on religious ritual.

II. Christ Vs. a Man-Made System (Vs. 21-22)

Christ further enlarges on the truth He has just expounded, dealing with the deeper issue of their reliance upon a works system rather than salvation by grace. To achieve this, Christ employs three pictures/parables:

A. New Vs. Old Cloth (Vs. 21)

1. “new cloth” = “refers to the fuller's trade in which a new piece of cloth is made usable by a process of cleansing, shrinking, and thickening, through the use of moisture, heat and pressure. The point is that unfulled cloth would shrink when used to patch fulled cloth, and thus tear away from the later.” (Wuest)
2. The new cloth represents the truth of salvation by grace (new covenant) and the old garment represents Pharisaic Judaism. Christ's Gospel of repentance and forgiveness from sin (remember context) could not be patched in to the legalistic traditionalism of the Pharisees (JM). The truth of the Gospel was incompatible with their false system of works righteousness.

B. New Vs. Old Wineskins (Vs. 22)

1. Second analogy re-affirmed the same essential point. As a piece of new cloth would destroy an old garment, new wine would destroy old wineskins.

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2. Wine was stored in ancient Israel in containers made from animal skin (Josh. 9:4, 13). “A wineskin was a goatskin that was removed without slitting it; the openings at the feet and the tail were closed, leaving the neck as well as the mouth. In Palestine and in Damascus we saw these skins still being used by water-carriers. When it is fresh the skin stretched considerably, but when it is old it becomes stiff and bursts under pressure. People, therefore, never put new wine, which still ferments and causes pressure, into old and dried-out skins. The result would be disastrous, for the skins would burst, and both skins and wine would be lost.” (Lenski)
3. The truth of salvation by grace could not be contained within their system of legalism.
4. The Bible makes it clear that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone!
 - a. Eph. 2:8-9 *“For by grace are ye saved...”*
 - b. Titus 3:5 *“Not by works of righteousness...”*
 - c. Rom. 4:4-5 *“Now to him that worketh is the reward...”*
 - d. Rom. 11:6 *“And if by grace, then it is no more of works...”*

C. New Vs. Old Wine (Luke 5:39)

1. This final analogy depicted the lost condition of the Pharisees. They were deceived into thinking their own false system of worship was superior to the truth Christ offered.
2. They chose the old, stale wine of religious legalism rather than drinking the pure wine of salvation by grace (Psalm 34:8; 1 Peter 2:3)
3. How often people refuse to drink of the water of life, believing their own religious system is superior.

III. Christ Vs. Man-Made Sabbaths (Vs. 23-28)

A. The Disciple’s Actions (Vs. 23)

1. Luke’s account adds “and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.” (Lk. 6:1)
2. The disciples taking of the corn during travel was allowed under the O.T. Law (Deut. 23:25)

B. The Pharisees’ Accusation (Vs. 24)

1. For the Pharisees, the observance of the Sabbath Day was the pinnacle of their self-righteousness system of works. They eagerly pounce on what they believe is an infraction of Sabbath Law – ‘behold’! Their judgment of Christ and the disciples was not based on the O.T. law but on their own traditions. *“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”* (Matt. 15:9) See also Matt. 23:23

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2. The Talmud, which is the central text of rabbinic Judaism, contains no less than 24 chapters on Sabbath Day regulations.
3. Description of Sabbath Day regulations in MacArthur's N.T. Commentary:

Almost no area of life was spared from the fastidious Sabbath regulations of the rabbis, which were designed to gain God's favor...carrying anything heavier than a dried fig was forbidden; and if the object in question had been picked up in a public place, it could only be set down in a private place. If the object were tossed into the air, it had to be caught with the same hand. To catch it with the other hand would constitute work and therefore be a violation of the Sabbath...No bathing was allowed, since water might spill onto the floor and accidentally wash it. No furniture could be moved inside the house, since it might create ruts in the dirt floor and thereby constitute plowing...a radish could not be left in salt because it would become a pickle, and pickling constituted work...it was not even permissible for women to look in a mirror, since they might be tempted to pull out any gray hairs they spotted. Nor were they allowed to wear jewelry, since jewelry weighs more than a dried fig.

4. The Pharisees regarded the plucking of the heads as reaping, the rubbing out of the grain as threshing, and perhaps the blowing away of the chaff as winnowing! (Hiebert)
5. All of these regulations made the Sabbath Day a day of burdensome toil and bondage. *"For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders..."* (Matt. 23:4)
6. Religion puts men and women in bondage but the truth in Christ sets them free.

C. The Lord's Answer (Vs. 25-28)

Their objection was refuted by our Lord's two-part answer:

1. An illustration from Scripture (Vs. 25-26)
 - a. Reference is to 1 Samuel 21:1-6
 - b. In this account, God allowed a ceremonial law to be violated in order to address an urgent need. Reveals that even under the dispensation of law, there was grace.
2. The position of the Saviour (Vs. 27-28)
 - a. "the Sabbath was made for man" = God had created the Sabbath Day to be a blessing to man; to give him a day of rest from labor and an opportunity to focus on the worship of God. The Pharisees had turned it into a day of burden and bondage!
 - b. "the Son of man is Lord" = Christ again uses the Messianic title from Dan. 7:13-14. The title emphasizes His authority and Lordship. Christ claims sovereignty over the Sabbath Day. 'Lord' means "he to whom a person or thing belongs, the owner, possessor." (Wuest)

Conclusion: Have you received God's gift of salvation by grace through faith or are you, like the Pharisees of old, still clinging to your own works system in the hope that you can earn salvation?

Reach Out & Be Restored

Text: Mark 3:1-6

Introduction:

1. Parallel passages of Scripture are Matt. 12:10-14 & Luke 6:6-11
2. This chapter continues to unfold the growing animosity of the Pharisees towards Christ's Lordship.
3. This section follows naturally on from the previous account and deals with a further confrontation between Christ and the religious hierarchy over the Sabbath Day. Truth will again collide with man made tradition. God's plan of salvation by grace will collide with man's system of salvation by works.
4. The Lord will heal a man with a paralyzed hand on the Sabbath day, providing another wonderful picture of salvation and the Gospel.
5. Let's examine this miracle in 5 segments.

Look firstly at...

I. The Condition for the Lord (Vs. 1)

A. The Place (Vs 1a)

1. "the synagogue" = possibly at Capernaum but not specifically stated
2. Christ took the truth and challenged the religious establishment on its home ground
3. Luke notes that Christ was teaching (Lk. 6:6)

B. The Problem (Vs. 1b)

1. "a man there" = appears he was a regular attendee at the synagogue. He knew religion but religion had done nothing to cure him of his debilitating condition.
2. "a withered hand" = 'withered' means to "be dry or made dry". Same word is used in the next chapter to describe the effect of the sun on the plant that springs up on stony ground (Mark 4:5-6) – "withered away". This man's hand was dead and shriveled up on account of some crippling disease. Luke points out that it was his "right hand" (Luke 6:6). This would have made his condition all the more difficult as the right hand is usually the most important out of the two.
3. Challenge: What a picture of man's lost condition. We are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) and are "without strength" (Rom. 5:6). The disease called sin leaves us dry, dead and deformed.

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Look secondly at...

II. The Contest with the Lord (Vs. 2)

A. Their Sinister Motivation (Vs. 2)

1. 'watched' = means to observe minutely. Word was used of those who would keep a careful eye on criminals (Key). "They played the spy on Jesus." (RWP)
2. "that they might accuse" = the motive behind their close scrutiny of Christ. They were actually hoping He would violate their laws so they would have a reason to attack Him! Luke's account expresses it this way, "that they might find an accusation against him." (Lk. 6:7)
3. Note: Religion and religious leaders are often one of the biggest obstructions that stand between the sinner and the Saviour.

B. Their Subtle Question (Matt. 12:10)

1. "And they asked him, saying, *Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.*" (Matt. 12:10)
2. Often people's questions reveal what is smoldering beneath the surface in the heart. Though their question might have seemed innocent on the surface, there was actually an evil motive behind it.

C. Their Sinful Collusion (Vs. 6)

1. Luke adds that they were "filled with madness" as they went out (Luke 6:11) The Pharisees responded to the miracle with deeper unbelief, fury and hostility. This refutes the idea that all people need to cure them from their unbelief is to see a miracle (See Luke 16:29-31).
2. The parties involved (6a)
 - a. "the Pharisees" = religious party
 - b. "the Herodians" = political party. The Herodians were Jews who were prepared to give their loyalties to Herod and Rome over their own people. At this point in time, they were supporters of Herod Antipas, the one who beheaded John the Baptist. "They were prepared to offer homage to Roman power in return for political and religious favors." (Phillips)
 - c. Note: Usually these two groups were bitter enemies but now they are united in common hatred of Jesus Christ. The various faces of the world can quickly lay aside their differences and unite when it comes to opposition to the Person of Christ. The cross highlights this. Pilate and Herod, who were usually enemies, were made friends (Luke 23:12). Political and religious forces were united in their endeavor to crucify Christ.
3. The purposed revealed (6b)
 - a. "they might destroy him" = they wanted to kill Christ

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- b. Note: What utter hypocrisy for regarding Christ's act of healing as a terrible crime while having no qualms about plotting murder on the Sabbath!

Look thirdly at...

III. The Call of the Lord (Vs. 3)

A. The Lord's Seeking – "and he saith"

1. The initiative for healing and restoring this man was from the Lord. Christ reached out to him before he ever reached out to Christ.
2. This is a beautiful picture of salvation. Christ, the Good Shepherd, goes seeking for the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7). We, in our natural, depraved state do not seek after God.
 - a. Psalm 10:4 *"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts."*
 - b. Rom. 3:11 *"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."*
 - c. We often talk about "finding Christ" but in reality, Jesus Christ comes and finds us! In the words of the hymn we often sing, "Before I loved Him, He loved me. Before I found Him, He found me. Before I sought Him, He sought for me. Yes, Jesus cares for me."

B. The Lord's Sympathy – "unto the man"

1. We can't but see the unfathomable love and compassion of the Saviour towards this man. What a glorious truth that Christ loves depraved, dead, deformed sinners!
2. 1 John 4:10 *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*
3. Titus 3:4-5 *"But after that the kindness and love of God..."*
4. Rom. 5:7-8 *"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die..."*
5. If you are ever in doubt about God's love, look at the cross, and see Christ beaten for you, broken for you and bleeding for you. See Him die for you and be buried for you. See Him rise for you!

C. The Lameman's Submission – "Stand forth"

1. "stand forth" = stand, rise up! *"Rise up, and stand forth in the midst"* (Luke 6:8)
2. Christ called this man forward in the midst of a hostile crowd. Luke records the man's obedience – "And he arose and stood forth." (Lk. 6:8)
3. For the man to respond it would have taken courage and humility. It would mean an acknowledgement of his need. If he did not respond to Christ's call on account of fear or pride, he would never have been healed!

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4. Challenge: Hell will be filled with “the fearful” (Rev. 21:8); those who hesitated, procrastinated and ultimately rejected the offer of salvation on account of their being held back by fears. When the invitation to be saved goes out, many hold back because...
 - a. They are afraid of what people will think
 - b. They are afraid of what people will say
 - c. They are afraid of the cost (e.g. family and friends)
 - d. They are afraid for their reputation (pride)
5. Illustration: Paul challenged a man by the name of king Agrippa in Acts 26 concerning salvation. Agrippa’s response is tragic and haunting – *“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, **Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.**”* (Acts 26:28) (See Hymn # 322)

Look fourthly at...

IV. The Confrontation from the Lord (Vs. 4-5a)

A. The Lord’s Illustration (Matt. 12:11-12)

1. Christ confronts the opposition of the Pharisees head on, exposing the foolishness and corruptness of their logic.
2. *“And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.”* (Matt. 12:11-12)
3. Christ pointed out their gross inconsistency, hypocrisy and cruelty. They would care for one of their livestock on the Sabbath but cruelly obstruct a fellow human being from being healed!

B. The Lord’s Question (Vs. 4)

1. They had asked Christ, “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?” (Matt. 12:10). Christ, after demolishing their logic with a real-life illustration, now asks a counter question.
2. This question was a check mate for the Pharisees. If they conceded that it was lawful to do good and save life, they would justify Christ’s actions. If they argued that doing evil and killing was for the Sabbath, they would be immediately in conflict with the Old Testament law.

C. The Lord’s Indignation (Vs. 5a)

1. Mark’s Gospel particularly notes the actions of Christ’s eyes and the revelation of His human emotions.
2. Christ responded with:
 - a. Anger – “with anger”. This was no sinful display of ungodly rage but the pure, righteous anger of Almighty God. Trench comments, “There is a wrath of God (Matt. 3:7) who would not love good, unless He hated evil, the two being so inseparable,

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that either He must do both or neither.” Gould says, “Anger against wrong as wrong, is a sign of moral health.”

- b. Anguish – “being grieved”. Christ’s heart was filled with sorry and deep grief at the “hardness of their hearts”. Their hearts were calloused against the man in need and against the truth. Their hardness of heart would eventually have eternal consequences (Matt. 23:14).
- c. “The presence of grief and anger in the same heart at the same time is no contradiction. Indeed, with Him who was at once perfect love and perfect holiness, grief for the sinner must ever go hand in hand with anger against sin.” (Butler)

Look fifthly at...

V. The Cure of the Lord (Vs. 5b)

A. The Command for the Cure – “stretch forth thine hand”

1. This command demanded faith on the part of the man as this was impossible for Him to do!
2. Note the two commands Christ gave this man:
 - a. “Stand forth” = speaks of repentance; coming to Christ in humility, acknowledging our deformed state that requires His healing.
 - b. “Stretch forth” = speaks of faith; reaching out to Christ, believing with all our hearts that He will save us!

B. The Compliance for the Cure – “And he stretched it out”

1. This is the “obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:26).
2. He responded in faith to Christ’s instruction.

C. The Completeness of the Cure – “and his hand was restored whole as the other.”

- a. The transformation was instantaneous – We too can be saved in a moment if we will come to Christ in saving faith.
- b. The transformation was complete – When God saves a soul, He does a full and complete work. This was no half-baked cure. The man was made whole.
- c. Ecc. 3:14 *“I know that, **whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.**”*

Conclusion:

1. Challenge to lost: Will you come to Christ for salvation today? “Stand forth...stretch forth”
2. Challenge to saved: Do we have the heart of Christ towards the lost or the heart of the Pharisees?

Serving with the Lord Jesus

Text: Mark 3:7-21

Introduction:

1. In our last message, the Lord encountered strong opposition in the synagogue. He now withdraws from the hostility of the Pharisees to the Sea of Galilee where he can minister to the multitudes. It is of interest that Mark only records one more visit of Christ to the synagogue after this point.
2. The disciples come more into focus in this section as they serve with the Lord Jesus and twelve are selected to fulfill the unique office of Apostle.
3. This account teaches us some helpful principles that will encourage and challenge us in our service for the Lord.
4. For the purpose of our lesson today, we will divide the text into three sections:

I. **The Serving of the Multitude (Vs. 7-12)**

A. **The Magnitude of the Multitude (Vs. 7-8a)**

1. Twice we have the phrase “a great multitude”. The size of the crowd was above average.
2. The multitude came from near and far, across the whole country.

B. **The Motivation of the Multitude (Vs. 8b)**

1. “when they had heard” = word had spread of this one called Jesus of Nazareth. The news had spread that there was one who could heal, one who could save!
2. “great things he did” = Christ’s works were marvelous and magnificent. The “great multitude” were drawn by the “great things” Christ did. Christ healed the sick, cast out demons, preached the truth and most importantly, cleansed sin sick hearts.

C. **The Mandate because of the Multitude (Vs. 9)**

1. “a small ship” = a small rowboat like those used by fisherman to row to and from their larger fishing vessels.
2. “wait on him” = ‘wait’ means “be at the ready”. The disciples were to keep the rowboat on standby in case the Lord needed it as they made their way along the sea shore.
3. Challenge: The disciples are afforded an opportunity to help Christ’s ministry to the needy multitudes by attending to a small domestic need. Oh, that we might learn to see that the smallest and seemingly insignificant acts of service take on a sacred dimension when performed for our blessed Saviour! Think of the task you least enjoy in your service in the local church. Do you think you would do it differently if you saw it as something done for Christ?
4. Col. 3:23-24 “*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the*

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reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” The word ‘heartily’ literally means “out of the soul”. Our service is to come from the heart.

D. The Miracles done for the Multitude (Vs. 10-12)

1. Deliverance from Defilement (disease) (Vs. 10)
 - a. ‘for’ = reason now given for command in Vs. 9
 - b. “he had healed many” = Christ’s power had touched a lot of lives and that drew others to Him. Do doubt many came motivated only for physical healing. But the faith of others went deeper as they embraced Him not only as their Deliverer from sickness, but as their Deliverer from sin.
 - c. “pressed upon him for to touch him” = by simply coming into contact with Christ they would be transformed of their ‘plagues’. When we come into contact with Christ by faith, He cleanses us from the plague of sin. Christ had the power to deal with every kind of plague. He still can!
2. Deliverance from Demons (Vs. 11-12)
 - a. The response of the spirits to Christ (Vs. 11)
 - i. “fell down before him” = their bowing down was not one of repentance but they had no other choice in the presence of Christ the Son of God. His very Person and Presence demanded they bow the knee. (See James 2:19)
 - ii. “cried” = they shouted, screamed
 - iii. “thou art the Son of God” = the devil and his demons are in no doubt as to who Christ is! They did not say “you were the Son of God” or “you were created to be the Son of God” or “you became the Son of God” but “**thou art** the Son of God.” Remember, these fallen spirits used to be holy angels in heaven before they were cast out with Lucifer when they rebelled with him against God. Satan may deceive many with lies about Christ, but he himself is in no doubt concerning the Deity of Christ.
 - b. The rebuke of the spirits by Christ (Vs. 12)
 - i. Christ consistently silenced the demon’s testimony concerning Himself even though their words were true.
 - ii. Christ did not want the truth of His Person associated with evil spirits, nor did He want the truth to be communicated through such a vile, corrupt channel.

II. The Selecting of the Men (Vs. 13-19)

This is a significant point in the ministry of Christ where He calls 12 men into special service to fulfil the ministry of an Apostle. Consider 5 aspects of this call.

A. The Prayer before the Call (Luke 6:12-13)

1. Luke’s account reveals that Christ’s call of the 12 was preceded by a night of prayer. Christ would then select 12 men out of His larger group of disciples to fulfil the role of Apostle.
2. Luke 6:12-13 *“And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and **continued all night in prayer to God.** And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them*

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he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;”

3. We learn an important principle from Christ’s example that big decisions should be preceded with much prayer in order to know God’s mind and direction. Prolonged seasons of prayer need to precede significant events.

B. The Place of the Call (Vs. 13a)

1. “a mountain” = “A mountain is often associated with God’s specific dealings with His people.” (Hiebert)
2. Think of how many significant things took place on mountains in the Bible (e.g. Abraham and Isaac; the giving of the law; the calling of the twelve; the giving of the Great Commission; the crucifixion)

C. The Prerogative of the Call (Vs. 13b)

1. “calleth unto him whom he would” = the Divine side. It was His Sovereign choice to set aside these men for special service. While God calls us all to serve Him as His people, He does separate certain individuals for specific callings such as pastor, evangelist or missionary.
2. “and they came unto him” = the human side. They willingly submitted to the call of Christ.

D. The Purposes of the Call (Vs. 14-15)

1. Piety – “that they should be with him”
 - a. “Fellowship with him must precede preaching about Him.” (Hiebert)
 - b. It has well been said, “He who would speak much to man for God, must speak much to God for man.” (Cited in *The Preacher and His Preaching*)
 - c. Closeness to Christ is the place of learning. It is the power source for our service that will keep us from becoming dry, cracked and brittle in our labours for Him.
2. Preaching – “that he might send them forth to preach”
 - a. “send forth” = same root word translated ‘apostle’
 - b. “to preach” = to be heralds of Divine, authoritative truth. Note the primacy of preaching. The bold declaration of the truth has been God’s method in every age and is still His primary method today (1 Cor. 1:21)
3. Power – “And to have power”
 - a. Power over disease (Vs. 15a)
 - b. Power over demons (Vs. 15b)
 - c. Note: The Apostles were given special authority in these areas as a part of that unique office. Today we can pray for healing and for deliverance and see God answer miraculously but we do not have Apostolic authority to command it to be so. 2 Cor. 12:12 *“Truly the **signs of an apostle** were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”*

E. The People of the Call (Vs. 16-19)

We note some general observations about these men the Lord chose:

1. They were diverse (Vs. 16-19)
 - a. Diversity of backgrounds
 - b. Diversity of gifts
 - c. Diversity of roles – some became Christ’s inner circle (Peter,

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James & John). Some became well known due to their prominence in the Biblical record. Others we know very little about beyond their names (e.g. Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite). Most of us are called to be “little people” in God’s service. Our labours are largely unknown and unnoticed on earth but are known of the Saviour in heaven.

2. One was a devil (Vs. 19)

III. The Sacrificing of the Material (Vs. 20-21)

The Lord and His disciples return from their mountain retreat to the house where they are staying (probably Peter’s). The multitudes quickly assemble and its time to serve again! Their service involved:

A. Sacrifice of Rest (Vs. 20a)

1. The Lord and His disciples were too busy to eat, let alone rest!
2. Note: There is a time to rest. We see an appropriate balance in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus. There were periods of retreat (See Mark 6:31) for the purpose of rest but these were in order that they might return to service with renewed vigour!
3. Challenge: We are living in a generation that knows very little of what sacrifice means in practical terms. We want a convenient and comfortable Christian experience and ministry.

B. Sacrifice of Rights (Vs. 20b)

1. Serving the Lord will sometimes mean we need to deny a legitimate, temporal need such as food.
2. Before we complain about serving, remember the example of our Lord! Most of us still make time to have something to eat!
3. Remember, as bond slaves of Christ, we have no rights!

C. Sacrifice of Reputation (Vs. 21)

1. Sacrificial service and commitment to the work of the Lord will often attract misunderstanding from those closest to us. The word ‘friends’ is literally “those from the side of him” and speaks of His closest acquaintances. From Vs. 31-35, it would appear that it was primarily family.
2. “beside himself” – out of one’s mind. That felt Christ was not acting rationally, that He was being unbalanced.
3. This form of opposition is more subtle and more difficult to discern and deal with than malicious opposition like that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were motivated by a desire for Christ’s destruction. His family on the other hand seem motivated out of care for His wellbeing. It is particularly hard when you are serving in the centre of God’s will and those you love seek to stop you out of misguided love. Serving the Lord faithfully often requires us to bear the cross of misunderstanding with the closest of earthly ties.

Conclusion: Have you experienced Christ’s healing touch from the plague of sin? Are you doing something for the cause of Christ? Is there any sacrifice for the Lord’s work? Do you need to sign back up for a ministry? “Go labor on, spend and be spent, your joy to do the Father’s will; it is the way the Master went; should not the servant tread it still?”

The One Sin God Won't Forgive

Text: Mark 3:22-30

Introduction:

1. Parallel accounts of the unpardonable sin can be read in Matthew 12:24-29 and Luke. 11:14-20.
2. Context: Both Matthew and Luke pin point the occasion as taking place when Christ cast out a demon. *“Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.”* (Matt. 12:22-24)
3. This section of Scripture is one of the most sobering in all of Scripture as it reveals a solemn warning concerning a sin that God will not forgive. In this sermon, through a careful study of the text in context, we will seek to gain an understanding of what the unpardonable sin is and how it can be committed.

I. A Slandering Reproach (Vs. 22)

A. The People of the Reproach (Vs. 22a)

1. ‘scribes’ = Matthew says ‘Pharisees’. These men were well educated in the Old Testament Scriptures. They had witness Christ’s miracles and heard His claims.
2. “which came down from Jerusalem” = Jerusalem the religious capital. They were clearly there on account of Christ’s immense popularity so that they might oppose Him.

B. The Process preceding the Reproach (Vs. 5-6; 2:7)

1. In order to understand the nature of the unpardonable sin, we must see it in the context of what has transpired so far between the religious leaders and Christ.
2. The blasphemy of the religious leaders against the Holy Spirit was the result of a process of hardening their hearts against the Lordship and claims of Christ. Rather than their hearts getting softer to the call of the Gospel over time, they were hardening their hearts in willful rebellion and unbelief.
3. Their progression in hardening their hearts against Christ as their Messiah can be clearly traced from the context:
 - a. Mark 2:7 – they inwardly questioned Christ’s authority to forgive sins, objecting to the salvation by grace message Christ presented.
 - b. Mark 2:16 – with religious arrogance and pride, they contested Christ’s compassion for sinners, believing them to be below their elevated status.

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- c. In Mark 2:24 they challenged Christ's Lordship over the Sabbath Day.
 - d. In Mark 3:5, Christ is grieved at the hardness of their hearts.
 - e. In Mark 3:6, they take their opposition to the next level when they begin plotting Christ's murder.
4. **Key Point:** Their blasphemous words were not a casual slip of the tongue or a result of ignorance. They were the climax of a process of willful rebellion and hardening of the heart against the light they had received. This was the crowning point of their opposition to Christ. Their blasphemous words simply revealed the hardened state of their unrepentant hearts – “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Matt. 12:34)

C. The Particulars of the Reproach (Vs. 22b)

- 1. The audience – these words were spread to the people following Christ in an attempt to slander and undermine His ministry. The crowd, on account of the miracle, was rightly contemplating whether Jesus was the Messiah. It appears they did not confront Christ directly with their accusation as “he called them unto him” (Vs. 23) and Matthew's account says “Jesus knew their thoughts” (Matt. 12:25)
- 2. The accusation – that Christ was possessed of Satan and therefore the miracle of casting out the demon was done with Satanic power. They asserted that Christ was an agent of Satan rather than One sent from God.
 - a. ‘said’ = imperfect tense. “they were saying” This was not a once off, casual remark but a repeated and persistent blaspheming of Christ's ministry.
 - b. ‘Beelzebub’ = a title of Satan who is “the prince of the devils”. This was unspeakably evil to attribute the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit through Christ to the power and workings of Satan.

II. A Sound Rebuttal (Vs. 23-27)

A. Christ Exposed their Absurdity (Vs. 23-26)

- 1. The Inquiry (question) (Vs. 23)
 - a. ‘parables’ = Christ would give them some simple illustrations to reveal how illogical and foolish their accusation was.
 - b. “How can Satan cast out Satan?” = question points out the obvious absurdity of their claim. Such an idea didn't even make sense!
- 2. The Illustrations (Vs. 24-25)
 - a. Illustration of a kingdom (Vs. 24)
 - i. A divided kingdom is a doomed kingdom!

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- ii. If Satan was destroying his own kingdom, he would be working against his own purposes! Satan would not authorize such a catastrophic attack on his own kingdom.
- b. Illustration of a household (Vs. 25)
 - a. The same principle applies in a household.
 - b. A divided home ultimately means a destroyed home.
- 3. The Implication (Vs. 26)
 - a. Christ now draws the conclusion from these two illustrations and relates it back to the point in question (Vs. 23)
 - b. If Satan opposed himself, his own kingdom, then his kingdom would crumble. And that is the total opposite to what Satan is trying to do!

B. Christ Revealed His Authenticity (Vs. 27)

Christ now presents the true explanation of his victories over the demons. He does so by giving a parable of a strong man who is overcome by one who is stronger.

- 1. The Strong – Satan
 - a. He is 'armed' (Luke 11:21)
 - b. He guards his 'house' or 'palace' (Lk. 11:21) to protect his 'goods'. The word 'goods' comes from the Greek word 'vessel'. "His goods" apparently are the human victims whom Satan holds in his power through his demonic agents. (Hiebert)
 - c. Picture is of Satan holding lost souls in bondage. People are so often deceived in Satan's palace. They think they are living in freedom and luxury but don't realize they are in bondage and cannot leave unless rescued by someone stronger than Satan.
 - d. Illustration: Imagine walking down the corridors of Satan's palace. There are multiple doors to multiple rooms, all promising certain pleasures. Inside each room are multiple people who think they are free when in reality they are captives.
- 2. The Stronger – the Saviour
 - a. Luke 11:22 *"But when **a stronger than he** shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."*
 - b. Christ is the "stronger than he". He is stronger than the strong and stronger than the strongest!
 - c. Christ's casting out of the demon proved the exact opposite to what the religious leaders were saying. Christ was not working for Satan's cause, he was destroying Satan's power, delivering precious souls from His oppressive grasp.

III. A Sobering Rebuke (Vs. 28-30)

A. The Potential for Forgiveness (Vs. 28)

1. 'verily' = first use of this word in Mark's Gospel. Christ's tone changes distinctly in this verse from one of reasoning to warning. The word 'verily' means amen, surely, truly. "Word occurs in statements which affirm or confirm a solemn truth." (Hendriksen)
2. "all sins shall be forgiven...and blasphemies" = the wideness of God's mercy is revealed in this statement. God offers forgiveness for the vilest sins if men will but repent and receive the free gift of His grace.
3. God is patient and longsuffering so that men might have an opportunity to repent. He bears long with them (Rom. 2:4; 2. Peter 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4). God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather desires their repentance (Ez. 33:11; Isaiah 28:21).

B. The Prohibited from Forgiveness (Vs. 29-30)

1. 'but' = the grim alternative to the above
2. "he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost" = it is the Spirit's office to convict of sin and convince of Christ. In context, this was an act of willful and deliberate unbelief in the face of much light they had received from Christ's words and works. It came from hearts that had been progressively hardened to the point where they were in danger of passing the point of no return where they would not be afforded any more opportunity to repent.
3. Hendriksen makes an insightful remark on this matter

"Now to be forgiven implies that the sinner be truly penitent. Among the scribes here indicated such genuine sorrow for sin was totally lacking. For penitence they substituted hardening, for confession plotting. Thus, by means of their own criminal and completely inexcusable callousness, they were dooming themselves. Their sin is unpardonable because they are unwilling to tread the path that leads to pardon. For a thief, an adulterer, and a murderer there is hope. The message of the gospel may cause him to cry out, "O God be merciful to me a sinner." But when a man has become hardened, so that he has made up his mind not to pay any attention to the promptings of the Spirit, not even to listen to his pleading and warning voice, he has placed himself on the road that leads to perdition."

4. "because they said" = imperfect tense – "They were saying". "The tense indicates that it was not so much a single act as an attitude of heart which persisted in rejecting the light by calling good evil and evil good. In such a state, the Holy Spirit can no longer work to produce conviction of sin." (Hiebert)
5. Challenge: The lost sinner can still commit this sin today by repeatedly hardening their hearts against the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Those particularly in danger of committing this sin are those who have been favoured with the light of the Gospel and then made a deliberate choice to reject it.
6. Gen. 6:3 *"And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with*

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man...

7. Warning! You may say “no” again and again to the offer of salvation, but God will have the final say. He knows when you have crossed that line that takes you beyond redemption’s point.
8. It is clear the bulk of the religious leaders crossed that line at this point as Christ will now primarily teach in parables in order to conceal the truth from them, and thereby ensure their judgment (Look at Mark 4:10-12)
9. Illustration: Pharaoh hardened his heart repeatedly, then God hardened His heart.
10. Example: The Romans 1 progression. As man rejects the light and persists in wilful rebellion against God, eventually God gives them up (Vs. 24 & 26) and then gives them over to a reprobate mind (Vs. 28)

Conclusion: Repent and receive Christ NOW while you still have the opportunity.

Hebrews 3:15 “...*To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts...*”

2 Cor. 6:2 “...*now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*”

Christ and Family Relationships

Text: Mark 3:31-35

Introduction:

1. In this section of Mark's Gospel reveals the conflict our Lord faced on several fronts. He was: Maligned by His Foes & Misunderstood by His Family.
2. In our last lesson we looked at the hostility of Christ's enemies and their blasphemous suggestion that He was under the control of Satanic power. In this lesson, we will look at a test in our Lord's life of a more subtle kind. No doubt this test from His family was a greater challenge to our Lord than the test with His foes. "In the incident recorded...we have a superlative revelation of the most subtle form which opposition to the work of the establishment of the Kingdom of God ever takes." (G. Campbell Morgan)
3. Like our Saviour, each one of us will come to cross road experiences in our Christian walk where we are faced with a decision between staying in the center of God's will, walking the consecrated, crucified walk, or moving out of that place of consecration to accommodate the wishes of family. There will be times where there is a clash between emotional and spiritual priorities, between natural affection and the will of God.
4. Our Lord's example will serve to both inspire and instruct us on the importance of faithfulness to the will of the Father in such circumstances. We will consider this theme in three parts.

I. The Perspective of our Lord's Family (Vs. 21)

A. The Occasion motivating the family (Vs. 20)

1. The Lord and His disciples had a busy ministry schedule to the multitudes.
2. Their commitment to the service of God was such that they were even willing to forego a bodily appetite (need for food) in order to serve.
3. Christ was walking the crucified, selfless walk in the center of the Father's will.

B. The Opinion of the Family (Vs. 21)

1. The word 'friends' is literally "those from the side of him" and speaks of His closest acquaintances. From Vs. 31-35, it would appear that it was primarily family.
2. "heard of it" = the report of Vs. 20. This is what stimulated his mother and brethren to travel from home town Nazareth to Capernaum (Compare Vs. 21 & 31 - "they went...there came then").
3. "beside himself" – out of one's mind. That felt Christ was not acting rationally, that He was being unbalanced. There was an error in their thinking that lead to an error in judgment and action.

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4. This form of opposition is more subtle and more difficult to discern and deal with than malicious opposition like that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were motivated by a desire for Christ's destruction. His family on the other hand seem motivated out of care for His wellbeing. It is particularly hard when you are serving in the centre of God's will and those you love seek to stop you out of misguided love. Serving the Lord faithfully often requires us to bear the cross of misunderstanding with the closest of earthly ties.

II. The Pressure from our Lord's Family (Vs. 31-32)

A. The Relatives Involved (Vs. 31a)

1. His Mother
 - a. Mary was a good and godly woman but sometimes her natural affections and emotions caused her to err in judgment.
 - b. Mary was a deep thinker, inclined to ponder over things in detail (Luke 2:51)
 - c. Mary's motive was undoubtedly honourable but she was still wrong!
 - d. Challenge: As parents we need to be careful that OUR will becomes an obstruction to GOD'S WILL in the lives of our children.
 - e. Illustration: Even at the age of 12, our Lord had to remind his mother that the Father's will must reign supreme in His life. Luke 2:49 *"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? **wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?**"*
 - f. Challenge: Walking the crucified, consecrated walk will at times bring us into conflict with the strongest of human ties. The bond between a mother and a child is one of the most powerful ties on earth. Christ had tender affection for His mother. We find Him making provision for her safety and well-being in His dying moments on the cross (John 19:26-27). No doubt her presence and pleadings would have tugged at His heart. His dedication to the will of the Father at this time was causing her anxiety and grief!
 - g. The moment we say "I will not allow my obedience to Christ to cause suffering to those I love," we have left the Calvary road. (Pastor I. Western series on the cross).
 - h. Illustration: Abraham and Isaac. We must place our loved ones on the altar of surrender.
 - i. Illustration: When Isobel Kuhn disclosed God's call to China as a missionary, her mother warned her: "If you ever go to China, you will go over my dead body." And she did. On her deathbed the mother confessed: "Daughter is right; I have been wrong." How sad to be forced to take the divine order in death! The mother died: her daughter went to China. The great refiner and Purifier of silver sat over against the crucible of her death-bed and skimmed off "the grey scum of selfishness" until mother ceased to be a hindrance – albeit through the doorway of death. (L.E. Maxwell – Born Crucified Pg. 97-98)
 - j. "We prove our distance from Him when in the fellowship of Mary

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and His brethren in the day so of their limited understanding, we attempt to dissuade those who are in closest fellowship with Him, from such sacrificial service as demonstrates their nearness to Him.” (G. Campbell Morgan)

2. His siblings
 - a. Christ had brothers (four) and sisters (Mark 6:3) At this point in time, they did not believe in their older brother’s claims as the Messiah (John 7:3-5). There was probably a touch of scepticism in their approach to the Lord, even opposition. They honestly thought their brother had lost control of his senses and needed help!
 - b. Challenge: Unsaved or even carnal siblings will often misunderstand your consecration to the Saviour and His service and can be an obstruction. Don’t underestimate the power of a siblings influence for good or evil!
 - c. “We should certainly be inclined to say that it was easier to resist the definite hostility of those who were in open rebellion, than to stand firm against suggestions which came from those who loved Him, and who, according to the measure of their light, were acting in his interest. Nothing other than the clearest vision of the will of God, and the most perfect acquiescence (submission) therein, would be equal to victory in such an hour of crisis. (G. Campbell Morgan)

B. The Request Involved (Vs. 31b)

1. The position of their request – “standing without”
 - a. At this stage, they were on the fringe, the outside. They were not yet a part of our Lord’s inner circle of loyal, consecrated disciples.
 - b. Challenge: Before allowing yourself to be moved by emotional pressure, pause and consider where that family member is positioned in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Are they walking the consecrated, crucified walk and therefore giving you Spirit-filled advice? Watch their feet more than what they say!
 - c. Note: Praise God Christ’s mother and brethren would later become consecrated followers. James would write the Epistle of James and pastor the Jerusalem church. Jude would write the Epistle of Jude. We find both Mary and Christ’s siblings in the Upper Room in Acts 1:14. Our hope, desire and prayer should be that all our family be consecrated disciples of God. But if for the time being, they are not, you dare not move out of the centre of God’s will!
2. The plea of their request = “calling him”
 - a. Their plea was for him to leave the place of consecrated, selfless service.
 - b. Their plea was for him to take a rest when it was God’s time to labour; to put the temporal over the eternal, the carnal over the spiritual.

C. The Repeaters Involved (Vs. 32)

1. ‘behold’ = the crowd try and draw Christ’s attention to the fact of His family’s presence.

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2. Sometimes others (often ignorantly and innocently) become the bearers of these carnal messages from family. This adds to the pressure!

III. The Principle applied to our Lord's Family (Vs. 33-35)

Our Lord's response to this difficult situation is both inspiring and instructive and provides a good example of how we need to respond in similar circumstances.

A. Christ Embraced a Spiritual Family (Vs. 33-34)

1. A Startling question (Vs. 33).
 - a. Christ is Omniscient, He knows all things. So, when He asks a question like this it is not because He is trying to gain knowledge or information. The question is intended to be of benefit to His hearers. "The question was intended to call attention to the fact that, in His work, there were ties that were higher than those of flesh and blood." (Hiebert)
 - b. What a rebuff this question was to the family! When the will of earthly family ever was in conflict with the will of the Heavenly Father, Christ is quite abrupt in His responses. Compromise will not be entertained! E.g. Christ's words to his mother in John 2:4, "*Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*"
2. A Significant answer (Vs. 34)
 - a. Christ's look – "he looked round about on them" Mark particularly highlights some of these looks of Christ.
 - b. Christ's gesture – "he stretched forth his hands toward his disciples" (Matt. 12:49)
 - c. Christ's answer – "Behold my mother and my brethren!" Christ demonstrated that if His natural family was in conflict with His spiritual family, He would choose His spiritual family. He demonstrates that spiritual ties go beyond natural ties.

B. Christ Maintained a Spiritual Priority (Vs. 35)

1. 'for' = further explanation as to why Christ referred to His disciples as His "mother and brethren"
2. "whosoever shall do the will of God" = Matthew says "the will of my Father" (Matt. 12:50) and Luke says "these which hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21)
 - a. The deepest bonds of unity are spiritual bonds forged in a common salvation and a common pursuit of the will of God.
 - b. Christ's supreme passion was obedience to the Father's will; obedience to the Word of God in company with other like-minded disciples.
 - c. "In the question He asked, and the declaration He made, He gave fresh evidence of the fact that the supreme passion of His heart was that of the accomplishment of the will of God. Such accomplishment He made the standard of His judgment, and the gauge of His relationships. Every other interest, however near, or however sacred by all the laws of human interrelationship, He counted secondary, and without hesitation or tremor, broke with them completely when they threatened in any measure to

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- interfere with that supreme matter.” (G. Campbell Morgan)
- d. The cross will at times cut across family ties and we will be faced with the test of true discipleship, to either put Christ of family first. Read Matthew 10:34-39.
 3. Challenge: How many children have in practice, loved their parents more than God and been moved out of the place of victory, service and blessing? How many parents allow themselves to be thwarted in their Christian priorities due to allowing natural affection to overwhelm and override the Spirit-filled, crucified walk? To love a family member more than God is to make that family member an idol.

Conclusion:

1. Are you obstructing a loved one in their obedience to God's will? Are you allowing yourself to be diverted by a loved one from God's will?
2. Who has your supreme love? Christ or family? Who is first in your life in practice, not just word?

The Sower, Seed & Soils

Text: Mark 4:1-20

Introduction:

1. This chapter could be called the parable chapter in Mark. Mark focuses less on the parables in comparison to Matthew and Luke.
2. What is a parable?
 - A parable is really an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. They were a common method of teaching in the East and there are numerous examples of parables in the Old Testament (e.g. Nathan's parable delivered to David after his sin with Bathsheba).
 - The word 'parable' means "something thrown alongside of" so it has the basic meaning of a comparison or analogy. Christ told simple stories based on the experiences of his listeners to illustrate Divine truth.
 - Someone stated that a parable was like a doorway. *"Jesus' listeners stood at the doorway and heard Him. If they were not interested, they stayed on the outside. But if they were interested, they could walk through the doorway, and think more about the truth behind the parable and what it meant to their life."*
3. How is a parable understood?
 - We need to remember that a parable generally conveys one main truth. Warren Wiersbe: *"Sometimes a parable contains a certain amount of "window dressing" to provide a setting for the truth that it is intended to convey. Much foolish exegesis has resulted from trying to force a meaning on every item in a parable."*
 - We need to check our interpretation against other clear declarations of Scripture.
4. This parable focuses on the response of four different soils to the seed, picturing the four heart responses that can be expected to the Gospel message.
5. In this lesson we will consider **3 truths** about this parable from our Lord.

I. The Expression of the Parable (Vs. 1-9)

A. The Setting of the Parable (Vs. 1-2)

1. The time – it was the "same day" (Matt. 13:1) that the religious leaders had charged Christ with working in the power of Beelzebub. This is significant as it marks a sharp transition in the teaching ministry of Christ. Because he was "morally rejected by the Jewish leaders, Jesus adopted a new method." (Hiebert)
2. The location – the "sea side". Christ enters a fishing boat so that he is surrounded by water with the multitude on the sea shore. This would be a natural amphitheater with good acoustics.

B. The Story of the Parable (Vs. 3-9)

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1. The sower of the parable (Vs. 3)
 - a. This was a familiar scene to Christ's listeners. They would have either sown themselves or would have seen it done many times.
 - b. "Grain fields covered the landscape of Galilee. A man hoisting a seed bag over his shoulder and scattering seed as he slowly traversed his furrowed field would have been a familiar sight."
(JM)
 - c. "He (the sower) worked with a leather bag containing the seed, either wheat or barley, tied to his waist while he scattered the seed by hand. The field would be neither extensive nor fenced. The scattered grain was plowed in by means of a wooden plow, generally drawn by a pair of oxen." (Hiebert)
2. The soils of the parable (Vs. 4-8)
 - a. The wayside soil (Vs. 4)
 - i. 'wayside' = refers to the narrow paths that crisscross the Galilean landscape, separating the fields and providing both farmers and travellers access through the countryside." (JM) This would be like the path used by Christ and his disciples to go through the corn fields (Mark 2:23)
 - ii. The seed doesn't even penetrate the surface of the soil and is quickly devoured by birds. Whatever the birds missed would be "trampled under foot" (Luke 8:5)
 - b. The stony soil (Vs. 5-6)
 - i. These areas had a thin layer of topsoil covering a limestone layer below.
 - ii. "A hard-rocky surface, covered with a thin layer of soil."
(Robertson)
 - iii. The seed germinates quickly in the warm, shallow soil but soon withers in the heat of the sun.
 - c. The thorny soil (Vs. 7)
 - i. 'thorns' = a thorny bramble common to the land of Israel. Word used in Matt. 27:29 of crown of thorns.
 - ii. Both the seed and the thorns spring up together but the thorns quickly outgrow the grain stalk and choke it to death.
 - d. The good soil (Vs. 8)
 - i. The central mark of the good ground is that it produces fruit whereas the others do not.
 - ii. "some thirty...sixty...an hundred" = The volume of fruit produced is a startling point in the parable. Farmers in ancient Israel usually expected a six to eightfold yield at harvesttime. Christ's words represent yields of 3,000, 6,000 and 10,000 percent! (JM)
3. The soberness required by the parable (Vs. 9)
 - a. Christ makes it clear that this is not a mere story. There is Divine truth to be revealed through this parable for those who are open to receive it.
 - b. Hearing the Word of God comes with sobering accountability.

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II. The Enquiry about the Parable (Vs. 10-12)

A. The Disciples Request (Vs. 10)

1. They asked why about the parable – “*Why speakest thou unto them in parables?*” (Matt. 13:10) He will answer that question in Vs. 11-12.
2. They asked what about the parable – “*What might this parable be?*” (Luke 8:9). He will answer this question in Vs. 13-20.
3. The true followers of Christ entered through the doorway into more truth. This is a mark of a true disciple – he has a thirst to know more of God’s truth.

B. The Lord’s Reply (Vs. 11-12)

Christ outlines the two purposes of the parables:

1. To reveal truth – “unto you it is given”
 - a. Those receiving the light would be given more light through the parables.
 - b. ‘mystery’ = “In the New Testament it denotes not something mysterious and inscrutable but something formerly hidden which cannot be known by man apart from divine revelation but which is now revealed and imparted to those spiritually qualified to receive it.” (Hiebert) See Eph. 3:4-5
 - c. “of the kingdom of God” = the ‘mystery’ parables “all record failure and a mixture of good and bad. They portrayed the Jewish rejection of Christ that was taking place and also the present church age that fills the period between the postponement of the kingdom and the inauguration of the kingdom.” (Phillips)
2. To conceal truth – “but unto them that are without”
 - a. Christ quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10. Those who were wilfully rejecting the light would be barred from further revelation as an act of judgment. Matt. 13:13-15 “*Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*”
 - b. “lest...they should be converted” = remember the previous chapter. They had hardened their hearts so many times they eventually passed the point of no return to where God would now not allow them any more opportunities for salvation.

III. The Explanation of the Parable (Vs. 13-20)

A. The Priority of the Parable (Vs. 13)

1. This parable would function like a pattern to aid in understanding the rest of the kingdom parables.
2. Key symbols such as the seed and the sower are defined.

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B. The Pictures of the Parable (Vs. 14)

1. The sower – represents Christ at that time when he was proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom and all believers that seek to sow the message of the Gospel (e.g. soul-winning).
2. The seed – represents the Word of God. Note: There is nothing wrong with the seed in any of these cases. The problem is in the condition of the soil. The seed does not need to be adjusted or tampered with to try and make it fit different soils!

C. The Particulars of the Parable (Vs. 14-20)

1. The Wayside Hearer – the Stubborn Heart (Vs. 15)
 - a. This heart is hard and calloused to the Word of God to the point where the seed doesn't even penetrate. This heart is hardened in unbelief.
 - b. Satan moves quickly to remove the seed from their hearts. He uses many means to do this. Highlights how that whenever the Gospel sower is working, Satan is active too! (See 2 Cor. 4:4) He snatches away the seed of the word "lest they should believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12)
2. The Stony ground Hearer – the Superficial Heart (Vs. 16-17)
 - a. 'likewise' = they are similar to the wayside hearer. The only difference is that their hard-heartedness is not so easily apparent being buried beneath the surface.
 - b. "receive it with gladness" = This hearer has a seemingly positive response to the Word. They get stirred and excited on an emotional level but deep down, the heart remains hard and unrepentant. "Shallow growth is the result of a spiritual experience that is emotionally exhilarating, but intellectually rootless." (McKenna)
 - c. "affliction or persecution...for the word's sake" = they quickly wither when they start to bear the cost that comes with being a disciple of Christ. This plant dies as rapidly as it grows.
 - d. Remember, this does not represent someone who is saved then loses their salvation. Rather, it pictures the false professor who on the surface appears to have come to saving faith but in reality, has only a shallow interest in the things of God.
 - e. J.C. Ryle: "It is quite possible to feel great pleasure, or deep alarm, under the preaching of the Gospel, and yet to be utterly destitute of the grace of God. The tears of some hearers of sermons, and the extravagant delight of others, are no certain marks of conversion...Their impressions are like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and perished in a night. They fade as rapidly as they grow."
3. The Thorny ground Hearer – the Suffocated Heart (Vs. 18-19)

The seed is strangled by three thorny branches. John Phillips outlines them as follows:

 - a. Worries – "the cares of this life" These are the pressures, necessities and distractions of life. Their minds are pulled in different directions. People get so wrapped up in the concerns of here and now that they do not take time to pause and consider their eternal destiny. They rush busily down the broad way

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- tragically unaware of the terrible fate that awaits them at the end.
- b. Wealth – “the deceitfulness of riches” Riches promise so much joy, satisfaction and fulfilment that millions pursue them full of hopes and expectations, only to find at the end, they have been lured into a trap and deceived. 1. Tim. 6:9-10 *“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare...”* Wealth is dangerous because it “insulates people from the realities of life so they do not feel the need for the Gospel” (Phillips). Heed the challenge of Mark 8:36 *“For what shall it profit a man...”*
 - c. Wants – “the lusts of other things” Luke’s Gospel says “pleasures of this life” (Luke 8:14) One of the characteristics of the last days is that men will be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2. Tim. 3:4) We live in a society given over to hedonism which means “a devotion to pleasure as a way of life.”
 - d. Challenge: While the primary interpretation refers to an unsaved soul, we can see how there is an application and warning for us as believers. The same things that keep the sinner from getting saved, keep the believer from growth and fruitfulness for the Lord. How thorn infested are the lives of some of God’s people!
4. The Good ground Hearer – the Sincere Heart (Vs. 20)
- There are two marks that identify the good ground hearer:
- a. Whole hearted reception of the Word – He “heareth the word, and understandeth it” (Matt. 13:23) and “in an honest and good heard, having heard the word, keep it” (Luke 8:15). Romans 10:10 reminds us “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness...” The Word penetrates deep into this heart, transforming and changing it.
 - b. Patient fruit bearing – “and bring forth fruit” Luke adds the words “with patience” (Luke 8:15). This is in the present tense. They go on bearing fruit as a pattern of life. Jesus said, “...If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;” (John 8:31) We do not ‘continue’ in order to be saved or keep ourselves saved but we ‘continue’ because we are saved.

Conclusion:

1. The Challenge from the Sower – we need to be faithful in spreading the seed plentifully, irrespective of the condition of the soil. As we proclaim the Gospel, we can expect to see these four kinds of responses.
2. The Challenge from the Seed – there is power in the Word of God to accomplish salvation. We do not need to try and alter the seed but simply be faithful to sow it. In time, we will have the joy of seeing the seed fall on good ground and bring forth fruit.
3. The Challenge from the Soil – which soil best represents you? Are you a good ground hearer, allowing your heart to be ploughed and prepared by the Holy Spirit’s conviction, receiving the Word in sincerity? Or are you one of the other three? Respond with a true heart to the Gospel.

In Christ's Discipleship Class

Text: Mark 4:21-34

Introduction:

1. This chapter could be called the parable chapter in Mark. Mark focuses less on the parables in comparison to Matthew and Luke. There are 7 kingdom parables in Matthew 13 whereas Mark only records three in his Gospel.
2. Review: What is a parable?
 - A parable is really an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. They were a common method of teaching in the East and there are numerous examples of parables in the Old Testament (e.g. Nathan's parable delivered to David after his sin with Bathsheba).
 - The word 'parable' means "something thrown alongside of" so it has the basic meaning of a comparison or analogy. Christ told simple stories based on the experiences of his listeners to illustrate Divine truth.
 - Someone stated that a parable was like a doorway. *"Jesus' listeners stood at the doorway and heard Him. If they were not interested, they stayed on the outside. But if they were interested, they could walk through the doorway, and think more about the truth behind the parable and what it meant to their life."*
3. This section concludes the main parabolic section of Mark. He records no further parables until Passion Week. Mark records two more of the kingdom parables and highlights Christ's use of the parabolic method in the training of his disciples.
4. In this lesson, we will divide the text under three headings.

I. **The Challenge from the Parables (Vs. 21-25)**

A. **A Challenge to Herald (Vs. 21-22)**

1. Christ now tells the parable of a candle and candlestick. This was not one of the kingdom parables but a simple illustration drawn from the very familiar home scene of that day to impress upon the hearts and minds of the disciples their responsibility to the truth they were receiving through His teaching.
2. Christ asks two questions that are framed in such a way that the answer is clearly implied. The purpose of a candle is to provide light. To light a candle and then conceal it under a bushel or a bed would be unthinkable. The disciples had a privileged position of receiving truth at the lips of Christ but with that privilege came a responsibility to make the truth known. We likewise are to:
 - a. Shine forth the light of *Truth* (the message) – Mark 3:21-22
 - b. Shine forth the light of *Testimony* (the messenger) – Matthew 5:14-16 ***"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill***

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*cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see **your good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

c. Philippians 2:15 *“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, **among whom ye shine as lights in the world.**”*

3. The believer possesses the light of the living Word (John 1:4-9; 8:12) and the light of the written Word (Psalm 119:105, 130)

B. A Challenge to Heed (Vs. 23-25)

1. “take heed” = translated from the Greek word meaning “to see, behold”.
2. This challenge had been given previously to the whole multitude (Vs. 9), now it is given to the disciples. Christ appeals for spiritual perception on the part of His disciples. Hearing the truth comes with solemn responsibilities for the listener. They are to listen attentively with a view to putting God’s Word into practice. *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”* (James 1:22)
3. “for with what measure ye meet” = Christ used the same maxim in Matthew 7:2 to teach the results of hypocritical judgment. “Here it is applied to the reward for diligent effort. The measure of their diligent attention to the teaching will be the measure of the profit they derive from it.” (Hiebert)
4. “unto you that hear shall more be given” = God generously rewards the diligent hearer, the one who receives the Word of God with a receptive heart and a teachable spirit.
5. Light received brings more light; light rejected brings darkness. “Truth received and carefully assimilated enlarges one’s capacity to receive more truth.” (Hiebert)
6. Challenge: Is your Christian growth being hindered by your attitude to the truth? Submission to the light you already have is vital if you desire for God to give you more light.

II. The Communication of more Parables (Vs. 26-32)

Mark now records two more of the kingdom parables given by our Lord. The previous parable of the sower provides the keys to understanding the other kingdom parables (See Vs. 13)

A. The Parable of the Sown Seed (Vs. 26-29)

1. Reminder: The ‘mystery’ parables “all record failure and a mixture of good and bad. They portrayed the Jewish rejection of Christ that

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was taking place and also the present church age that fills the period between the postponement of the kingdom and the inauguration of the kingdom.” (Phillips) “The time period covered by the parables in Matthew 13 extends from the time of Israel’s rejection until Israel’s future reception of the Messiah.” (Pentecost)

2. What does the seed represent? Answer: The Word of God (Vs. 14)
3. What does the soil represent? Answer: The heart (Vs. 15)
4. This parable focuses on the operation of the seed in the heart. We note several truths about the seed:
 - a. The *planting* of the seed (Vs. 26) – This highlights the work of the sower. After this point, there is little more he can do until the harvest is ready. Our job is to sow the seed of God’s Word and then trust the Word of God to do its work in the heart. Paul reminded the Corinthian believers, “*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*” (1 Cor. 3:6-7) We can plant and water but only spiritual life can come from God.
 - b. The *power* of the seed (Vs. 27-28a) – “of itself” The seed has within itself the energy and life needed to grow. Our English word ‘automatic’ is based on this word. It is translated “of its own accord” in Acts 12:10. This process of growth is largely a mystery to the farmer and is something outside of his control. The seed of the Gospel has life giving power. We can sow it with confidence!
 - i. Romans 1:16 “*For I am not ashamed...*”
 - ii. Colossians 1:5-6 “*For the hope which is laid up for you...*”
 - c. The *progression* of the seed (Vs. 28b-29) – This highlights the principle of time. Patience is required on the part of the sower. An important factor to bear in mind with soul-winning! The growth of the seed is in stages.

B. The Parable of the Small Seed (Vs. 30-32)

1. The Lord’s question (Vs. 30)
2. The Lord’s explanation (Vs. 31-32)
 - a. “mustard seed” = refers to a common mustard-tree grown in Palestine about the size of a grain of sand.
 - b. “The smallness of the seed is emphasized to help show the greatness of the contrast between the seed and the size of the tree it produces.” (Butler)
 - c. “Palestinian mustard trees sometimes grow to a height of ten to fifteen feet or more.” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary)
 - d. This parable pictures the kingdom starting from something very small and then growing into something very large.

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- e. It pictures the success and growth of the Gospel as well as its corruption by evil. The “fowls of the air” are identified in the parable of the sower as representing Satan. This interpretation is consistent with what we see in church history in the church age as well as other clear Scriptures that predict great corruption and departure from the faith in the last days (2. Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1)

III. The Coaching in the Parables (Vs. 33-34)

These verses contain the summary of this parabolic section. In the training of the disciples our Lord gave attention to:

A. The Maturity of the Disciples (Vs. 33)

1. “many such parables” = there were other similar parables our Lord used to impress these truths upon the hearts and minds of His disciples. Our Lord was a thorough Teacher!
2. “as they were able to hear it” = Christ gave consideration as the Master Teacher to where the disciples were at in their maturity and taught them accordingly.
3. *“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”* (John 16:12)

B. The Molding of the Disciples (Vs. 34)

1. “when they were alone” = Christ gave special time and attention to his inner circle of followers to teach and mentor
2. ‘expounded’ = to unloose or untie. Word was used of the solving or interpreting of problems, riddles or dreams. Christ revealed the mysteries of His parables to His disciples through careful teaching and instruction.

Conclusion:

1. What are we doing with the light we have been given? Are we shining it forth for Christ or are we seeking to conceal it?
2. What is our approach to God’s Word? Do we have a passion to learn and apply the truth to our lives or are we resisting the truth and thereby stunting our spiritual development?
3. Do we have confidence in the power of the seed of God’s Word to accomplish the work? Are we sowing that seed in hearts for God’s glory?

Through the Storm with Jesus

Text: Mark 4:35-41

Introduction:

1. The Divine Power of Christ the Son is powerfully demonstrated in this account. In fact, the Divine Authority of the Son of God from Mark 4:35 to the end of Mark 5 will be demonstrated in 4 areas:
 - The Son's Power over Disaster (Nature) (4:35-41)
 - The Son's Power over Demons (5:1-18)
 - The Son's Power over Disease (5:25-34)
 - The Son's Power over Death (5:21-24; 35-43)
2. This account of Christ and His disciples in the storm will teach us some valuable lessons concerning the storms of life (trials and tests) we will face in the will of God. This message is so important for everyone as you are either in a storm, about to go into one or just coming out of one!
3. Faith is the central theme of the passage. The disciples' faith came under test and was found wanting. Christ used the storm in their lives to grow their faith and He deals with our lives in the same way.
4. In this lesson, we will note 5 truths about this storm and how it relates to our own walk of faith.

I. The Command leading to the Storm (Vs. 35-36)

A. The Specifics of the Command (Vs. 35)

1. The time – “the same day, when the even was come”
 - a. What an eventful day it had been! It had been a day of miracles, opposition and teaching. To then embark on a journey at night to the other side of the lake was an intriguing command on the part of Christ.
 - b. Christ didn't offer any explanation for this command. He simply gave it. The Christian life requires obedience even when things don't make sense to us on the human level.
2. The destination – “the other side” They were currently on the Western, more populated side of the lake. They would cross over to the Eastern side which was approx. 6 miles or 9.6 kms distance and had no large cities along the shore of the lake.

B. The Submission to the Command (Vs. 36)

1. The obedience of the disciples was prompt and without objection or question – “And they launched forth” (Luke 8:22)
2. Matt. 8:23 “*And when he was entered into a ship, **his disciples followed him***” The disciples were simply following Christ's lead in humble submission.

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3. Principle: Storms come into our lives when we are faithfully and obediently serving the Lord. Jonah found himself in a similar storm but that was on account of his disobedience. His storm was one of chastisement but in this case, the disciples had done nothing wrong! They had simply been loyal and obedient. God allows storms in our lives as we follow and serve Him in order that our faith might grow.

II. The Coming of the Storm (Vs. 37)

A. The Suddenness of It – “And there arose”

1. All was tranquil as they began sailing. The breeze blew softly and the waves lapped gently against the side of the ship. Christ, the Son of God was on board. A smooth night of sailing was ahead and all would be well. Suddenly the wind came howling down the mountain ravines slamming into the peaceful waters and turning the lake into a treacherous, seething cauldron of waves and foam. The thunder cracked, the lightening flashed, the wind howled, the waves crashed and the rain poured. Luke 8:23 “as they sailed...there came down a storm of wind on the lake”
2. Illustration: Fishing trip with Dad behind Bluff at Victor Harbor
3. Principle: The storms of life come swiftly and unexpectedly upon us while we are in the very act of following and serving the Master. The storms come to us when we are in the will of God.

B. The Source of It – “And there arose”

1. Consider the storm from the *Natural* Perspective
 - a. “To understand the causes of these sudden and violent tempests we must remember that the lake lies low – **680 feet (207m)** below the sea, that the mountainous plateau...rises to a considerable height, spreading backward to...the snowy Hermon; that the water- courses have worn or washed out profound ravines and wild gorges, converging to the head of this lake; and that these act like great funnels to draw down the cold winds from the mountains.” (Thomas)
 - b. The cold wind rushing down these gorges gains a terrific speed and crashing into the warm air of the sea produces a violent reaction. (Butler)
2. Consider the storm from the *Spiritual* Perspective
 - a. Question: Where were they headed on this trip? Who would they meet on the other side? They had left the multitudes and were going on a mission to rescue a special case; a man who was in deep Satanic bondage.

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- b. This is why Christ rebukes the wind later on in Vs. 39. Job 1 reveals that Satan sometimes uses natural forces like the wind (Job 1:19)
- c. Principle: Those who take on Satanic strongholds with the Gospel can expect Satanic storms to arise! Illustration: Personal experience at NBC in the lead up to souls being saved; special meetings etc...

C. The Severity of It – “a great storm of wind”

- 1. The Wind – comes from the Greek word meaning hurricane, whirlwind or tornado. The word is “used of a furious storm or hurricane. It never refers to a single gust.” (Wuest) Matthew describes it as “a great tempest” The word tempest is the Greek word ‘seismos’ which is the source of our English word ‘seismic’ The storm was “a terrific force...like an earthquake.” (RWP)
- 2. The Waves – Matthew says “the ship was covered with the waves”; Mark says “the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full” and Luke that “they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy”
- 3. Principle: The trials we face can seem so overwhelming that they are going to consume and destroy us. The timing of the deliverance often comes when all is hopeless on the human level. “Sometimes God allows us to have all the props knocked out from under us before He intervenes and delivers.” (Butler)

III. The Cry in the Storm (Vs. 38)

A. The Silence of the Saviour (Vs. 38a)

Christ sleeping in the midst of the storm gives us some insight into His character.

- 1. Christ’s Humanity – Both the Deity and Humanity of Christ are vividly portrayed in this account. Christ is all God and all Man – He is the God-Man! “From this (Christ sleeping), one can form some estimate of the tremendous drain on our Lord’s physical and nerve force by His ministry.” (Wuest)
- 2. Christ’s Immutability – while we are perplexed, distressed and confused about our trial, our Saviour is not distressed or changed by it. He pities us with Father-like compassion but the storm cannot change Who He is!
- 3. Christ’s Sovereignty – As perfect man, Christ did all things in accordance with the Father’s will. There was a purpose in this decision of Christ to sleep. He was going to use this experience to strengthen the faith of the disciples and glorify Himself. It can be perplexing when it seems God is asleep in our trials and leaving us to battle it on our own. The disciples felt Christ was neglecting them in their hour of greatest need. But let us never lose sight of the fact

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that though in His wisdom there may be periods of silence, He has not taken away His presence. His silence is not on account of any weakness on His part but in accordance with His wisdom.

B. The Supplication to the Saviour (Vs. 38b)

1. What was **right** with their prayer – they came to Christ in their hour of crisis and called on Him. This was the right thing to do! Trials have a way of driving us to the Saviour. Their prayer, no matter how imperfect, still received an answer!
2. What was **wrong** with their prayer – there was an absence of faith. They cried out in unbelief and accused the Saviour of being uncaring to their needs. This is a very human response to a severe trial and one we can identify with. The storms reveal the reality of our Christian walk. They do not produce the lack of faith but simply reveal our lack of faith.
3. Every believer at some point in their Christian experience will have to grapple with this question, “Does Jesus Care?” The answer is yes! Romans 8:28-39 “*And we know that all things work together for good...*” In the storm be sure to remember – His **Providence** placed me there; His **Presence** comforts me there; His **Prayers** sustain me there & His **Power** delivers me there.
4. “The presence of Christ on board does not guarantee a smooth passage. He promises not protection from the storm but His presence in the storm.” (Phillips)
5. Illustration: Job’s amazing example – “*In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*” (Job 1:22) “*In all this did not Job sin with his lips.*” (Job 2:10) commendable

IV. The Calming of the Storm (Vs. 39)

A. The Rebuke of the Saviour (Vs. 39a)

1. ‘rebuked’ = all three Gospels accounts record that Christ rebuked the storm indicating there was something evil behind it. What Christ said exactly in this rebuke is not recorded. The word means “to admonish or charge sharply.” Very likely our Lord was rebuking the demonic activity behind the storm. See Mark 1:25 where Christ uses the same language to rebuke a demon
2. “peace, be still” = ‘peace’ means “be silent” and “be still” means “be muzzled”

B. The Response to the Saviour (Vs. 39b)

1. The wind and waves immediately responded to the command of their Creator. A “great storm” was turned to a “great calm”.
2. The storm was stopped by nothing but the power of Christ’s spoken Word. The stormy trials may seem to be long and drawn out but they will end exactly when our Saviour determines they are to end.

V. The Correction after the Storm (Vs. 40-41)

A. The Rebuke of the Disciples (Vs. 40)

Christ asks them two heart searching questions. He asks them...

1. Concerning their **Fear** (Vs. 40a) What's the difference between faith and fear? Fear looks at the storm, faith looks at the Saviour. Had they so quickly forgotten the supernatural miracles they had just seen? Fear is forgetful. It is interesting that the disciples will go through another storm and Christ will link their lack of faith to the fact they "considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened." (Mk. 6:46-52)
2. Concerning their **Faith** (Vs. 40b) Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6) Luke's account says, "Where is your faith?" (Lk. 8:25)

B. The Reverence of the Disciples (Vs. 41)

1. "they feared exceedingly" = this fear they had towards the Lord was different to the fear they had towards the storm. This was a sense of awe and reverence at the majesty of God they had just seen displayed before them. Matthew says they 'marveled' (Mt. 8:27) and Luke says they 'wondered' (Lk. 8:25)
2. The storms God leads us into, though difficult, teach us more about His Power, Character and Ways. They become occasions for the display of His Divine Power. "The greatness of the storm serves to magnify the greatness of Christ." (Butler)

Conclusion:

1. Are you saved? Is Christ in your life? Without Him, you will be hopeless in the storms of life.
2. Are you going through a storm? Christ is with you and has a Divine purpose in what He is doing. Look to Him in faith.

Jesus Sets the Captives Free

Text: Mark 5:1-20

Introduction:

1. The context: Christ and the disciples have just crossed the Sea of Galilee over the past night. They came through a terrific storm and Christ demonstrated His power over the forces of nature.
2. This chapter: Christ demonstrates his power in three realms:
 - Over Devils – healing of the Gadarene demoniac
 - Over Disease – healing of the woman with the issue of blood
 - Over Death – healing of Jairus' daughter
 - “He delivered in turn, a man, a woman, and a child.” (Phillips)
3. This account is one of the most powerful demonstrations of the power of God over the forces of darkness, surpassed only by the casting of Satan & the demonic host out of heaven in the past, and their consignment to the lake of fire in the future. This man was no ordinary demon-possessed man. He was “Satan’s prize exhibit” (Phillips). It is a powerful example of the life transforming power of Christ and the Gospel.
4. One of the purposes for which Christ came was to destroy the works of Satan – 1 John 3:8 *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, **that he might destroy the works of the devil.**”*

I. His Condition (Vs. 1-5)

He was...

A. An Unclean Man (Vs.1-3a)

1. Dominated by an Unclean Prince – “a man with an unclean spirit”.
 - a. Luke says “which had devils long time” (Lk. 8:27) and Matthew says “possessed with devils” (Mt. 8:28).
 - b. **Satan** is the spirit that “now worketh in the children of disobedience.” (Eph. 2:2) He holds us in bondage through the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15).
1. Dwelling in an Unclean Place
 - a. “country of the Gadarenes” = on the Southeast shore of the Sea of Galilee, in the vicinity of what we know today as the Golan Heights.
 - b. “out of the tombs...dwelling among the tombs” = driven there by the demons (Luke 8:29). There is a connection between the occult and obsession with death and darkness.
2. Defiled in an Unclean Practice – “and ware no clothes” (Lk. 8:27). The demonic hosts are ‘unclean’ and lead their subjects to live and act in an ‘unclean’ way both morally and physically. After the fall, God clothed Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness and Satan

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has been working overtime to get men and women undressed ever since!

3. Challenge: Sin makes us unclean in the presence of God. *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...”* (Is. 64:6) Romans 3:10-18, 23 *“As it is written...”*

B. An Unrestrainable Man (Vs. 3b-4a)

1. His binding with the chains
 - a. ‘fettters’ = for the binding the feet
 - b. ‘chains’ = for binding the hands and other parts of the body
2. His breaking of the chains
 - a. Revealing his superhuman, demonic strength
 - b. As a result, no one would attempt to “pass by that way” (Mt. 8:28)

C. An Untameable Man (Vs. 4b)

1. ‘tame’ = word used of the subjugation of animals
2. Note: The two failed attempts of men to solve the situation – **Restraint** (fettters & chains) and **Reform** (tame). Each of these 3 accounts in Mark 5 highlight the weakness/inability of man and the power of God as the ONLY solution to the problem.

D. An Uncontrolled Man (Vs. 5)

1. There was Sorrow
 - a. ‘crying’ = a loud scream or shriek; “an unearthly yell or scream under strong emotional excitement.” (Hiebert)
 - b. Life without Christ is a life described in the words of Ephesians 2:12 as “having no hope and, without God in the world.”
2. There was Scars
 - a. This man would cut and lacerate himself with sharp stones
 - b. Note: Self-harm is demonic. Satan delights in the mutilation of the human body which was created to reflect the glory of the Creator.

II. His Conversion (Vs. 6-13)

A. The Demoniac’s Encounter with Jesus (Vs. 6-10)

1. The Cry of the Demon (Vs. 6-7)
 - a. They believed in the Most High God (Vs. 7a) (James 2:19)
 - i. Title often used of God in the Old Testament.
 - ii. Title refers to the true God as distinguished from all false gods (Hiebert).
 - b. They believed in the Son of God (Vs. 7b)
 - i. They were prostrating themselves before him (Vs. 6).
 - ii. ‘worshipped’ = to prostrate oneself, to fall upon the knees & touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence.

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- iii. Note: While Satan, as an angel of light, deceives millions into either denying the Person of Jesus or believing falsehoods about Jesus, he is not at all in doubt as to who Jesus is!
- c. They believed in the coming judgment (Vs. 7c)
 - i. Luke records that the demons requested not to be sent into the 'deep' (Lk. 8:31). This is the same word for the "bottomless pit" a place of judgment for demonic spirits (Rev. 9:1,2,11; 11:7, 17:8, 20:1-3)
 - ii. Matthew's account – "art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (8:29)
- 2. The Command to the Demon (Vs. 8)
- 3. The Count of the Demons (Vs. 9)
 - a. 'legion' = a Roman military unit consisting of about 6,000 infantrymen, a common sight in these regions. Christ used the same term in Matthew 26:53 where he said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" This is over 72,000 angels! The number of the swine (2,000) indicate that there were at least 2,000 demons.
 - b. Vs. 15 – Indicates that this man was possessed with about this number of demons
 - c. In Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus revealed that demons actively seek residence in human bodies and encourage others to join them once they have found a victim. *"When an unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."*

B. The Demonic's Entreaty to Jesus (Vs. 10-12)

The demons beseech Christ concerning:

- 1. Their place (Vs. 10). They did not want to give up their strong hold upon the area where they had held this man and those who feared him in bondage for so long.
- 2. Their possession (Vs. 11-12). Now the whole host of demons possessing this man all cry out in a chorus of ugly voices.

C. The Demonic's Exorcism by Jesus (Vs. 13)

- 1. The compassion of the deliverance – 'compassion' (Vs. 19). This was unmerited favour.
- 2. The command of the deliverance - Jesus gives them leave, again demonstrating His absolute sovereignty and power over them.

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Christ issues a one-word command to these demons – ‘go’ (Matt. 8:32). What power in just one word from the lips of the Son of God!

III. His Change (Vs. 14-17)

A. The Areas of Change (Vs. 15)

1. Seated – no longer restless
2. Clothed – no longer naked
3. Sober – no longer insane. “right mind” has the basic idea of ‘self-controlled’. He was in control of his mental faculties.
4. 2 Cor. 5:17 *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

B. The Antagonism to the Change (Vs. 14, 16-17)

1. Their Reporting (Vs. 14)
2. Their Reaction – ‘fear’ (15)
 - a. What a strange fear! They were terrified of the demoniac but now they were afraid of Christ, the one who had solved the problem they could never solve.
 - b. These people had the awesome privilege of seeing firsthand the miracle working power of Christ and yet they did not respond in saving faith. This dispels the commonly held belief that all men need to convince them to turn to Christ is to see a miracle.
3. Their Request – ‘depart’ (Vs. 17)
 - a. “they began to pray him” = ‘pray’ implies that they ‘requested’ or ‘appealed’ with the fervency of an earnest prayer (Hiebert).
 - b. It seems they were more interested in material gain than the deliverance of a precious soul. “They were more concerned to protect their financial interests than to rejoice in the deliverance of the neighbourhood demoniac.” (Hiebert)
 - c. This is similar to the demon possessed damsel delivered through Paul’s ministry in Acts 16:16

IV. His Commission (Vs. 18-20)

A. His Desire (Vs. 18)

1. His desire to be with Christ another sign of the new birth. Of the 3 requests made of Jesus in this story, only this man’s request was denied!
2. We also desire to be with our Saviour away from the scene of our past life but Christ has a work for us to do for Him in His absence.

B. His Duty (Vs. 19-20)

1. The particulars of the command (Vs. 19)
 - a. Go & Tell!

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- i. What? He was to share the following: 1. The Lord's work in his life. 2. The Lord's compassion in his life.
- ii. Where? Starting at home with friends and family. "Around the world, across the street"
- b. God's methods haven't changed!
 - i. The command of Christ: Mark 16:15 "*And he said unto them, **Go** ye into all the world, and **preach** the gospel to every creature.*"
 - ii. The command to the Apostles: Acts 5:20 "**Go, stand and speak** in the temple to the people all the words of this life."
 - iii. Note: It is of interest to note that even in our day of digital communication, secular organisations (e.g. political parties & activists) still resort to one on one contact with people in the streets and on the door step. They are simply borrowing a biblical method that works and yet many Christians today sneer at old-fashioned evangelism!
2. The performance of the command (Vs. 20)
 - a. 'publish' = this word commonly translated 'preach' in the N.T. (e.g. "preach the Word")
 - b. 'Decapolis' = group of 10 cities east of Galilee. Gadara was one of those ten cities. He became a missionary to his home area.
 - c. Note: The salvation of special cases like this can have a profound and powerful impact on a particular people group or locality.
 - d. Seems his witness had a profound effect on the area as the response to Jesus' next visit was profoundly different (Mark 7)

Conclusion:

1. To the unsaved: Have you experienced the salvation Christ offers?
2. To the saved: Are we being faithful witnesses of what Christ has done in our lives? Do we share our testimony? How serious are we about the Great Commission?

Touch the Hem of His Garment

Text: Mark 5:25-34

Introduction:

1. The context: Christ has just healed the Gadarene demoniac (Vs. 1-20)
2. The chapter: Christ demonstrates his power over devils, disease and death. “He delivered in turn a man, a woman, and a child.” (Phillips)
3. This miracle occurs back on the Western side of the lake (Vs. 21) while Christ was on His way to perform another miracle in the healing of Jairus’ daughter. So, this miracle is a miracle within a miracle! Read Vs. 21-24 for the context.
4. The key theme is found in the words “thy faith hath made thee whole” (Vs. 34). This same phrase is translated elsewhere as “thy faith hath saved thee” (e.g. Lk. 7:50; 18:42). This woman is an example of someone who through faith, experienced the saving, life transforming power of Christ. We will consider this miracle under 5 divisions.

I. Her Condition (Vs. 25-26)

A. The Defilement of Her Condition (Vs. 25a)

1. Pronounced Unclean by the Law (Lev. 15:25-27)
 - a. Note particularly Lev. 15:25 – *“And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean.”*
 - b. The law reveals to us our unclean condition before God and is the “schoolmaster” that leads us to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25). Romans 3:19-20 says, *“Now we know...”* The law is holy, just and good but contains to cure, no life transforming power. All it can do is convict and condemn me. When I look at the 10 commandments, I find myself pronounced unclean! (Isaiah 64:6)
2. Pronounced Separated by the Law (Lev. 15:25)
 - a. Separated socially – e.g. from family and friends
 - b. Separated spiritually – e.g. from the temple

B. The Duration of Her Condition (Vs. 25b)

1. This woman was another hard case. She had been a slave of this impure condition for 12 long, painful years.
2. “The length of the problem does not limit the ability of Christ to remedy the problem.” (Butler)

C. The Distress of her Condition (Vs. 26a)

1. Rather than easing her pain, these doctors added to her pain!
2. Marvin Vincent documents the medical prescriptions found in the Talmud for treatment of an issue of blood:

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“Take the gum of Alexandria the weight of a zuzee (a fractional silver coin); of alum, the same; of crocus the same. Let them be bruised together, and given in wine to the woman that has an issue of blood. If this does not benefit, take of Persian onions three logs (pints); boil them in wine, and give her to drink, and say, ‘Arise from thy flux’ (flow of blood). If this does not cure her, set her in a place where two ways meet, and let her hold a cup of wine in her right hand, and let someone come behind and frighten her, and say, ‘Arise from thy flux’.” (Quoted by Butler)

3. There are many ‘physicians’ out there offering fake cures for sin and uncleanness. They cannot help you and will only add to your problem. You need the Great Physician, not the ‘physicians’.

D. The Destitution of her Condition (Vs. 26b)

1. All her possessions and finances had been spent in the hopes of a cure from one of these physicians.
2. Sin is expensive whether one is indulging in it or seeking to be delivered from it. What expense people pay to cured of their sin.

E. The Deterioration of her Condition (Vs. 26c)

1. “nothing bettered” = all human efforts had failed. She grew worse under their treatment. Others had failed and she had failed.
2. “grew worse” = her condition was further deteriorating. She could not be “healed of any” (Lk. 8:43) of these physicians.
3. In a similar way, the sin problem does not get better with time and effort, it simply gets worse.

II. Her Confidence (Vs. 27-28)

This woman came to Christ in faith that He could do what she and others could not do. Look at...

A. The Prompting of her Faith (Vs. 27a)

1. “when she had heard of Jesus” = news of this one called Jesus finally reached her in her desperate state. Her heart was stirred with hope that she could finally be cured.
2. “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*” (Rom. 10:17) Hearing the good news of Jesus Christ is the most important news you will ever hear. He is the only one who can save you (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). Jesus is bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, balm for the broken, conqueror for the captives, deliverance for the damned, father for the fatherless, healer for the helpless, hope for the hopeless and victor for the vanquished.

B. The Persistence of her Faith (Vs. 27b)

1. This was the action of her faith. Her faith drove her to overcome the obstacles that stood in between her and Christ.
2. “the press” = the word speaks of the crowd surrounding Jesus and pressing in upon Him. Verse 24 says the people ‘thronged’ him which means they “pressed in on all sides” (Strong’s).
3. Isaiah 55:6-7 “*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the*

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unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

C. The Perception of her Faith (Vs. 27c-28)

This woman had faith in some specific truths about Christ. She had...

1. Faith in His Person (Vs. 27c)
 - a. Matthew’s account specifically mentions that she touched “the hem of his garment” (Matt. 9:20). Luke says “the border of his garment” (Lk. 8:44). The reference is to “an outer garment...to the four corners of which tassels were attached (Num. 15:37-40; Duet. 22:12)” (Hiebert).
 - b. This woman did not touch Christ’s garment generally but she touched it specifically. The O.T. predicted that Messiah would have healing powers in the borders of His garment. Malachi 4:2 *“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings...”*
2. Faith in His Perfection (Vs. 27c)
 - a. The ribband of blue on the four tassels of Christ’s garment would have reminded her of the law. (See Numbers 15:38-40)
 - b. That ribband of blue in the border of Christ’s garment testified of two truths:
 - i. **The corruption of man** on account of his disobedience to the law
 - ii. The **perfection of Jesus Christ** on account of his perfect obedience to the law
 - iii. We see our sinfulness in the light of His holiness, our corruption in the radiance of His beauty, our transgressions in the blaze of His perfection and our iniquities in the mirror of His purity.
3. Faith in His Power (Vs. 28)
 - a. “for she said” = imperfect tense. She said this “within herself” (Matt. 9:21) repeatedly as she made her way to Christ
 - b. “I may touch but his clothes” = what power Christ has that even just coming into contact with His clothes would heal!
 - c. “I shall be whole” = this is the language of faith! She was absolutely certain of Christ’s power to heal her.
 - d. Note: Under Jewish law, her touch should have made Christ unclean. But instead of her making Christ unclean, Christ made her clean!

III. Her Cure (Vs. 29)

A. The Speed of her Cure (Vs. 29a)

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1. 'straightway' = the healing took place in an instant, in a moment of time.
2. Challenge: Salvation is a moment in time experience, not a process. You have to be born again before you can start growing!

B. The Soundness of her Cure (Vs. 29b)

1. "fountain of her blood" = the source of the problem was dealt with.
2. "dried up" = this was no superficial cure. It was a complete cure.

C. The Sense of her Cure (Vs. 29c)

1. "she felt in her body that she was healed" = as soon as she came into contact with Christ by faith, she recognized the change within her. "Amazing grace tis heaven below to feel the blood applied"
2. 2 Corinthians 5:17 *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*
3. Illustrations
 - a. John Newton – Amazing Grace
 - b. Sam Jones (1847 to 1906)

Sam Jones was an intelligent man with a lawyer's degree but was a drunk and would beat his wife until she was black and blue. However, he was converted to Christ in August of 1872. A turning point came when he was on a six-week drinking binge and heard that his father was seriously ill. On his deathbed, his father's words pierced the heart of young Sam – "My poor, wicked, wayward, reckless boy. You have broken the heart of your sweet wife and brought me down in sorrow to my grave. Promise me, my boy, to meet me in Heaven." Overcome with emotion, Sam fell to his knees and took his dying father's hand, and shouted "I promise, I'll quit drinking and set things straight. I'll meet you and mother in heaven." The father died and Sam kept his promise. He tells about his last encounter with drink: "I went to the bar and begged for a glass of liquor. I got the glass and started to drink and looked into the mirror. I saw my hair matted, the filth and vomit on my clothes, one of my eyes totally closed, and my lips swollen. And I said, "Is that all that is left of the proud and brilliant lawyer, Sam Jones?" I smashed the glass on the floor and fell to my knees and cried, "Oh God! Oh God, have mercy!" The bartender ran to my side and thought I was dying and I was! I said, "just let me alone." I picked myself up and staggered to my cheap rooming house and went through three days and nights of hell, but when the morning came, something had happened to old Sam Jones." Sam Jones went to the clothing store and bought a new set of clothes and then then went to the barber for a bath, a shave and a haircut. Putting on his new clothes and looking pale and weak he returned home to his heart broken wife. At first, she didn't even recognize her own husband. He recounts the scene: "Honey, God has given you a new husband and the children a new daddy, and I wonder if you will forgive me and start all over again." She grabbed me in her arms and cried, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! I have been praying for this!" And I have been going around the country bragging about Jesus ever since."

4. Jesus Christ can take a man like Saul, a murderer, blasphemer and persecutor and turn him into a preacher of the Gospel; He can take a woman like the woman of Samaria with shattered morals and broken hopes and dreams and make her clean and pure; He can take a dishonest tax collector like Matthew and make him honest and trustworthy; He can take a proud, rough fisherman like Peter

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and make him humble and gracious and the good news is that Christ can transform you too!

IV. Her Confession (Vs. 30-33)

A. The Prompting of her Confession (Vs. 30-32)

1. The Purpose of Christ's question (Vs. 30) Christ did this for the woman's benefit. It was intended to encourage the confession. Christ would have us declare our faith openly and publicly.
2. The Protest of Christ's question (Vs. 31) The disciples were quick to question the wisdom of our Lord's question. Not surprisingly, Peter acted as their spokesman! (Luke 8:45) Christ was aware of something the disciples were not. They were only viewing things from the outside appearance.
3. The Persistence of Christ's question (Vs. 32; Luke 8:46)

B. The Proclamation of her Confession (Vs. 33)

1. Observe her humility – “fell down before him”
2. Observe her honesty – “told him all the truth” She went public with her testimony! She declared what Christ had done for her “before all the people” (Lk. 8:47)
3. Challenge: Baptism for the Christian is a vital, first step of obedience to publicly declare your faith in Christ.

V. Her Comfort (Vs. 34)

Because of what Christ had done she knew the comfort of:

A. A New Position (Vs. 34a)

1. 'daughter' = this is the only time Christ uses this title of a woman. “It affectionately assured her of the spiritual relationship with Him into which she had entered.” (Hiebert)
2. 1 John 3:1 *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:”*

B. A New Promise (Vs. 34b)

1. What she already knew by experience was now confirmed by His Word.
2. The promises of God are the foundation of our salvation.

C. A New Peace (Vs. 34c)

1. Romans 5:1-2 *“Therefore being justified by faith...”*
2. Colossians 1:20 *“And having made peace through the blood...”*

D. A New Preservation (Vs. 34d)

1. “be whole of thy plague” = these words were a guarantee that this cure would be permanent. She was to continue in that state.
2. We are “kept by the power of God” (1 Pt. 1:5) See also John 10:27-28. “...whatsoever God doeth it shall be forever...” (Ecc. 3:14)

Conclusion: Have you touched the Lord by faith? Do you confess Christ publicly?

The Trial & Triumph of a Father's Faith

Text: Mark 5:21-24; 35-43

Introduction:

1. The chapter – we see Christ's power in 3D – over Demons, Death & Disease
2. The context: Christ has just returned from the Eastern side of the lake where he delivered the maniac of Gadara from demon possession. Upon arrival on the sea shore, the crowds quickly assemble together to Him.
3. The next scene opens dramatically with the approach of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue who came to Christ with a great need. The name 'Jairus' is the Greek form of the Hebrew name 'Jair'. For example, Mordecai was the son of a man called 'Jair' (Esther 2:5)
4. The theme of faith is central to this account as revealed in the words of Christ recorded in Vs. 36 – "Be not afraid, only believe."
5. Let's consider 4 lessons about Jairus's faith in this sermon.

I. The Plea of His Faith (Vs. 21-24)

A. The Humility of his Plea (Vs. 22)

1. He had an exalted position (Vs. 22a)
 - a. He was a ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum which made him an individual of importance. The "rulers" were a "board of elders who were over the affairs of the local synagogue." (Hiebert). Their duties were to select the readers or teachers in the synagogue and to see that all things were done with decency (See Acts 13:14-15) (Wuest).
 - b. Most of the Jewish religious leaders rejected Christ but Jairus was an exception. He found in Christ something he could not find in the empty forms and ceremonies of legalistic Judaism.
2. He adopted a lowly posture (Vs. 22b)
 - a. This was an act of worship – "and worshipped him" (Matt. 9:18)
 - b. This was an act of reverence – he was acknowledging that Christ was superior to him
 - c. When we come to Christ in a time of trial, our first step needs to be to worship at His feet.
 - d. Job's Example: "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed by the name of the LORD." (Job 1:20-21)

B. The Fervency of his Plea (Vs. 23)

1. The expression of the fervency (Vs. 23a)

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- a. God honours fervent praying (James 5:16)
- b. Is there any heart and passion in our praying?
2. The motivation of the fervency (Vs. 23b)
 - a. His daughter was at death's door. The phrase has the idea of being "at the last gasp." This trial drove Him to the feet of Jesus.
 - b. The grief was heightened by the fact it was his only daughter (Lk. 8:42)
 - c. Challenge: There is a lesson we discern here for parents. Our children enter this world spiritually dead. They lie "at the point of death" and there is NOTHING we can do in our own power to raise them to spiritual life. But there is one thing we can do. We can lay hold of the feet of our Saviour and plead with Him to touch their lives with His power! While each of our children have to make their own personal decision for Christ, the faith of the parent is an important channel of blessing to the child. If this father had not come to Christ and exercised faith, his child would never have been raised to life again!
3. The supplication of the fervency (Vs. 23c)

C. The Victory of his Plea (Vs. 24)

II. The Proving of His Faith (Vs. 35-36)

A. The Cause of the Delay (Vs. 25-34)

1. Another woman had a desperate need and came to Christ in faith. This delayed their arrival at Jairus's house. This delay would accomplish 2 important things in Jairus's life:
 - a. He would witness a powerful miracle that was received by faith in the healing of the woman with the issue of blood that would serve to strengthen his own faith in the power of Christ (Vs. 34)
 - b. The delay meant that the situation with his daughter would worsen, becoming a platform for an even greater display of God's power. The darker the situation, the more glory Christ received when He moves in Might and Power.
2. Principle: In God's infinite wisdom He sometimes delays the answer to our urgent prayers. We often grapple with this experience as we feel that our need warrants immediate attention. We feel perplexed when it seems the Lord is giving attention to other people's needs while delaying to address ours. But faith is tested and strengthened by such delays.

B. The Consequence of the Delay (Vs. 35)

1. "thy daughter is dead" = his precious daughter had died. "The worse the situation, the better it is to magnify the great power of our Lord in His miracle working." (Butler)

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2. “why troublest thou the Master any further” = this question contains an assumption. The assumption is that death took the little girl beyond the reach of Christ’s power.
3. Illustration: The death of Lazarus (John 11)
 - a. Vs. 6 – Christ’s intentional delay
 - b. Vs. 21 – Martha’s anguish and confusion
 - c. Vs. 40 – Christ’s exhortation to faith

C. The Comfort in the Delay (Vs. 36)

1. Cease from Fear (Vs. 36a)
 - a. “be not afraid” = fear had obviously gripped Jairus’s heart on account of the news. In essence, Christ was saying “stop being afraid”
 - b. Fear is the natural human reaction to circumstances that seem to bring us to an impossible situation.
 - c. Phillips: “Faith and fear pull in different directions.”
2. Continue in Faith (Vs. 36b)
 - a. “only believe” = present imperative. “He was to continue believing, even in the presence of death. “Be believing.” The command was for a continued, sustained faith.” (Butler) Luke adds, “and she shall be made whole” (Vs. 50)
 - b. Jairus had exercised a measure of faith in Christ up to this point. He believed Christ could heal his daughter. Now his faith needs to be strengthened and increased to believe what he thought was impossible.
 - c. This means he was to turn his focus back to Christ. He was to anchor his faith in the promise of Christ. Fear looks at the circumstances, faith looks at the Saviour. Fear looks at the problem, faith looks at God’s power.
 - d. Hebrews 11:6 “*But without faith it is impossible to please him...*”

III. The Protest against His Faith (Vs. 37-40)

Faith must face the challenge of unbelief. Jairus would face this upon his arrival home with the mourners.

A. The Sorrow of the Mourners (Vs. 37-38)

1. Their journey to the scene of mourning (Vs. 37)
 - a. Peter, James and John form Christ’s inner circle within His disciples. This is the first instance where these three are favoured in this way (see also 9:2; 14:33).
 - b. Christ took the minimum number of witnesses required to verify an event under the Old Testament law (Deut.17:6).
2. Their arrival at the scene of mourning (Vs. 39)

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- a. 'tumult' = a noisy, clamorous uproar, commotion. "Shrill and piercing cries filled the air." (Hiebert) There was weeping and wailing, commotion and crying.
- b. Matthew 9:23 "*And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the **minstrels** and the people **making a noise***"
- c. "It appears from Matthews reference that those making the tumult were principally paid mourners. The use of such hired mourners was expected as evidence of esteem for the one who had died." (Hiebert)

B. The Scorn of the Mourners (Vs. 39-40a)

1. Christ challenges the mourners with a question followed by a startling statement. It is not a sin to mourn the death of a loved one but in this case, it revealed a lack of faith in the Lord Jesus who had been called upon to come and heal the little girl.
2. "the damsel is not dead but sleepeth" = Christ speaks figuratively
 - a. Christ used similar language in connection with the death of Lazarus (John 11:11-14).
 - b. "It is not the sleep of the soul; its activity ceases not; but the sleep of the body, which lies down in the grave, still and silent." (Henry) (See Rev. 6:9-11 as evidence against "soul sleep")
 - c. This is a Christian view of death distinct from the hopelessness of the world. At death, the spirit immediately goes into the presence of God in heaven (2 Cor. 5:8); the body rests in the grave, awaiting the coming resurrection where the soul will be reunited with the body (1 Thess. 4:13-18). "What He wished especially to do was to put a meaning upon death more worthy of those who believe in God than that suggested by such unbridled expressions of hopeless grief." (Thompson)
 - d. This statement also reveals the power of Christ. He holds the keys of hell and of death and to resurrect someone from the dead is as simple to Him as waking someone out of sleep.
3. "they laughed him to scorn" = impf. tense – they laughed repeatedly. They mocked Christ knowing "she was dead." (Lk. 8:53) The natural man received not the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14).

C. The Separation of the Mourners (Vs. 40b)

1. "put them all out" = comes from a strong word meaning "to cast out". Their unbelief meant they were ejected from the house and missed seeing the miracle performed. Only the parents and the 3 disciples would witness this miracle.
2. "Unbelief shuts us out from many special and spiritual blessings." (Butler)

IV. The Performance in Response to His Faith (Vs. 41-43)

A. Christ's Contact with the Damsel (Vs. 41a)

1. "took the damsel by the hand" = the Saviour takes a hold of the little girl's lifeless hand
2. Christ took hold of the hand of Peter's mother in law and "lifted her up" (Mark 1:31) Praise God that if you are saved you can testify, "Love lifted me"!

B. Christ's Call to the Damsel (Vs. 41b)

1. Mark records Christ's words in Aramaic and then translates them into Greek for his readers.
2. 'damsel' = a term of tender affection

C. Christ's Cure of the Damsel (Vs. 42)

1. Luke 8:55 "*And her spirit came again...*"
2. "the damsel arose and walked" = powerful evidence of her healing
3. Note: What a powerful illustration of salvation. We were "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) but Christ came and "quickened us" (Eph. 2:5), made us alive again! He lifted us up and gave us new life!

D. Christ's Care of the Damsel (Vs. 43)

1. "commanded that something should be given her to eat" = reveals something of the tender love our Saviour has for little ones.
2. Challenge: Your attitude towards children reveals a lot about how Christlike you are.

Conclusion:

1. Parents, do we pray earnestly for the Saviour's working in our children's lives? Do we pray for their salvation?
2. Are you dealing with a trial at the moment? Look to Christ and His promises.
3. Are you saved? Have you experienced Christ's healing touch in your life? He can raise you to spiritual life.

The Sin that Stops the Power of God

Text: Mark 6:1-6

Introduction:

1. This section of Mark's Gospel records a visit of our Lord to His hometown of Nazareth. The majority response was one of unbelief, so much so that Christ could "do there no mighty work" (Vs. 5). Matthew's account puts it even more bluntly – "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." (Matt. 13:58)
2. The verses contain a powerful challenge to the lost and the saved of the evil of unbelief and the bitter fruit it produces.
3. Let's consider 3 lessons about unbelief we find in these verses.

I. The Revealing of their Unbelief (Vs. 1-3)

A. The Scene of their Unbelief (Vs. 1)

1. "into his own country" = This is clearly the village of Nazareth as Luke 4:16 notes that this is "where he had been brought up" At the time of Christ it was an insignificant village with a population of around 500 inhabitants. This was Christ's second and final recorded visit to Nazareth, his first occurring shortly after his temptation in the wilderness (Luke 4).
2. "his disciples follow him" = this was a mission outreach to hometown Nazareth.

B. The Scepticism of their Unbelief (Vs. 2)

1. The Evidence Received (Vs. 2a)
 - a. The evidence of Christ's **Words**
 - i. During Christ's previous visit He had made direct Messianic claims (See Luke 4:16-21).
 - ii. Christ spoke powerful words of truth that 'astonished' them. The word 'astonished' means "to strike out or expel by a blow". They were shocked and dumbfounded by His preaching; they found it mind-blowing. "*Never man spake like this man.*" (Jn. 7:46)
 - b. The evidence of Christ's **Works**
 - i. "mighty works" comes from the Greek word 'dunamis' which is a word used repeatedly of Divine, Supernatural power in the N.T.
 - ii. The works of Christ added further weight and authority to His claims – John 10:37-38 "*If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, **believe the works:** that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.*" John 14:11

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*“Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me **for the very works’ sake.**”*

2. The Evidence Rejected (Vs. 2b)
 - a. “Their agnosticism and scepticism found its expression in the form of a question. In order to maintain their disbelief, they looked for any explanation other than the obvious one.” (JM)
 - b. This is the character of unbelief. Unbelief is a wilful hardening of the heart in the face of indisputable evidence (truth). These people refused to submit to the obvious conclusion the evidence was leading them to that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.
 - c. Evidence of Christ’s Lordship will lead to salvation when the heart responds in faith. But when the heart is hardened and entrenched in unbelief, it will look for superficial arguments to try and avoid the demands of the truth.

C. The Scorn of their Unbelief (Vs. 3)

1. The first questions in Vs. 2 were aimed at His ministry. These next questions are aimed at him personally (Vs. 3) Since they could not refute the message, they attacked the Messenger.
2. “Is not this the carpenter” = Christ had evidently been taught the carpenters trade by his step father Joseph (Matt. 13:55) and was known as such in the village of Nazareth. Justin Martyr (in the middle of the second century) said that Jesus made “plows and yokes.”
3. “the son of Mary...the brother of...his sisters” = Christ’s family was very familiar to this audience and at this point, with the probably exception of Mary, still did not believe in Him themselves (John 7:5). We have clear evidence that they did later (Acts 1:4; Epistles of James and Jude).
4. “they were offended” = were made to stumble. This offense found its root in pride. Who did He think He was! To them He was just “the carpenter” from down the street!

II. The Reproof of their Unbelief (Vs. 4)

A. The Lord’s Claim (Vs. 4a)

1. Our Lord likens Himself to a prophet in this verse. He was often considered to be one of the prophets (See Vs. 15). He was the Prophet who was prophesied of by Moses in Deut. 18:15. Indeed He was much more than a prophet! He was Prophet, Priest and King; God manifest in the flesh.
2. A prophet was a messenger from God with a message from God.

B. The Lord’s Comparison (Vs. 4b)

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1. Christ had mentioned this same proverb during his previous visit. It is a maxim that contains a similar truth to the one expressed in our modern saying, “familiarity breeds contempt.”
2. Christ mentions “three decreasing circles of persons to whom the prophet is related.” (Hiebert)
3. Christ did not say that a prophet would be honoured everywhere but that he would not be “without honour” especially in places outside of his home area. In other words, the natural tendency of the sinful heart is to lightly esteem the words of truth when they are delivered to us by one with whom we are very familiar (parent, friend, pastor).
4. Question: Would you be more likely to take offense to being confronted by the truth from one you know well (e.g. parent, pastor, friend) or someone from another country or locality? It all depends on your ATTITUDE to that authority and the truth but the natural tendency of the sinful heart is to despise and disdain truth from the lips of those closest to us.
5. This is a dangerous trap and can have disastrous results. If a man is sent from God with a message from God, our place is to respect the messenger and receive the message.

III. The Results of their Unbelief (Vs. 5-6)

A. The Restriction of Christ’s Power (Vs. 5-6a)

1. The danger of unbelief to the lost – it leads to damnation
 - a. Unbelief is at its root, a heart problem, a rejection of the truth of the Gospel. So long as unbelief reigns in the heart, there can be no salvation as we are saved “*by grace **through faith***” (Eph. 2:8-9)
 - b. John 3:18-19 Jesus said, “*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that **believeth not** is condemned already, because he hath **not believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*”
 - c. Mark 16:16 “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that **believed not** shall be damned.*”
 - d. Revelation 21:8 “*But the fearful, and **unbelieving**, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*”
2. The danger of unbelief to the saved – it leads to departure (backsliding & apostasy)
 - a. The writer to the Hebrews warns believers of the danger of unbelief – “*Take heed, brethren, lest there **be in any of you an***

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*evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be **hardened** through the deceitfulness of sin.”* (Hebrews 3:12-13)

- b. “It is of utmost importance that we firmly grasp the truth that this unbelief is not intellectual, but moral; it is not the doubt of the inquiring mind, but of the wandering heart.” (W. Jones)
- c. “he could there do no mighty work” = what staggering, shocking words. This same Jesus is the One who created the universe and holds it all together! This Jesus is the One who knows all the stars by name. This Jesus is the One who possesses all power (Psalm 62:11), the One who can do the impossible (Matt. 19:26). But in this case, He says I **cannot** work! Why? “because of their unbelief” (Matt. 13:58). How evil is unbelief! “It (their unbelief) closed the door against the operation of His power.” (Hiebert)
- d. “he marvelled because of their unbelief” = there are only two times where it is recorded in the Gospels that Christ ‘marvelled’. Both of them were in relation to faith. The first instance was in relation to the faith of a centurion who besought Christ to come and heal his sick servant (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10). Christ said of this centurion “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”. What a contrast to this second instance where Christ marvels at His hometown’s lack of faith.

B. The Retraction of Christ’s Presence (Vs. 6b)

- 1. Challenge for the lost – to reject the truth in unbelief is a dangerous thing and you are not guaranteed another opportunity.
- 2. Challenge to the saved – while you can’t lose your salvation, you can lose the joy of your salvation and God’s hand of blessing. The Spirit of God can be grieved and quenched in our lives.
- 3. Challenge to the church – Christ left Nazareth never to return. As a church, if our hearts become hardened into unbelief through the deceitfulness of sin, we run the very real danger of forfeiting the presence and blessing of Christ. There are churches today that used to know God’s power and presence that have the word “Ichabod” written across them – “the glory is departed” (1 Samuel 4:21). Christ’s rebuke to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7 is a sobering reminder that if a church cools in its affections towards Christ, He may remove their candlestick (Vs. 5).

Conclusion: **To the lost** – will you submit to the truth of the Gospel and be saved? **To the believer** – will you repent of your backsliding which is bringing about a retraction of the presence and power of God in your personal life and your church?

The Disciples First Missions Trip

Text: Mark 6:7-13; 30-31 (See also Matt. 10:1-15 & Luke 9:1-6)

Introduction:

1. There are two dispensational aspects to this first mission of the disciples we must keep in mind:
 - The Jewish aspect – *“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to **the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**”* (Matt. 10:5-6) The Gospel was to “the Jew first” (Rom. 1:16).
 - The Apostolic aspect – *“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you...”* (2 Cor. 12:12) There were special sign gifts that accompanied the Apostles that were unique to that office and which have since ceased.
 - This first mission was local, the second (the Great Commission) was global. The first was to the Jewish nation only, the second to all nations. The first was national, the second international.
2. However, with the above in mind, we do want to learn from the abiding principles we can discern in this passage. “Some of the things which He said have no application to us; they were only for the men who were then under Him. Nevertheless, there are underlying principles in every part of these charges, which are of perpetual application.” (G. Campbell Morgan)
3. Let’s study this mission of the Apostles in four sections:

I. Their Commission for the Mission (Vs. 6-7)

A. The Period of the Mission (Vs. 6)

1. Christ has been active in reaching out with the Gospel (Vs. 6)
2. Christ has just exhorted them concerning the need to pray for the harvest (Matt. 9:36-38)
3. G. Campbell Morgan: “It is to be carefully noted that the men whom He charged to pray specifically for labourers, were those whom He immediately sent forth to labour. “Pray ye” is the first command, “go ye” is the next. The men who have learnt to look with the eyes of Jesus until they fell with the heart of Jesus; and who, out of such vision and such feeling, begin to pray, are more than half ready for the work of bringing in the harvest.”

B. The Purpose of the Mission (Vs. 7a)

1. “the twelve” = they had already been called to service and had accompanied Christ as He preached and ministered. Now they were to put what they had learned from Christ into practice. This Evangelistic tour was a part of their training.

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2. Christ had called them with the express purpose of making them fishers of men (Mark 1:17). True discipleship and growth as a believer should lead to us becoming soul-winners.
3. Practical service, especially in the area of winning souls, is an absolute MUST for those who believe they are called to full time ministry (2 Tim. 4:5).

C. The Partnership for the Mission (Vs. 7b)

1. “send forth” = Greek word ‘apostle’ meaning “a sent one”
2. They were sent out “two by two”. Matthew 10:2-4 appears to indicate the pairs as he lists the names in sets of two.
3. This pattern also seen in the Book of Acts. E.g. Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2). Perhaps there would be fewer casualties in pioneer missions and church planting if this pattern was observed?

D. The Power for the Mission (Vs. 7c)

1. They were given Authority – primary sense of the word ‘power’ in this verse. Same word translated ‘authority’ in Luke’s account (Lk. 9:1)
2. They were given Ability – Luke’s word for ‘power’ is *dunamis*, speaking of supernatural power.
3. Principle: Whom God calls, He enables! “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” (2. Cor. 4:7)

II. Their Commands for the Mission (Vs. 8-11)

There was to be...

A. Faith (Vs. 8-10)

1. Faith for daily needs (Vs. 8-9)
Beyond a simple walking stick, there were to take:
 - a. No Scrip – a leathern sack in which travellers and shepherds carried their provisions. A small bag, wallet or satchel. David put 5 smooth stones in a scrip (1 Sam. 17:40).
 - b. No bread – they would need to trust God for daily bread
 - c. No money – ‘purse’ refers to the girdle in which coins were often kept
 - d. One pair of sandals
 - e. One coat
 - f. Note: The Lord would provide these needs through the giving of those who responded favourable to the message (Matt. 10:10). That the Lord faithfully supplied can be gathered from their testimony later as recorded in Luke 22:35.
2. Faith for dwelling needs (Vs. 10)
 - a. “It was a common cultural practice to offer hospitality to strangers arriving in a village.” (Hiebert) To refuse Christ’s

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messengers this courtesy would represent a deep-seated rejection of the message they carried.

- b. By staying in one place, Christ's disciples would distinguish themselves from false teachers who made profit going from house to house seeking to collect money from people.

B. Forewarning (Vs. 11)

1. A significant gesture (Vs. 11a)
 - a. The Background: "The Jews were accustomed, on their return from heathen countries to the Holy Land, to shake off the dust from their feet at the frontier. This act symbolized a breaking away from all joint-participation in the life of the idolatrous world. The apostles were to act in the same way in reference to any Jewish cities which might reject in their person the kingdom of God." (Godet)
 - b. "a testimony against them" = gesture was to serve as a visible warning to the rejectors
 - c. The example of Paul with the Christ-rejecting Jews of Corinth: "*And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he **shook his raiment**, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*" (Acts 18:6)
2. A serious judgment (Vs. 11b)
 - a. 'verily' = truly. This warning of Christ is trustworthy and true!
 - b. The people of a city that rejected the Gospel message would receive a severer judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - c. Read Christ's warnings in Matthew 11:20-24
 - d. Challenge: To reject the offer of salvation has grave consequences for eternity. Hebrews 10:28-31 "*He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment...*" See also 2 Thess. 1:6-9
 - e. J.C. Ryle: "One of the greatest sins man can commit in the sight of God is to hear the Gospel of Christ and not believe it – to be invited to repent and believe, and yet remain careless and unbelieving. In short, to reject the Gospel will sink a man to the lowest in hell."

III. Their Conduct on the Mission (Vs. 12-13)

A. The Message they Preached (Vs. 12)

1. They preached the kingdom of God (Matt. 10:7; Lk. 9:2)
 - a. "the kingdom" = the rulership of God. The King had arrived and was being offered to the nation but they rejected their King.
 - b. "at hand" (Matt. 10:7) = there was a sense of urgency and responsibility. "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2)

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2. They preached the Gospel (Lk. 9:6)
 - a. This was the good news of the kingdom.
 - b. We proclaim the good news of Christ's death, burial and resurrection.
3. They preached Christ (Vs. 14a)
 - a. So effective was their mission, that it impacted Herod's palace!
 - b. It is significant that Herod did not hear of *them* (the disciples) but of *him* (Christ). The result of the disciple's mission was that Christ's name was "spread abroad".
4. They preached repentance (Vs. 13)
 - a. They followed in the footsteps of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-2) and Christ (Mk. 1:15).
 - b. No repentance equals no salvation! (Luke 13:3 & 5)

B. The Miracles they Performed (Vs. 13)

1. Delivering people from demons (13a)
2. Delivering people from diseases (13b)
 - a. This included raising the dead (Matt. 10:8)
 - b. Those claiming to have the same power as the Apostles should be able to raise the dead, not just "heal" the sick.
3. These miracles were not an end in themselves. They served a secondary role to confirm and authenticate the message.

IV. Their Completion of the Mission (Vs. 30-31)

A. They Reported to Christ (Vs. 30)

1. They reported their words and works.
2. Reporting an important, Biblical principle for mission work. The Apostle Paul another good example of this in relation to his home church of Antioch.
3. Challenge: We will all give an account of our Christian life and service to the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ. "...the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. 3:13)

B. They Rested with Christ (Vs. 31)

1. Christ invites them to take some time to rest and recuperate; an important practice to follow after intense periods of Christian service.
2. "a while" = means a little, a short time.

Conclusion:

1. Challenge: Are you saved? Will you repent and receive Christ today?
2. Challenge: Are you a soul-winner?

The Murder of John the Baptist

Text: Mark 6:14-29

Introduction:

1. This passage details the sad death of John the Baptist, a man who was described by the Lord Jesus as the greatest man born of women (Matt. 11:11).
2. Historical Background:
 - Background to Herod and Herodias' adulterous marriage:

Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, a half-brother to Antipas, thus his niece. She had married her uncle, here called Philip, and they had had a daughter named Salome. Philip had been disinherited by his father, Herod the Great, and lived with Herodias in Rome as a private citizen. While visiting his brother in Rome, Antipas became enamoured with Herodias, who, as an ambitious woman, agreed to marry Antipas on the condition that he would divorce his wife, a daughter of the Nabataean king Aretas IV. Upon learning of the treacherous intentions of her husband, his wife of many years fled to her father at whose hands Antipas later suffered a humiliating military defeat. (Hiebert)

- Place of John's imprisonment:

He was imprisoned, according to Josephus, at Machaerus, near the north-eastern shore of the Dead Sea. It was a fortress, palace and prison all in one. (Hiebert) Vincent describes the palace as follows: "Perched on an isolated cliff at the end of a narrow ridge, encompassed with deep ravines, was the citadel. At the other end of this ridge Herod (the Great) built a great wall, with towers two hundred feet high at the corners; and within this enclosure, a magnificent palace, with colonnades, baths, cisterns, arsenals – every provision, in short, for luxury and for defence against siege. The windows commanded a wide and grand prospect, including the Dead Sea, the course of the Jordan and Jerusalem. In the detached citadel, probably in one of the underground dungeons, remains of which may still be seen, was the prison of John."

3. Verse 18 reveals the heart of this passage. It was John's uncompromising denunciation of the sin of immorality that cost him his head.
4. We will now examine this murder of John the Baptist in four sections.

I. The Conscience about John's Murder (Vs. 14-16)

A. The Report to Herod (Vs. 14a; 16a)

1. The Evangelistic mission of the disciples was so effective that the Gospel began to unsettle Herod in his palace. So powerfully did they witness of Jesus Christ that Herod did not hear of "them" (the disciples) but of "him" (Jesus Christ).
2. Our witness for Christ is effective when Christ is the focus rather than ourselves as His messengers.

B. The Reaction of Herod (Vs. 14b-16)

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1. Herod's conscience was so troubled over his murder of John the Baptist that when he heard the reports of Christ, he superstitiously believed it was John the Baptist risen from the dead!
2. "others said" = others reported that Christ was Elijah or one of the prophets (Vs. 15)
3. "But when Herod heard...he said" = Herod repeatedly insisted that it was John the Baptist
4. "whom I beheaded" = Herod felt the personal responsibility for what he had done

II. The Catalyst for John's Murder (Vs. 21-25)

There were some events that acted as a catalyst that lead to the gruesome death of the fiery Baptist. There was...

A. A Bold Rebuke from John (Vs. 17-18)

1. The Sin he rebuked (Vs. 17b, 18)
 - a. The sin of Adultery
 - i. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14)
 - ii. "...But the thing that David has done displeased the LORD." (2 Sam. 11:27)
 - iii. Death penalty for adultery under O.T. law (Lev. 20:10)
 - iv. John the Baptist was not a respecter of persons. Most preachers today won't reprove this sin in strong terms, especially in those of high position in their church. We loudly proclaim that as Bible believers we follow in the footsteps of the Fiery Baptist but in reality, he would probably be thrown out of most of our churches for his uncompromising denunciation of evil.
 - b. The sin of Divorce and Remarriage
 - i. John denounced the marriage as 'unlawful' on the basis of Lev. 18:16 & 20:21.
 - ii. God hates divorce! *"For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that **he hateth putting away...**"* (Mal. 2:16)
 - iii. Marriage to a divorced person equals adultery in God's eyes – Jesus said, *"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, **committeth adultery**: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband **committeth adultery.**"* (Luke 16:18)
 - iv. There's no such thing as divorce and remarriage "Christian style!" John's preaching reflected the mind of God on this matter.
2. The Suffering he Received (Vs. 17a)
 - a. John paid a heavy price for his stand against sin. First incarceration and then execution.

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- b. Taking a stand against immorality will not win you the popularity vote! In fact, it will provoke some of the most vicious anger and opposition for the man of God. But better to lose your head for the truth than keep it for error!
- c. “It was a blunt and brave thing that John said. It cost him his head; but it is better to have a head like John the Baptist and lose it than to have an ordinary head and keep it.” (RWP)

B. A Bitter Reaction from Herodias (Vs. 19-20)

- 1. The revenge intended (Vs. 19)
 - a. “had a quarrel” = imperfect tense. Means she nursed and harboured a spirit of bitterness and malice against John. She “had it in” for John.
 - b. “would have killed him” = so incensed was Herodias against John that she desired his murder. She would settle for nothing less than seeing John’s head, dripping in blood on a platter in her hands.
- 2. The revenge obstructed (Vs. 20)
 - a. The only obstacle that stood in the way of Herodias and her desired revenge was Herod.
 - b. Herod had a respect for John on account of his impeccable character and genuine holiness and would on occasion, speak with John, hearing more of his uncompromising message of repentance.
 - c. Illustration: In a similar way, Felix heard the Gospel from Paul and trembled, but out of political expediency left Paul bound (Acts 24:25-27).

III. The Conspiracy for John’s Murder (Vs. 21-25)

The conspiracy for John’s death involved:

A. A Sinister Plot (Vs. 21)

- 1. ‘convenient’ = means opportune, suitable, timely, seasonable. Herodias was watching and waiting for such a moment where she could ensnare Herod and carry out her murderous plan.
- 2. “Herodias chose Herod’s birthday as the strategic moment to spring her trap and force him to put John to death.” (Wuest)
- 3. “Herod on his birthday made a supper” = a luxurious banquet with drinking, dancing and debauchery.
- 4. F.B. Meyer describes the scene: “...the great banqueting chamber was specially illuminated; the tables decked with flowers and gold and silver plate; laughter and mirth echoing through the vaulted roof from splendid company that lay, after the Eastern mode, on sumptuous couches, strewing the floor from one end to the other of the spacious hall. Servants, in costly liveries, passed to and fro,

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bearing the rich dainties on massive salvers (platters), one of which was to be presently besprinkled with the martyr's blood."

B. A Sensual Performance (Vs. 22a)

1. "the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced" = the root of the verb means some kind of rapid motion (RWP).
 - a. "Towards the end of such a feast it was the custom for immodest women to be introduced, who, by their gestures imitated scenes in certain well-known mythologies, and still further inflamed the passions of the banqueters." (Meyer)
 - b. "Such solo dances were grossly suggestive...comparable to a striptease act in a modern nightclub. They were regularly performed by professional entertainers of low moral character, and it was an almost unprecedented thing for Salome to perform such a dance before Herod's guests." (Hiebert)
 - c. "It was a shameful exhibition of lewd dancing pre-arranged by Herodias to compass her purpose for John's death." (RWP)
2. This passage reveals God's mind on the drink, dancing and parties of the world. Christians should have nothing to do with it! Conversion used to mean that you tipped your booze down the drain, got rid of your rock and roll music and left the dance house, movie house and pub house never to return! And yet today in the name of so-called 'liberty' we have Christians advocating the drink, dance, movies and music of this evil world!
3. Making application to this passage of Scripture in 1890, F.B. Meyer warned:

Some of us dare not enter the theatre, or encourage others to enter...even when a play may be deemed inoffensive and harmless, the sensuous attractions of the place, the glitter, the music, the slightly-dressed figures of the actors and actresses, the entire atmosphere and environment, which appeal so strongly to the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, break down some of the fortifications, which would otherwise resist the first incidence and assault of evil. **The air of the theatre, the ball-room, the race-course, seem so impregnated with the noxious germs and microbes of evil, that it is perilous for the soul to expose itself to them**, conscious as it is of predisposing bias and weakness.

C. A Senseless Promise (Vs. 22b-23)

1. This foolish promise was given while enflamed by wine and lustful passion. How many foolish and evil decisions are made under such circumstances. Herod was evidently impressed by the fact Herodias, a daughter of high position, would lower herself to the level of an immoral dancer just out of honour for him! His pride was inflated and his lust aroused and he quickly fell into Herodias' trap.
2. "he swore unto her" = Herod put himself under oath

D. A Sickening Petition (Vs. 24-25)

1. The request of the mother (Vs. 24)
2. The cooperation of the daughter (Vs. 25)

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- a. Salome shows no reluctance in carrying out her mother's evil wishes. Both mother and daughter were united in evil.
- b. Her demand was made with haste – 'straightway'; "with haste"; "by and by" (meaning at once, right now in Old English)

IV. The Completion of John's Murder (Vs. 26-29)

A. The Beheading of John (Vs. 26-28)

1. Herod's Decision (Vs. 26)
 - a. "exceeding sorry" = Herod was remorseful over his foolish oath but not repentant.
 - b. "yet for his oath's sake...and their sakes which sat" = Herod's pride restrained him from going back on his word.
 - c. "Is it not marvellous that a man who did not refrain from doing deeds of incest and murder, should be so scrupulous about violating an oath that ought never to have been sworn?" (F.B. Meyer)
2. Herod's Directive (Vs. 27-28)
 - a. The executioner is quickly dispatched to carry out the gruesome deed.
 - b. Imagine the scene:

John lies bound in a prison cell, perhaps even hearing the occasional sound of music and laughter from the party wafting down the dungeon corridors. All of a sudden, the sound of heavy, approaching footsteps greets his ears; they pause outside his door and a key grates as it turns in the lock. The door opens and there stands a brutal Roman guard, the flickering torchlight illuminating his hardened face and the presence of a sword in his hand. What words transpired at that fateful moment we are not told but the deed is carried out swiftly. The sword falls upon the neck of the greatest man every born and he is ushered into eternal glory. The head is unceremoniously placed on a golden platter and taken back to the two women who wait gloating and hissing like two venomous vipers for the gory spectacle.

- c. Maclaren: "Lust dwells hard by hate. Sensual crimes and cruelty are closely akin."

B. The Burial of John (Vs. 29)

1. Josephus stated that the body of John the Baptist over the castle wall, and lay for a time unburied. Whether that is true or not, the disciples of John showed great courage in what they did.
2. If we could have put a plague on John's Tombstone it could have been, "*all things that John spake of this man (Jesus) were true.*" (John 10:41)

Conclusion: Are you repentant or just remorseful over your sin? Herod had the opportunity to repent from his wickedness but he refused and suffered eternally.

What is your attitude towards bold, uncompromising preaching against sin? Do you support or attack the man of God when he stands for righteousness?

Five Loaves & Two Small Fishes

Text: Mark 6:30-44

Introduction:

1. This is the only miracle (apart from the resurrection) that is recorded in all four Gospels. It must therefore be a miracle of great significance. It is not only significant on account of its magnitude, but it is also significant in relation to its timing as it occurred near the end of Jesus Galilean ministry and would form the basis for Christ to challenge the people to receive Him as the bread of life. At this point many turned back from following Him (Jn. 6:66).
2. There are some important lessons to be learned from this parable concerning the Person of Christ as well as the importance of faith in Christian service and ministry.
3. In this sermon we will study this miracle under four headings:

I. The Place of the Miracle (Vs. 30-33)

A. The Context of the Place (Vs. 30-31)

1. The return of the Apostles (Vs. 30)
 - a. The Apostles were sent out in twos by Christ for an important Evangelistic mission.
 - b. They now return and give a detailed report to Christ of that tour.
2. The recommendation of Christ (Vs. 31)
 - a. Much wisdom revealed in Christ's council. Intense periods of Christian service should be followed by short periods of rest in a quiet place in order to recuperate for further ministry.
 - b. The busyness of Christ and the Apostles is highlighted. They couldn't even find time to eat a proper meal.

B. The Characteristics of the Place (Vs. 31-32)

It is described as:

1. A desert place. The word 'desert' often translated wilderness. It was a solitary, uninhabited place. Luke pinpoints it as "*belonging to the city called Bethsaida.*" (Lk. 9:10) "It was a vast open space of field on a hillside on the north-eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee."
(Butler)
2. A coastal place. They had to journey there by boat.
3. A mountain place. John 6:3 records, "*And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there sat with his disciples.*"
4. A grassy place. Mark mentions "green grass" (Vs. 39) and John mentions "much grass" (John 6:10). So, this miracle took place on a grassy mountain slope overlooking the Sea of Galilee.

C. The Crowd in the Place (Vs. 33)

1. They saw Christ (Vs. 33a)

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2. They sought Christ (Vs. 33b)

II. The People for the Miracle (Vs. 34)

A. Christ's Compassion for them (Vs. 34a)

1. The Depth of His Compassion – “moved with compassion”
 - a. Compassion means to feel pity or sympathy. Very strong word in the Greek language. Root word referred to the intestines (heart, lungs, liver etc...). Word translated ‘bowels’ elsewhere. Reference is to the seat of the affections. It means that Christ felt pity and sorrow for the multitudes in His heart, He yearned inside.
 - b. Christ's example of compassion for sinners: Matt. 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 20:34; Mark 1:41, 5:19, 6:34, 8:2; Luke 7:13 (9 references in Gospels)
2. The Discernment of His Compassion – “as sheep not having a shepherd”
 - a. Sheep are vulnerable creatures. Without a shepherd they scatter and become easy pickings for predators. Without a shepherd to feed them they become sickly and malnourished.
 - b. This was how Christ viewed the multitudes. There were many false shepherds in Israel who would mislead and destroy them but He was the Good Shepherd who came to give his life for the sheep. John 10:11 *“I am the good shepherd: **the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.**”* John 10:15 *“...I lay down my life for the sheep.”*

B. Christ's Instruction of them (Vs. 34b)

1. The duration of the instruction – obviously for some hours (Vs. 35a)
2. The theme of the instruction – specifically the “kingdom of God” (Lk. 9:11). Christ was principally concerned for the salvation of their souls.

III. The Proving before the Miracle (Vs. 35-40)

A. The Ignorance of the Disciples (Vs. 35-36)

1. They tried to council the Lord (Vs. 35)
 - a. Here is Jesus, the Lord of glory and they approach Him as if He has forgotten the place, the time and the hunger of the people (Vs. 36b). How often do we wrongly feel that our difficulties have escaped our Lord's attention!
 - b. Perhaps there was a measure of exasperation and frustration on the part of the disciples. After all, they had come all this way to get a rest and now they were surrounded with people again!
2. They tried to command the Lord (Vs. 36)

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- a. “send them away” = the disciples’ solution to the problem was to send the people away! This was not the only time they thought this was the best approach.
- b. Challenge: How often do we waste time **telling** the Lord what we think He should do when we find ourselves in a challenging place in Christian service rather than **asking** Him what He would have us do! The Lord in His Omniscience already had a plan as to what He was going to do! (See John 6:6)

B. The Instruction to the Disciples (Vs. 37-40)

1. The Requirement of the Lord (Vs. 37)
 - a. “Give ye them to eat” = the Lord puts the problem back on the disciples.
 - i. John 6:5-6 *“When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? **And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.**”*
 - ii. The Lord knew what He was going to do the whole time, but He used the occasion to test the faith of the disciples and force them to realize they had no human solution to the problem.
 - b. “Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread?” = a penny (denarius) was the ordinary pay for a day’s work in the vineyard (Matt. 20:2). This would represent about 8 months wages for a common workingman and would be way beyond the reach of the disciples. Especially considering the fact they had just returned from their Evangelistic tour where Christ had commanded them to not take any money with them (Vs. 8)!
 - c. Principle: The Lord requires the impossible from us; not that we may be cast upon our own resources but that we may learn to rely upon His Divine Power. We have to learn to come to the end of ourselves and let Christ be our live.
2. The Resources for the Lord (Vs. 38)
 - a. John’s account reveals that the lunch was donated by a young boy found by Andrew (John 6:8-9). Andrew comments “...but what are they among so many.” “The disciples had mathematics in mind; the Lord had a miracle in mind!” (Phillips) They forgot to include Christ in the equation.
 - b. Maclaren writes, “Calculations which leave out Christ’s power are not quite conclusive...Five loaves and two fishes, plus Jesus Christ, come to a good deal more than two hundred pennyworth of bread.”
 - c. Principle: Christ asks us to place at His disposal **what we have, not what we don’t have**. So often we spend our whole time focusing on what we DON’T have and fail to simply give God

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what we DO have. “Jesus uses our resources for the basis of His wonders.” (Maclaren)

3. The Readiness for the Lord (Vs. 39-40)
 - a. We note the parallel truths of God’s Divine Power and human responsibility in this account. Christ will do the miracle, but the disciples’ job is to prepare for it. This is the obedience of faith.
 - b. An orderly seating arrangement would facilitate distribution of the food as well as keep Christ as the focal point.

IV. The Performance of the Miracle (Vs. 41-43)

A. The Prayer before the Miracle (Vs. 41a)

1. The posture of Christ’s prayer – “looked up to heaven” Conveys the dependence of Christ as perfect man upon the Heavenly Father to work through Him.
2. The content of Christ’s prayer – “and blessed” John says he “gave thanks”. Prayer before a meal is a Scriptural practice.

B. The Power of the Miracle (Vs. 41b)

1. “brake the loaves and gave” = the word ‘gave’ is the imperfect tense meaning he gave and kept on giving. “The miracle of multiplying by dividing and of adding by subtracting began.” (Phillips)
2. Illustration: Like the widow’s handful of flour and little oil that didn’t run out for many days (1 Kings 17:8-16), the bread and fish kept coming from the hands of Christ till all were abundantly fed.
3. Christ’s power as the Creator demonstrated through this miracle as He brought into existence literal food that didn’t exist previously. The power of Christ is inexhaustible. He can give and give and give of His power and yet His power is not diminished. “He bestows and is none the poorer. The streams flow from the golden vase, and, after all outpouring, it is brimful.” (Maclaren)

C. The Principle of the Miracle (Vs. 41b-42; John 6:35)

1. There was a higher truth this miracle was meant to convey that went beyond the physical needs of the people. This miracle would set the stage for Christ to challenge this same group of people concerning their spiritual need to receive Him (Christ) as the bread of life.
2. John 6:35 “*And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.***”
3. John 6:47-48 “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. **I am that bread of life.***”
4. John 6:51 “***I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.***”
5. Illustration: Jesus used a similar analogy with the woman of

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Samaria where He likes Himself to living water (John 4:14)

D. The Plenty of the Miracle (Vs. 42-44)

1. They were filled (Vs. 42) What a picture of the Gospel! Only the Lord Jesus truly satisfies. “O taste and see that the LORD is good...” (Ps. 34:8)
2. There were fragments (Vs. 43) The abundance of the miracle didn't negate the need for the disciples to prudently use what had been provided.
3. There were five thousand (Vs. 44) Matt. 14:21 adds “beside women and children” so this crowd could have been somewhere in the order of 20,000 people!

Conclusion:

1. To the unsaved – have you received Jesus Christ who is the bread of life?
2. To the saved – are you serving in faith and dependence upon Christ?

When Stormy Winds Blow

Text: Mark 6:45-56

Introduction:

1. Context: Christ has just performed the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand (Vs. 32-44). The crowd responds enthusiastically and tries to make Christ a king – *“When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.”* (John 6:15) It is likely that the disciples shared the Messianic hopes of the people. Christ responds by sending away the people and the disciples while He goes into a mountain to pray.
2. This is the second storm in which the disciples find themselves in the will of God (See Mk. 4:35-41). In the first storm they struggled even with Christ’s presence in the boat with them. Now they will face this next storm without even Him physically present in the boat.
3. There are both theological and practical lessons we can learn from this account. Theologically we learn much about the Person of Christ through the amazing miracles He performs. Practically we learn much about the principles that will sustain us when going through trials.
4. In this sermon we will note 7 truths that will help us as we go through storms/trials in our lives.

When stormy winds blow, we need to remember...

I. His Providence Placed me in the Storm (Vs. 45, 47-48a)

A. The Constraint of the Command (Vs. 45)

1. They were forcefully compelled: The word ‘constrained’ means “to force, insist, urge, to compel.” Implies there was a measure of reluctance on the part of the Apostles and a measure of urgency on the part of the Lord Jesus.
2. They were purposefully compelled: There was a purpose behind this command. From what John 6:15 reveals, it was likely connected with the Lord stopping the attempt of the crowd to crown Him as a political Messiah. There was also a heart problem developing in His disciples that needed to be addressed.

B. The Consequence of the Command (Vs. 47-48a)

1. The timing of the storm (Vs. 47)
 - a. “when the evening was come” = the “second or late evening, six p.m. at this season or sunset on.” (Robertson) John notes that “it was now dark” (Jn. 6:17). Storms often come in the night seasons of life.

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- b. “the ship was in the midst of the sea” = they had reached the half way point
- 2. The toiling in the storm (Vs. 48a)
 - a. The reason – consider the magnitude of the storm
 - i. Wind – this wind was against them (head wind) and is described in John’s account as “a great wind” (Jn. 6:18)
 - ii. Waves – Matthew describes the ship as being “tossed with waves” (Matt. 14:24) and John records “the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew” (Jn. 6:18)
 - b. The rowing – the disciples tried their best in the storm
 - i. ‘toiling’ = literally means “tortured”. The same Greek word is translated ‘torment’ 8 times in the N.T. and ‘pain’ once. “The storm was causing them grievous physical, emotional and mental stress.” (Hiebert)
 - ii. To the disciples’ credit, they didn’t turn back but kept the boat pointed in the direction of God’s will. It would have been easier to turn around and with the wind behind them, run back to shore!

II. His Prayers Sustain me in the Storm (Vs. 46, 48a)

A. The Offering of His Prayers (Vs. 46)

- 1. “a mountain” = seemingly Christ loved to resort to mountains in which to pray. Christ prayed from the vantage point of the mountain.
- 2. What a picture of the intercessory ministry of the Lord Jesus.
 - a. *“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, **who also maketh intercession for us.**”* (Rom. 8:34)
 - b. *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, **seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.**”* (Heb. 7:25)
 - c. Dear believer, whatever trial you are going through at this time, be assured that your Great High Priest and Saviour Jesus Christ is interceding for you in accordance with the perfect will of God.

B. The Omniscience of His Prayers (Vs. 48a)

- 1. “And he saw them” = Christ had perfect, supernatural knowledge of exactly what the disciples were going through. He knew exactly where they were and what was happening. “They were the definite objects of His consideration.” (Hiebert)
- 2. The delay in Christ’s deliverance of the disciples was in accordance with His perfect wisdom and not because of any lack of power on His part.

III. His Presence Meets me in the Storm (Vs. 48)

A. The Moment of His Coming (Vs. 48b)

1. The time: “the fourth watch of the night” = the Romans divided the night into 4 watches. The first was from 6 to 9pm; the second, from 9 to 12pm; the third from 12pm to 3am; and the fourth, from 3 to 6am. (JM) This means the disciples had been rowing somewhere between 9 to 12 hours!
2. The distance: “So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs” (Jn. 6:21) A ‘furlong’ was about 606 feet (202m) so this means they had travelled between 5 and 6 kms. A long way to row with a stiff head wind!
3. Principle: Christ comes to our aid at just the right time and place. He is never early, never late but always right on time in accordance with His perfect will for our lives.

B. The Miracle of His Coming (Vs. 48c)

1. “he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea” = Christ’s power and Deity demonstrated majestically. Job, referring to God, said, “*Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.*” (Job 9:8) It’s not hard to believe this miracle happened when you realize WHO Christ is! He Created the wind and the waves!
2. “The storm that was over their heads was under His feet!” The situation you face may seem impossible but it is not beyond our Saviour’s control.
3. G. Campbell Morgan: “It is too dark for you to see Him yet, but He is coming. He cannot leave you alone to perish. And mark this, He is coming over the very waves you are most afraid of. The very waves that threaten to buffet and break you to pieces are the pavement for His blessed feet.”

IV. His Precepts Comfort me in the Storm (Vs. 49-50)

A. The Confusion of the Disciples (Vs. 49-50a)

1. They erred mentally – “they supposed”
 - a. ‘supposed’ = means to “imagine as true” (Webster). The same Greek word is translated ‘think’ 33 times in the N.T. There was a problem in the disciples thinking during the storm. Their perceptions were not reality! They made an error in judgment.
 - b. “a spirit” = our word ‘phantom’ comes from the Greek word. They thought they were seeing an apparition. But in reality, it was their blessed Saviour!
 - c. Challenge: How often do we fail to discern the Saviour in our storms? “How often in our troubles we fail to discern the times and situations correctly but see dreadful “phantoms” in our

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troubles when it is Christ working for us. Like the disciples, there is so much flesh in us compared to our faith.” (Butler)

- d. We need to be aware that often our thoughts are in error when we are in the midst of a grievous storm. Therefore, let us be more careful to listen for His voice speaking above the noise of the wind and the waves than the thrashing of our own minds.
2. They erred emotionally – they “cried out”
 - a. “cried out” = means to scream in terror. These strong, tough men were seriously frightened!
 - b. “were troubled” = to throw into a panic, strike with dread (JM)
 - c. The error in their emotions was a direct product of the error in their thinking.

B. The Consolation of the Lord (Vs. 50b)

1. The Exhortation – “be of good cheer...be not afraid”
 - a. Be Joyful – *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.”* (Phil. 4:4)
 - b. Don’t Be Fearful – how often in the Bible to we read the phrase “fear not”. Our Heavenly Father tells us again and again “don’t be afraid” because we are so prone to fear. But God wants us to learn to respond to our storms with faith rather than fear.
 - c. Principle: The Word of God brings comfort to us in our storms. “Christ’s words removed fear and revealed God. The Word of God quietens our fears.” (Butler)
2. The Revelation – “it is I”
 - a. The words are literally “I AM” (ego eimi) which is a title of Jehovah God in the O.T. (Ex. 3:14). What a revelation of Christ’s absolute Deity. Jesus Christ is God, the great I am!
 - b. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35, 48, 51); “I am the light of the world” (Jn. 8:12;9:5); “I am the door” (Jn. 10:7,9); “I am the good shepherd” (Jn. 10:11,14); “I am the resurrection and the life” (Jn. 11:25); “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6); “I am the true vine” (Jn. 15:1, 5).
 - c. At least 12 times in the Gospels Christ proclaims Himself as the “I am”
 - i. “I am he” – 7 times in John’s Gospel
 - ii. “it is I” – 4 times in the Gospels
 - iii. John 8:58 *“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”*
 - iv. Illustration: The mob that came to arrest Jesus in the garden were knocked to the ground when Jesus spoke those two words, “I am” (John 18:4-6).
 - d. Note: Between the command to “be of good cheer” and “be not afraid” stands Jesus, the great I AM. Without Jesus as our

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complete sufficiency those commands are completely impossible.

3. John Phillips summarises these three sayings of Christ as follows: “be of good cheer” was a word to their emotions; “it is I” a word to their minds and “be not afraid” a word to their wills.

V. His Power Enables me in the Storm (Matt. 14:28-31)

A. The Faith of Peter (Vs. 28-29)

1. The action of his faith (Vs. 28)
 - a. Peter could be impulsive but on the positive side he was willing to step out of the boat if God was in it!
 - b. Staying within the apparent safety of the boat may seem like the more favourable option but you will miss out on experiencing the power of God.
2. The revelation for his faith (Vs. 29)
 - a. Without that one word ‘come’ it would have been presumption on the part of Peter to step out of the boat. But he could step out with confidence based on that one Word from the lips of Christ.
 - b. Our steps of faith are not to be based on our feelings but on the Revelation of God’s Word.

B. The Failure of Peter (Vs. 30)

1. Something happened to Peter’s focus (Vs. 30a) Peter turned his eyes from the Lord to the circumstances around him. The fact we have passed the first hurdle of stepping out of the boat doesn’t mean that there won’t be further tests along the way.
2. Something happened to Peter’s faith (Vs. 30b) Peter’s faith faltered when he changed his focus.
3. Something happened to footing (Vs. 30c)

C. The Favour of Peter (Vs. 31)

1. Jesus heard Peter – “he cried...And immediately Jesus”
2. Jesus held Peter – “Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him”
3. Jesus helped Peter – “O thou of little faith”
4. Note: Thank God for His grace and patience with us as we falter and fall in our walk of faith.

VI. His Peace Calms me in the Storm (Vs. 51)

A. He Delivers in the Storm (Vs. 51)

1. The storm finishes according to the Lord’s will.
2. Psalm 89:9 *“Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.”*
3. Christ’s Presence brings peace.

B. He Delivers from the Storm (Jn. 6:21)

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1. “Then they willingly received him into the ship: and **immediately** the ship was at the land wither they went.” (Jn. 6:21)
2. “they were sore amazed...” = the disciples responded with amazement which in turn turned to worship. “Then they that were in the ship came and **worshipped** him, saying, Of a truth **thou art the Son of God.**” (Matt. 14:33)

VII. His Purging Refines me in the Storm (Vs. 52)

Storms have a way of bringing spiritual blind spots in our lives to the surface. This is a part of God’s design in the storms as we are often unaware these blind spots even exist. The disciples had a two-fold problem:

A. A Head Problem (Vs. 52a)

1. “they considered not” = the word is “to set or bring together, in the mind, thus to understand.” The Greek word is translated ‘understand’ (24 times).
 - a. They should have reasoned that if our Lord had the supernatural power to feed five thousand people by multiplying five loaves and two fish, He could also exert that supernatural power to quiet the wind, still the sea, and walk on the surface of the water.” (Wuest)
 - b. They had failed to give proper attention and thought to the previous miracle they had just experienced. “They had not grasped the significance of the miracle that afternoon.” (Hiebert)

B. A Heart Problem (Vs. 52b)

1. Their heart problem was the source of their head problem.
2. ‘hardened’ = calloused. Same word translated ‘blind’ 2 times in the N.T. “They were in a state of being spiritually unperceptive.” (Hiebert) Their hearts had hardened in the face of one of Christ’s most significant miracles! Perhaps this was because Christ’s decision in relation to the Messianic hopes of the multitude was contrary to their thinking? Such is the insidious propensity of our human hearts.
3. “The disciples weren’t gospel hardened; they were glory hardened!” (Phillips)

Conclusion: Are you going through a trial? A storm in the will of God? Are you exercising faith or are you filled with fear? Are you discerning the movements of the Saviour in your trial or are you being deceived in your own thinking that some dreadful phantom is upon you?

Jesus' Portrait of Man's Wicked Heart

Text: Mark 7:1-23

Introduction:

1. Context: The demonstration of the miracle working power of Christ (Mk. 6:56). The Lord's ministry is progressing, moving forward and expanding in its influence.
2. Now the religious leaders re-enter the scene, sending a special delegation from Jerusalem, the capital city of legalistic Judaism. The last time we encountered the scribes and pharisees in Mark was in chapter 3.
3. In the chapter before us, truth and tradition will again collide, giving occasion for our Lord's powerful declaration concerning the depravity of the human heart.
4. For this message, we will divide our text into three sections:

Consider firstly...

I. The Traditions of the Opposers (Vs. 1-5)

The word 'tradition' occurs 5 times in this section (Vs. 3, 5, 8, 9, & 13)

A. The Criticism based on their Traditions (Vs. 1-2)

1. Their spirit (1)
 - a. 'then' = when was then?! Look at Vs. 56 of the previous chapter. When the work of God is going forward, opposition will be aroused.
 - b. "came together...from Jerusalem" = the purpose of this delegation was to oppose the ministry of Christ.
2. Their surveillance (2)
 - a. "they saw" = they were looking for an occasion to oppose the Lord. "The Lord and His disciples were under intrusive surveillance." (Hiebert)
 - b. "unwashed hands" = "The charge was not that the disciples were eating with grimy hands but that they had not cleansed their hands with the proper rite of purification." (Hiebert) "The objection raised was on ceremonial, not sanitary grounds" (Robertson).
 - c. "they found" = their critical eyes found something with which they thought they could discredit the Saviour. What did they find? They found the harried, busy disciples having a bite to eat on the run without following the prescribed ceremonial washing of the hands.

B. The Commentary about their Traditions (Vs. 3-4)

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Mark explains the Jewish customs in these verses for the benefit of his mainly Gentile audience (the Romans). Three examples of washing traditions are outlined:

1. Hand Washing (Vs. 3)
 - a. “all the Jews” = influence of the Pharisees was widespread
 - b. “tradition of the elders” = the oral laws passed down from generation to generation. To add weight to these oral laws, the claim was sometimes made that God gave them to Moses who then passed them on orally to the elders. The motive behind these traditions was to build a so called “fence around the law” to make sure they did not transgress.
2. Body Washing (Vs. 3a)
 - a. ‘wash’ = this word ‘wash’ is from the Greek word ‘baptizo’ and means “to dip or immerse”.
 - b. It is a reference to the ritual bathing as prescribed by Jewish Law.
3. Vessel Washing (Vs. 3b) (30 chapters in the Mishnah about this)
4. Note: Most man-made religions have some sort of ritual washing or water ceremony as a core part of their tradition. Man senses his need for cleansing but his need is not to be washed in water but washed in the blood!

C. The Confrontation about their Traditions (Vs. 5)

1. ‘walk’ = word used in the Hebrew sense of living or conducting one’s life (Linguistic Key)
2. “according to” = they used their tradition as the standard for measuring the conduct of the disciples (Hiebert)

II. The Truth about the Opposers (Vs. 6-13)

Christ unmask these religious fakes for who they really are. Christ exposes...

A. The Root of their Corruption (Vs. 6-8)

1. The quotation from the Scriptures (Vs. 6-7)
 - a. ‘well’ = excellently. Describes the accuracy of Isaiah’s prediction (Wuest) These religious leaders fit Isaiah’s description to the letter
 - b. “Esaias prophesied of you” = quotation from Isaiah 29:13
 - c. ‘hypocrites’ = the word means actor, stage player. A man who assumes an identity and character different from what he really is (Hiebert). The word literally means “one who speaks from under a mask” and came from the theatre where the actors wore masks to portray a character. (e.g. imagine an actor dressed up like a doctor for a part. It is just an act as he is not a doctor in real life. It is not his real identity)

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- d. “honoureth me with their lips” = they paid lip service to God
- e. “heart is far from me” = the word ‘far’ has the idea of “far, far away!” The same word is translated “a great way off” (Lk. 14:32). It pictures them as “actively holding their heart at a great distance from God.” (Hiebert)
- f. “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” = they elevated their own traditions to the same level as the Word of God
- g. Illustration: The Roman Catholic Church and tradition

“If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Sixth Session, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 12).

“Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal ... Thus, it comes about that the Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Hence, both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal feelings of devotion and reverence” (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Chap. 2, 9, p. 682).

- 2. The application from the Saviour (Vs. 8)
 - a. “laying aside” = to leave or forsake. Christ exposes them further. They had done more than just add to the truth. They had deserted the truth in favour of traditions of their own making.
 - b. “ye hold” = has the idea of a powerful grip on something. Here it means to keep carefully and faithfully. (Wuest)

B. The Fruit of their Corruption (Vs. 9-13)

- 1. The assertion of the Lord (Vs. 9)
 - a. “full well” = excellently, finely. “It was biting sarcasm that cut to the bone.” (Robertson)
 - b. “reject...that ye may keep” = reveals that truth and human tradition cannot exist side by side. Its either truth or tradition and where tradition is held to, the truth will ultimately be rejected.
- 2. The illustration from the Lord (Vs. 10-12)
 - a. “For Moses said...But ye say” = Christ gives a specific example as evidence of the assertion made in the previous verse
 - b. “It is Corban” = Hebrew word meaning ‘gift’
 - 1. Wuest explains: “The Hebrew word refers to a gift or offering to God. The rabbis allowed the individual to keep whatever money should have been given by the son for the support of his parents, if he would declare it as a gift to God. He could keep the money and by merely speaking the word, justify his withholding it from his parents. This was in defiance of God’s command by which a son is required to honour his parents by providing for their necessities where they were in need.”

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2. Hiebert explains: “In an argument or fit of anger, the son might declare, “that wherewith thou mightiest be profited from me is Corban!” When the son had once pronounced this vow concerning that from which the parents had rightly expected support, it was henceforth to be regarded as consecrated and not used for the support of the parents. This view was based on the proposition that what has been devoted to God is holy and cannot be used for secular purposes.”
3. The conclusion of the Lord (Vs. 13)
 1. “make of none effect” = to cancel, render null and void, to invalidate. Often used of annulling wills and contracts (Key). Through their tradition they deprived the Word of God of its “force and authority” (Strong’s). According to A.T. Robertson, some sons paid bribes to the religious leaders to come up with such exceptions.
 2. “many such like things do ye” = the example given was only a sample of many other similar things

III. The Teaching because of the Opposers (Vs. 14-23)

Our Lord’s confrontation with the religious leaders formed a springboard to teach on the true source of spiritual defilement.

A. The Declaration to the Multitude (Vs. 14-16)

1. Christ’s call to the people (Vs. 14)
 - a. Christ uses the opportunity to expose the religious leaders before the people.
 - b. “Hearken unto me” = Christ calls for a definite and careful consideration of the statement of truth He is about to make
2. Christ’s counsel to the people (Vs. 15)

Christ declares the maxim that He will expand upon later with His disciples.

 - a. “there is nothing from without” = external, material things such as food to not defile one spiritually or morally
 - b. “the things which come out of him” = the source of man’s defilement is within himself
3. Christ’s charge to the people (Vs. 16)

B. The Discipling of the Men (Vs. 17-23)

1. Christ challenges their spiritual perception (Vs. 17-19)
 - a. Their request (17)
 - b. Christ’s rebuke (18-19)
2. Christ explains the spiritual principle (Vs. 20-23)
 - a. The source of man’s corruption (Vs. 20-21a; 23) Man is the fountain of his own uncleanness.
 - b. The specifics of man’s corruption (Vs. 21b-22) Christ outlines a list of 13 ugly attributes of man’s depravity:

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1. “evil thoughts” = consideration, thought, reasoning. “Not merely evil thoughts but evil devisings which issue in degraded acts and vices now mentioned.” (Taylor) It is “the thinking of a man deliberating with himself, inward reasoning.” (Strongs) “These evil thoughts come from the heart and lead to the dreadful list here given.” (Robertson) (See Prov. 23:7)
2. “adulteries” = the breaking of marriage vows
3. “fornications” = immorality, especially of the unmarried
4. ‘murders’ = taking of another’s life (e.g. what’s reported on the news, abortion)
Note: It is of interest that the first three specific sins mentioned have to do with immorality and violence. Mankind particularly expresses his depraved heart in these areas (e.g. the pre-flood world).
5. ‘thefts’ = stealing
6. ‘covetousness’ = craze for more and more (Robertson). Word is plural in number and “indicates the various ways in which this spirit expresses itself in selfish grasping for self-gratification.” (Hiebert)
7. ‘wickedness’ = evil, depravity. This word also plural.
8. ‘deceit’ = the root word contains the underlying thought to lure or bait. Speaks of cunning, trickery, dishonesty and guile. It includes outright lies but extends beyond to the more sophisticated and clever manipulations for personal gain. “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.” (Ps. 58:3)
9. ‘lasciviousness’ = unbridled lust; unrestrained sex instinct
10. “an evil eye” = a Hebrew expression denoting an envious, jealous or grudging attitude.
11. ‘blasphemy’ = evil speaking, injurious speech against God or man. It is “speech injurious to another’s good name” (Key). Wuest refers to it as “malicious misrepresentation”.
12. ‘pride’ = root meaning is to “show oneself above others”. “It pictures an individual who has a swollen opinion of himself, exalting himself above others, whom he regards with scornful contempt.” (Hiebert)
13. ‘foolishness’ = folly. In this context primarily a moral rather than an intellectual problem.

Conclusion: Only Christ’s power can cleanse and change a sinful heart (Ez. 36:25-26)

Jesus Doeth All Things Well

Text: Mark 7:24-37

Introduction:

1. The Context: Christ leaves hometown Capernaum for non-Jewish territory. “This trip marked the first time during His ministry that Jesus actually penetrated recognized pagan territory. It foreshadowed the extension of the Gospel to the Gentile world.” (Hiebert) Christ journeyed to the ‘borders’ (boundaries, region, district, territory) of Tyre and Sidon situated to the northwest of Galilee and refers to the Gentile territory of ancient Phoenicia, which today is located in southern Lebanon. Tyre and Sidon were coastal cities, located about 20 miles (32 kms) apart along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Christ is now roughly 35 miles (56 kms) northwest of Capernaum.
2. The Content: Christ performs two miracles of healing. Both are rich in instruction for both the saved and the lost.
3. In this message, we will study these two miracles of healing in turn.

Consider firstly...

I. Christ’s Healing of a Demon possessed Girl (Vs. 24-30)

This troubled girl received healing largely on account of her mother’s unshakable faith. Look at four truths about her faith:

A. The Prompting of Her Faith (Vs. 25)

1. She had a grievous problem (Vs. 25a; 26a)
 - a. A parental problem (Vs. 25a)
 - i. “young daughter” = little daughter. The age bracket of the child identified. She was a young child. A family trial is sometimes used of God to draw the parent to saving faith in Christ.
 - ii. “an unclean spirit” = her daughter was possessed of an evil spirit. Matthew adds that she was “grievously vexed” by the devil. Satan’s true murderous and cruel character unmasked in his willingness and desire to possess and damage even little children.
 - iii. Note: This woman was from a pagan, idol worshipping area and it is therefore of no surprise that in that context her daughter was vulnerable to demon possession.
 - b. A personal problem (Vs. 26a)
 - i. Her nationality – she is described as “a Greek”. The title ‘Greek’ identifies her as a Gentile. It probably also implies she adhered to Greek religion, language and culture. Matthew describes her as “a woman of Canaan” (Matt.

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15:22) meaning she was a descendent of the Canaanites the ancient enemies of the Israelites.

- ii. Her locality - the word 'Syrophenician' identifies the geographical area.
- iii. Her religiosity – as a Gentile woman raised in an area steeped in pagan idolatry, it is safe to assume she was raised as an idol worshipper.
- iv. Eph. 2:11-13 *“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”*

2. She heard of a Great Saviour (Vs. 25b)
 - a. “heard of him” = good news of Christ reached her ears and faith was stirred. Romans 10:17 says, *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*
 - b. There were others from this region who had come into contact with Christ’s ministry in Galilee previously and they were likely the ones who informed this lady about Christ (See Mark 3:7-8).

B. The Plea of her Faith (Vs. 26)

1. The perception of her plea – “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David” (Matt. 15:22) She clearly understood that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah. Saving faith involves BOTH the Person AND work of Christ.
2. The posture of her plea – “came and fell at his feet”. Matthew uses the word ‘worshipped’ (Matt. 15:25)
3. The passion of her plea – “she besought him” Matt. 15:25 “...Lord, help me”
4. The point of her plea – “that he would cast forth the devil”

C. The Persistence of her Faith (Vs. 27-28)

This woman is a great example of importunate prayer. She kept on asking, seeking and knocking until the answer came.

1. Her test from the Lord (Vs. 27) The reason for Christ’s statement was twofold:
 - a. There was a dispensational reason – at this time Christ’s priority was to the nation of Israel. *“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* (Matt. 15:24) He uses the word ‘first’ not the word ‘only’. We know our Lord came to die for all men, but His chosen people were to first be offered the opportunity to repent and receive Him as Lord and Saviour (See Rom. 1:16).

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- b. There was a practical reason – our Lord was clearly testing and refining this woman’s faith, something he often did when people sought him (e.g. the rich young ruler).
- 2. Her triumph with the Lord (Vs. 28-29)
 - a. “Yes, Lord” = the heart attitude of one who will prevail with God. She accepts the humbling position the Lord gives her in the proverb. This attitude essential for effectual prayer. We say “yes” to the Lord even if our understanding of His wisdom is limited.
 - b. “yet” = coupled with her spirit of submission is humble persistence. Matthew’s account records 3 separate appeals from this lady. She must have the answer to her request at all costs. She knew without a doubt that Christ had the power to meet her need.
 - c. Andrew Murray: “The blessing of such persevering prayer is unspeakable. There is nothing so heart-searching as the prayer of faith. It teaches you to discover and confess, and give up everything that hinders the coming of the blessing; everything there may be not in accordance with the Father’s will. It leads to closer fellowship with Him who alone can teach to pray, to a more entire surrender to draw nigh under no covering but that of the blood, and the Spirit.”
 - d. Maclaren: “What a constellation of graces sparkles in her ready reply! There is humility in accepting the place He gives her; insight in seeing at once a new plea in what might have sent her away despairing; persistence in pleading; confidence that he can grant her request and that He would gladly do so.”
 - e. “for this saying go thy way” = Matthew records our Lords words as “O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt” This is a remarkable commendation from the Lord. Only twice did Christ call someone’s faith ‘great’. The other was the Roman centurion (Matt. 8:10). In both cases, they were Gentiles. Great faith brings great answers to prayer!

D. The Profit of her Faith (Vs. 29-30)

- 1. The promise of Christ (Vs. 29)
 - a. “the devil is gone out” = perf. Tense in the Greek signifying a permanent change.
 - b. Christ had already answered her request before He confirmed it with her verbally.
- 2. The peace of Christ (Vs. 30)
 - a. “to her house” = what a transformation took place in this home by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. “she found the devil gone out” = the evil spirit was gone and now Christ’s presence filled the void.

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- c. “her daughter laid upon the bed” = a state of peaceful repose in contrast to her former possessed state. (Hiebert)

Consider secondly...

II. Christ’s Healing of a Deaf & Dumb Man (Vs. 31-37)

A. His Conveying to the Lord (Vs. 32)

1. Their compassion for this man – “they bring unto him one that was deaf”
 - a. Matthew 15:29-31 makes it clear there were multiple people healed during this time – the lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others. Mark focuses upon this one man as an example.
 - b. In Bible times, people with these sorts of conditions were often looked down upon as if they were that way on account of sin and therefore under God’s displeasure.
 - c. These men were moved beyond prejudice by compassion for this man’s need.
2. Their supplication for this man – “they beseech him”
 - a. ‘beseech’ = to beg, intreat. They sought the Lord’s healing touch for this needy man.
 - b. Challenge: What a challenge to us in the area of soul-winning! We cannot save the sinner. But we can seek to point them to Christ and to pray earnestly for their salvation.

B. His Condition for the Lord (Vs. 32)

1. He was deaf – he could not hear. What a picture of the lost sinner whose ears are only able to comprehend natural things.
2. He was dumb – he had an impediment in his speech. This was on account of his hearing problem. Because he could not hear, he could not speak properly. So with the lost sinner, their tongues can only speak the foolishness of this world.

C. His Cure by the Lord (Vs. 33-35)

1. The Lord’s Method (Vs. 33-34)

Christ’s actions preceding the cure appear to be tailored to the man’s unique condition. There are 7 steps the Lord takes...

 - a. He took him aside from the multitude – his dealing with the man was personal. He removed him from the distraction of the crowd.
 - b. He put his fingers into his ears – to draw attention to the area that required healing and to quicken the man’s faith. He used sign language.
 - c. He spit – to draw attention to the tongue and mouth. “It conveyed the thought that the power to deal with them came from Jesus.” (Hiebert)
 - d. He touched his tongue – to draw attention to the area of need

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- e. He looked up to heaven – a common prayer posture of the Lord indicating His dependence on the Heavenly Father to do the miracle through Him. It would also draw the man's attention to the Divine Source of the healing.
 - f. He sighed – word means 'groaned'. Reveals His deep emotional sympathy and compassion for the man. Twice in Mark's Gospel it is recorded that Christ sighed (see also Mk. 8:12). Oh, the wonder of the Saviour's sighs for sinners! What infinite love and compassion is within our Saviour's heart for the lost.
 - g. He said to him "Eph-pha-tha" – a simple Aramaic word that this man could likely lip read. Mark quickly interprets the meaning for us, "Be opened". Romans 10:17 says, "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" Observe the sequence in the verse. Faith is a result of hearing and hearing is produced by the Word of God. What power there is in the Gospel to open the ears to the truth!
2. The Lord's Miracle (Vs. 35)
 - a. An immediate transformation in his faculty of hearing
 - b. An immediate transformation in his faculty of speech
 - c. J.C. Ryle: "Here we are meant to see our Lord's power to heal the spiritually deaf. He can give the chief of sinners a hearing ear...Here also we are meant to see our Lord's power to heal the spiritually dumb. He can teach the hardest of transgressors to call upon God. He can put a new song in the mouth of him whose talk was once only of this world. He can make the vilest of men speak of spiritual things, and testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

D. His Command from the Lord (Vs. 36-37)

1. The requirement – to not spread the news. This seems to contradict other clear Scriptures that command us to go and tell. The context brings clarity to this. Christ was seeking to discourage the tendency of the crowd to respond to miracles like this with attempting to make Him a political Messiah. Christ also discouraged miracle made converts. What a contrast to the modern "faith healers" who advertise and promote their so called "healings".
2. The response – the more He commanded them the more they published it. There was zeal and excitement which was admirable but it wasn't exercised within the realm of obedience. That aside, their testimony of Christ was true – "He hath done all things well".

Conclusion:

1. Has your life been transformed by the power of Christ?
2. Are we being faithful in prayer as believers despite the obstacles?
3. Are we seeking to bring others to Christ for salvation?

Beware of Moral & Doctrinal Leaven

Text: Mark 8:1-21

Introduction:

1. The Context: Christ has left hometown Capernaum for non-Jewish territory. “This trip marked the first time during His ministry that Jesus actually penetrated recognized pagan territory. It foreshadowed the extension of the Gospel to the Gentile world.” (Hiebert) He is now in the region of Decapolis, where He had healed the Gadarene demoniac previously. Matthew records, “And Jesus departed from thence, and came night unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And **great multitudes came unto him**, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them:” (Matt. 15:29-30).
2. The Content: Christ performs a second miracle of multiplication with the feeding of the 4,000 (plus women and children). Through this miracle, Christ now demonstrates that He is also the bread of life for the Gentiles. Following this miracle, Christ’s Messianic claims are challenged by the religious leaders which leads to Christ’s warning of the disciples concerning the danger of their teachings and practices.
3. The text naturally divides into three sections:

Consider firstly...

I. The Compassion of the Lord (Vs. 1-9)

A. The Prompting of His Compassion (Vs. 1-3)

1. “nothing to eat” = the multitude had a great need
2. “I have compassion” = Christ’s compassion highlighted a number of times by the Gospel writers but this is the only time recorded where Christ uses the word of Himself (Matt. 15:32). The word compassion is from a word that refers to “the inner parts.” The phrase “my heart goes out to them” conveys the sentiment.
3. Christ knew what it was to suffer hunger (Matt. 4:2) and so could identify with human suffering and need.
4. Note: Christ satisfied physical hunger for those who had first demonstrated spiritual hunger. This crowd had been with Christ for three days, hearing His words and watching His miracles.

B. The Proving of His Disciples (Vs. 4)

1. The Confrontation of the Disciples (Vs. 1-3)
 - a. “Jesus called his disciples unto him” = Our Lord was intent on training the twelve so He used this opportunity to test them. Christ could accomplish His work without us but He chooses to

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involve us in what He is doing that we might experience the joy and privilege of service.

- b. Christ used the previous feeding miracle to the same end John 6:5-6 “*When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? **And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.***”

2. The Consternation of the Disciples (Vs. 4)

- a. “from whence can a man satisfy these men” = the answer is there is NO man but the Son of Man!
- b. Our first response to a challenge like this tends to be to look to ourselves to try and find the resources there to meet the need.
- c. At first glance, we find the reply of the disciples incredulous given the fact they had only recently witnessed the miraculous feeding of the 5,000. However, if we pause for a moment, we will see ourselves mirrored in the behaviour of the Apostles. How often do we see God move mightily on our behalf only to doubt Him again when confronted with the next challenge.
- d. Hiebert: “It is a common observation that believers frequently forget God’s amazing dealings with them in the past when confronted with some new crisis.”

C. The Performing of His Miracle (Vs. 5-9)

1. The materials for the miracle (Vs. 5)

- a. “how many loaves have ye?” = Christ turns their attention to the resources they had. Rather than creating something out of nothing, our Lord chose to take the little the disciples had and use that for His miracle.
- b. This is often the way God works and He does it for our benefit and for His glory. We have the privilege of being “labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9)
- c. Challenge: Place the little you have at God’s disposal!

2. The method of the miracle (Vs. 6-7)

- a. The preparation of faith – he had them sit down.
- b. The participation of faith – he involved the disciples. They did no miracle but they had the privilege of being vessels to receive bread at the hands of Christ and pass it on to needy souls.

3. The marvel of the miracle (Vs. 8)

- a. There was satisfaction – Christ can satisfy physical hunger but most importantly, He can satisfy spiritual hunger. “*And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.***” (John 6:35)
- b. There was a surplus – “When God is in it, you will notice, there is always a surplus.” (McGee)

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Consider secondly...

II. The Contention with the Lord (Vs. 10-13)

A. The Request of the Religious Leaders (Vs. 11)

1. Matthew's account (Matt. 16:1-4) includes the Sadducees as part of the delegation. It is possible the Herodians were also involved as in Mark's account Christ also warns of the "leaven of Herod" (See also Mark 3:6). These three groups were rivals and often bitter enemies (e.g. the Pharisees and Sadducees) but they quickly united in their opposition to Christ. "Extremes of error combined from hatred of the truth." (Matthew B. Riddle)
2. "began to question with him" = they put our Lord under cross examination
3. "seeking of him a sign from heaven" = they wanted Christ to authenticate his claims. They were not prepared to accept the abundant evidence they had already been provided with. Unbelief is a choice and these men were willingly ignorant (See 2 Peter 3:5).
4. "tempting him" = reveals the request of the religious leaders did not come from a seeking heart but from a hardened heart, a heart already decided in rebellion against the truth. They were not coming to validate Christ's claims but to try and discredit His claims. They were not looking for reasons **TO believe** but for reasons **NOT to believe**. Their question came from a corrupt and sinful motive.

B. The Rejection of the Religious Leaders (Vs. 12-13)

1. Christ denied their request (Vs. 12)
 - a. "he sighed deeply" = a more intense form of the same word used in 7:34. It literally means "groaned upwardly" indicating that the groan welled up from the very depths of His inner being. Christ was deeply distressed by the moral perversity of these Jewish leaders. "Christ groaned sympathetically in the presence of human suffering (7:34), but obstinate sin evoked a deeper reaction from Him." (Hiebert) "The sigh seemed to come, as we say, from the bottom of His heart; the Lord's human spirit was stirred to its depths." (Swete)
 - b. Matthew records that Christ highlighted the fact they had discernment concerning natural things but no discernment in spiritual things (Matt. 16:2-3)
 - c. "why doth this generation seek...a sign" = it was unjustified since they had deliberately rejected the evidence already given. Matthew adds, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas..." (Matt. 16:4). The only sign that would be given was the sign of the resurrection (Matt. 12:39-40) but they still refused to believe, even bribing the guards to

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suppress their eyewitness evidence and spread a fake story (Refer Matt. 28:11-15).

2. Christ departed from them (Vs. 13)
 - a. Christ deliberately abandons these unbelieving men, refusing further discussion with them.
 - b. Challenge: To be abandoned by Christ to your hardened heart of unbelief is a sobering thing indeed!
 - c. Illustration: My dealings with Alex – “If questions A, B & C are satisfactorily answered, you will then come up with another 3 objections!”
 - d. Heb. 11:6 *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”*

Consider thirdly...

III. The Caution of the Lord (Vs. 14-21)

Our Lord’s caution as motivated by his encounter with the religious leaders described in the previous verses.

A. The Lord’s Command (Vs. 14-15)

1. “take heed, beware” = a double caution.
 - a. “take heed” = comes from Greek word ‘horao’ meaning “to see, to become acquainted with by experience.” The word is translated ‘see’ 51 times. “This word gives prominence to the discerning mind. The disciples were to use their heads!” (Wuest)
 - b. ‘beware’ = from Greek word ‘blepo’ meaning “to perceive by the use of the eyes.” Translated ‘see’ 90 times, “take heed” 12 times, ‘behold’ 10 times, ‘beware’ 7 times and “look on” 4 times. In a metaphorical sense, “to see with the mind’s eye, to discern mentally, understand, to turn the thoughts or direct the mind to a thing, to consider, to take heed.” (Wuest)
 - c. Note: The root meaning of both of these words is “to see”. Therefore, Christ is calling for the disciples to exercise spiritual perception and discernment. Christ desires this quality in His followers! (See 1 Cor. 2:15)
2. “of the leaven” (See also Matt. 16:6) Christ warns of three types of leaven
 - a. The leaven of the Pharisees – Ritualism
 - i. The doctrine of the Pharisees (Matt. 16:12)
 - ii. The lifestyle of the Pharisees (Luke 12:1). They were hypocrites, saying one thing and living another! Theirs was an external profession of godliness with no inner heart transformation.

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- b. The leaven of the Sadducees – Rationalism
- c. The leaven of Herod – Libertinism
- d. Summary: Christ warned against two categories of leaven – doctrinal leaven and moral leaven. Both have devastating effects on a church!
- e. Wuest: “The word (leaven) speaks of evil doctrine in its three-fold form of Pharisaism, externalism in religion, of Sadduceeism, scepticism as to the supernatural and as to the Scriptures, of Herodianism, worldliness.”
- f. Illustration: The church at Corinth (moral leaven) 1 Cor. 5:6
“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”
- g. Illustration: The churches of Galatia (doctrinal leaven) Gal. 5:9
“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”
- h. Warning! Our tendency is to minimise the seriousness of leaven by making it out to be a small matter. But that is just the danger with leaven! It may be small in size but it is large in its destructive influences.

B. The Disciples Carnality (Vs. 14, 16)

- a. They failed to do what Christ had just called on them to do which was to exercise spiritual eyesight!
- b. Note: Believers living and thinking in the realm of the carnal and natural are typically not very discerning. They overlook danger and fail to heed warnings.
- c. Romans 8:6 *“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”*
- d. Heb. 5:11-14 *“Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. 12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of **use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**”*

C. The Lord’s Censure (Vs. 17-21)

- 1. Christ rebukes their lack of discernment (Vs. 17-18)
- 2. Christ rebukes their lack of faith (Vs. 19-21) “O ye of little faith” (Matt. 16:8) If Christ could feed 5,000 with 5 loaves and 4,000 with 7 loaves, He could certainly feed 12 disciples with one loaf (Vs. 14)!

Conclusion: How is our faith as God’s people? Are we looking to Him for the impossible situations or to ourselves? Are you seeking the Lord or hardening your heart against the evidence? Are we growing in spiritual discernment?

Jesus Heals the Blind Man of Bethsaida

Text: Mark 8:22-26

Introduction:

1. The Context: Review recent travels of Christ on maps.
2. This is one of two accounts of healing recorded only in the Gospel of Mark. The other one is Christ's healing of the deaf and dumb man of Decapolis (Mk. 7:31-37). Both have similarities. MacLaren writes, "Both of them have these points in common: that our Lord takes the sufferer apart and works His miracle in privacy; that in both there is an abundant use of the same singular means—our Lord's touch and the saliva upon His finger; and that in both there is the urgent injunction of entire secrecy laid upon the recipient of the benefit."
3. The miracles of Christ were a testament to His Messiahship.
 - a. Luke 4:18-19 *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to **preach** deliverance to the captives, and **recovering of sight to the blind**, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."*
 - b. Luke 7:22 *"Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that **the blind see**, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached."*
4. We will now study this healing and its Gospel implications under four headings:

I. His Conveying to the Lord (Vs. 22)

A. Their Compassion for this man (Vs. 22a)

1. In both of Mark's unique miracles (7:31-37 & 8:22-26), the one in need was brought to Christ by others.
2. In Bible times, people with these sorts of conditions were often looked down upon as if they were that way on account of sin and therefore under God's displeasure. They would often be neglected and mistreated. But compassion moved these men beyond those prejudices to seek this man's healing.
3. Challenge: Are you reaching out to the lost? Do you have a love for the lost? Do you make any efforts to bring lost, blind sinners to the Saviour? Are you involved in the ministry of soul winning?
4. 2 Cor. 5:14-15 *"**For the love of Christ constraineth us**; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."* The word 'constraineth' is an "Old and common verb, to hold together, to

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press the ears together (Acts 7:57), to press on every side (Luke 8:45), to hold fast (Luke 22:63), to hold oneself to (Acts 18:5), to be pressed (passive, Luke 12:50; Php. 1:23). So here Paul's conception of Christ's love for him holds him together to his task whatever men think or say." (Robertson Word Pictures)

- a. The word 'constraineth' is translated 'throng' in Luke 8:45 – "And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude **throng** thee and press *thee*, and sayest thou, Who touched me?"
- b. The word 'constraineth' is translated 'held' in Luke 22:63 – "And the men that **held** Jesus mocked him, and smote *him*" Paul was held in the grip of Divine Love

5. **David Brainard:** "I care not where I go, or how I live, or what I endure so that I may save souls. When I sleep I dream of them; when I awake they are first in my thoughts."
6. **Hudson Taylor:** "The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed."
7. **John Wesley:** "You have one business on earth – to save souls."

B. Their supplication for this man (Vs. 22b)

1. 'beseech' = to beg, intreat, urge, exhort. The sought the Lord's healing touch for this needy man.
2. Romans 10:1 "*Brethren, my **heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.***" Note: Paul's prayer motivated by the desire of his heart. We will not pray much for souls unless we have much love for souls.
3. Challenge: Are you praying for the lost?

II. His Condition for the Lord (Vs. 22)

This man was blind. Blindness is a picture of the sinners lost condition. There is...

A. The Blindness of Sin

1. Ephesians 4:18-19 "*Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the **blindness of their heart:** Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*"
2. We are all born spiritually blind (Rom. 5:12) on account of sin. We are sinners by nature and by practice (Ecc. 7:20; Rom. 3:10-18, 23)

B. The Blindness of Self-righteousness

1. Religion does not cure blinded eyes. In fact, it adds to the sinner's blindness! Consider the example of the Pharisees.

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2. Jesus said of the Pharisees, *“Let them alone: they be **blind** leaders of the **blind**. And if the **blind** lead the **blind**, both shall fall into the ditch.”* (Matt. 15:14)
 3. Christ denounced the blindness of the scribes and Pharisees 5 times in Matthew 23:
 - a. *“Woe unto you, ye **blind** guides”* (Vs. 16)
 - b. *“Ye fools and **blind**”* (Vs. 17)
 - c. *“Ye fools and **blind**”* (Vs. 19)
 - d. *“Ye **blind** guides”* (Vs. 24)
 - e. *“Thou **blind** Pharisee”* (Vs. 26)
 4. John 9:39-41 *“And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, **Are we blind also?** Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; **therefore your sin remaineth.**”*
 5. Challenge: The first step to being healed of spiritual blindness is to admit your blind condition and there is NOTHING you can do to cure yourself! See Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6
- C. The Blindness of Satan** – *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath **blinded** the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”* (2 Cor. 4:3-4)
1. Satan uses religion to keep millions blinded to the truth. As someone put it, “Satan goes to church every Sunday!” Churches that preach a false Gospel are doing the work of Satan, not Christ.
 2. To be freed from Satanic blindness, the lost need a clear and bold declaration of the Gospel, not a hidden one!
 3. Consider Christ’s commission to Paul on the road to Damascus – *“To **open their eyes**, and to **turn them from darkness to light**, and from **the power of Satan unto God**, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”* (Acts 26:18)
 4. The Gospel has the power to open blinded eyes! (Rom. 1:16)

III. His Cure by the Lord (Vs. 23-25)

This is the only recorded miracle where the healing was in stages.

MacLaren: “As a rule, faith in His power to heal was a condition of Christ’s healing, and that mainly because our Lord would rather make men believing than sound of body. They often wanted only the outward miracle, but He wanted to make it the means of insinuating a better healing into their spirits.” There was...

A. An Awakening Touch (Vs. 23-24)

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1. Christ's dealings with each sinner is specific and unique. This man was touched at least three times by Christ.
 - a. The *first* touch: Christ takes him by the hand and leads him out of the town. What tenderness and love Christ demonstrated to this man. What a picture of salvation! We are drawn out of our old life and separated unto Christ.
 - b. The *second* touch: Christ spits in his eyes and puts his hands upon his eyes. With this touch, came a partial restoration of sight.
 - c. This pictures the pre-salvation workings of God in the heart of the sinner to illuminate them to the light of the Gospel. At this stage, the Gospel light has begun to penetrate the sinner's darkness but he hasn't come yet to full faith and understanding yet. For a sinner to get saved, they need the Lord's touch, often multiple times, to bring them finally to the salvation moment.
 - d. Illustration: Lydia – *"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: **whose heart the Lord opened**, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."* (Acts 16:14) 1. Her heart was opened by the Lord (pre-salvation work). 2. She heard the Gospel through the Apostle Paul and was converted (salvation moment).
2. Note: It is important that we as soul-winners seek to discern where the sinner is at. Is he truly ready to receive Christ or still in the early stages of being awakened to the Gospel?
3. H.S. Paisley: "Similar experiences may be known to soul-winners, who meet some at the time of their conversion, who may be unclear in their spiritual perception, but later as a result of instruction have clear spiritual enlightenment."

B. A Saving Touch (Vs. 25)

1. "put his hands again upon his eyes" = Christ touches his eyes for the second time
2. 'restored' = to restore to its former state
3. Isaiah 42:6-7 *"I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; **To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.**"*
4. John Wesley: Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night; thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose went forth and followed thee.

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5. John Newton: Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost but now am found, twas blind but now I see.

IV. His Command from the Lord (Vs. 26)

A. The Reason

1. Christ was seeking to discourage the tendency of the crowd to respond to miracles like this with attempting to make Him a political Messiah. As a general rule, Christ did not publicise and promote His miracles!
2. Bethsaida had also been denounced by Christ for its stubborn unbelief (Matt. 11:21) so it seems the Lord will now not give them any further public demonstration of His power.

B. The Response

1. As far as we can tell, this man obeyed the command of Christ.
2. We are saved to a life of obedience! Just about every time you read of a healing like this, the first thing Christ does after the healing is gives the individual a command.

Conclusion:

1. Will you come to Christ today to be healed from the blindness of your sin? Will you let Him touch your eyes?
2. What are we doing to bring blinded sinners to Christ? Are we like the majority of Christ's day who didn't care about the blind or worse still, utterly despised them? Or are we like those few who cared enough to bring them to Christ.

The Cross and Discipleship

Text: Mark 8:27-38 (Refer also Matthew 16:13-27 & Luke 9:18-26)

Introduction:

1. The Context: Review recent travels of Christ on map.
2. Christ's focus seems to now be on preparing the 12 for his impending death and for their future ministry. In these verses we have a dialogue that takes place between Christ and His disciples concerning His Person and coming crucifixion. This forms a basis for the Lord to outline His demands for true discipleship. In short, there was to be a cross for Christ but also a cross for His disciples as well.
3. The cross stands at the heart and centre of true discipleship. It is one thing to confess Christ in truth (salvation) but God would have us to go on and embrace the cross in a life of consecration.
4. To be a disciple you must embrace three truths found in the text:

I. The Person of Christ (Vs. 27-30)

A proper understanding of the Person of Christ is essential to a proper understanding of the cross of Christ. Christ asks His disciples two questions. He asks them concerning...

A. The People's View of Himself (Vs. 27-28)

1. The place of the question (27a) – Caesarea Philippi, about 25 miles (40 kms) north of Bethsaida. A significant location religiously and politically. The dialogue between Christ and His disciples takes place while they are “by the way”.
2. The point of the question (27b) – Christ asks the disciples concerning the opinion of the general populace as to who He is. Note the words “I am”. “He asks them to identify His Person, not what He did but who He was.” (Hiebert)
3. The answer to the question (Vs. 28) – the people had discerned something of Christ's supernatural, prophetic character. They put Him on the same level as one of the Old Testament prophets or as John the Baptist. While these views expressed some truth concerning the Person of Christ, they did not go far enough as they fell short of an acknowledgment and acceptance of His Messiahship.
4. Challenge: Each man at some point must come face to face with this question – **who is Jesus Christ?** The answer to that question has eternal consequences.

B. The Disciple's View of Himself (Vs. 29-30)

1. The confession (Vs. 29)

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- a. Peter acts as spokesman for the disciples. This was a truth they had already embraced concerning Christ but Christ wanted a public confession as He would now begin teaching them in a deeper way concerning His impending death on the cross.
 - b. The title 'Christ' means 'anointed' and is a reference to Jesus' Messiahship.
 - c. Matthew adds, "the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Peter recognized Christ as the Son of God and therefore acknowledges His Deity and Divinity.
2. Christ's commendation (Matt. 16:17) *"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, **but my Father which is in heaven.**"* 1 Corinthians 12:3 says, *"no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."*
3. Christ's command (Vs. 30)
- a. This command was likely on account of the expectations of the people of a political Messiah (See John 6:14-15). The thought of a suffering Messiah was not in their thinking and Christ would not allow anything to stand in the way of Him going to the cross and fulfilling God's plan for the redemption of mankind. The following verse (31) reveals that this was the theme on Christ's heart and mind.
 - b. Luke doesn't even begin a new sentence here so Christ's command is closely linked with his announcement concerning the cross (Luke 9:21-22).
 - c. Hiebert: "For them to go out and broadcast the fact that He was the Messiah would simply raise false hopes among the people who were expecting an earthly Messiah who would fulfil their political hopes."

II. The Purpose of Christ (Vs. 31-33)

A. Christ's Instruction about the Cross (Vs. 31)

There were four things Christ said 'must' take place:

1. He must suffer – note the word 'many'. His suffering would be great and diverse. Christ did not just suffer in one area for our redemption, suffering was inflicted upon His whole Person – spirit, soul and body.
2. He must be rejected – the religious leaders particularly mentioned. This was literally fulfilled when Christ was condemned by the Jewish Sanhedrin.
3. He must be killed – Christ would be brutally killed on a Roman cross.

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4. He must rise again – the cross would not be the end of the story. Christ would rise in triumph and victory over death!
5. Note: This is the Gospel in a nutshell – the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

B. Peter's Objection to the Cross (Vs. 32)

1. Peter's motivation – Peter clearly motivated by natural affection.
 - a. "...*Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.*" (Matt. 16:22)
 - i. Interestingly the phrase "be it far" comes from a Greek word with the root meaning of 'mercy'. It has the sense, "Lord, be propitious to thyself", or "spare thyself" (Gill). "Lord, not that; pity Thyself; have mercy upon Thyself; anything but that!" (Morgan)
 - ii. The phrase "this shall not be unto thee" is "the strongest kind of negation, as if Peter would not let it happen." (Robertson)
 - b. Natural affection has its proper place but if uncrucified, it can become an obstruction to the will of God.
 - c. The self-life hates the cross. Peter's response to the cross revealed something in him that needed to go to the cross. Self says, "side step the cross, avoid the pain, preserve yourself!" The drive for self-preservation is often an obstruction to the Calvary road. It can be an obstruction in our own lives and the choices we make and we can become an obstruction in the lives of others in our misguided attempts to stop them from going to the cross the Lord has for them.
 - d. "The moment we say "I will not allow my obedience to Christ to cause suffering to those I love", we have left the Calvary road." (The Glory of the Cross, I. Western)
 - e. Galatians 5:24 "*And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*"
2. Peter's mistake
 - a. Peter had an emotional reaction to the will of God and became governed by the self-life rather than the Holy Spirit. Peter's example highlights how a believer can swing between speaking total truth and total error depending on whether he is being controlled by the Spirit or by the self-life.
 - b. "Peter here appears in a new character; a minute ago speaking under inspiration from heaven, now under inspiration from the opposite quarter." (Bruce)

C. Christ's Admonition about the Cross (Vs. 33)

Christ issues a searing rebuke to correct Peter's wrong counsel. Christ rebukes...

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1. The Silent Sympathisers – Christ “turned about and looked on his disciples”. No doubt this was intended that they might also feel the force of the rebuke. Very likely they shared a similar opinion to Peter. You can almost see them nodding their heads and saying a few quiet “Amen” to themselves as they overhear Peter rebuking the Lord. At this time, the disciple’s thoughts were more consumed with the crown than the cross.
2. The Sinister Source – “rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan” The source of Peter’s error was twofold. It came from...
 - a. Self – Peter was his own worst enemy. His self-life had reared its ugly head. The phrase “for thou savourest not” highlights Peter’s error. Peter’s thoughts were being dominated by man’s wisdom rather than God’s. Peter was living “in the small conceptions of the immediate.” (Morgan)
 - b. Satan – in that moment of weakness, Satan was able to lodge a dart in Peter that he then passed on to the Lord.
 - c. MacLaren: “He (Christ) hears in Peter’s voice the tone of that other voice, which, in the wilderness, had suggested the same temptation to escape the Cross and win the crown by worshipping the Devil.”
 - d. F.B. Meyer: “How soon Peter fell from his high estate! Beware! The voice that bids us *spare ourselves* is Satan’s. Self-pleasing ends in destruction. Self-denial and self-sacrifice are the divine path to life. Let us be more eager to lose ourselves than to find ourselves; more set on the cross than on the glory...We do not choose or make our cross; Christ gives each a little bit of His true Cross to bear as *He* pleases.”

III. The Principle of Christ (Vs. 34-38)

A. The Requirements of True Discipleship (Vs. 34)

Christ outlines three requirements of discipleship in this verse. A true disciple must...

1. Deny himself – this is the complete opposite to the natural man and the ways of the world. We are called upon to die to the hyphenated sins of the self-life such as self-promotion, self-defence, self-preservation, self-love, self-importance, self-centredness, self-praise etc... “The disciple must no longer make his own interests and desires the supreme concern of his life. He must ‘turn away from the idolatry of self-centeredness’ (Cranfield).” (Hiebert)
2. Take up his cross
 - a. Note carefully the word ‘his’. This is a very individual matter. You must bear the cross that Christ has for you.

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- b. MacLaren: “To slay the life of self is always pain, and there is no discipleship without crucifying ‘the old man.’ Taking up my cross does not merely mean meekly accepting God-sent or men-inflicted sorrows, but persistently carrying on the special form of self-denial which my special type of character requires.”
- c. Luke adds the word ‘daily’ to the formula. “This willingness to accept the cross must characterize the disciple every day.”
(Hiebert)

3. Follow Christ

B. The Reasons for True Discipleship (Vs. 35-38)

There are two key truths that should motivate us to accept Christ’s terms of discipleship:

- 1. Self-preservation leads to self-destruction (Vs. 35-37)
 - a. “whosoever will” = stresses that the choice is a matter of the individual will (Hiebert).
 - b. ‘lose’ = to destroy. Self-preservation, side stepping the cross God has for me has destructive consequences for my Christian life.
 - c. Challenge: How many Christians end up shipwrecking their Christian lives simply because they would not dare to die. They heeded the subtle whisper of the Serpent, “save thyself.”
 - d. MacLaren: “The man who lives absorbed in the miserable care for his own wellbeing is dead to all which makes life noble, sweet and real. Flagrant (blatant) vice is not needed to kill the real life. Clean, respectable selfishness does the work effectually. The deadly gas is invisible and has no smell. But while all selfishness is fatal, it is self-surrender and sacrifice ‘for my sake and the gospel’s,’ which is life giving.”
 - e. “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” (Jim Elliot)
 - f. Vs. 36-37 – “the issues are now broadened to include on and all.” Illustration: God brings out the scales. On the one side, He puts the whole world. On the other side, a human soul. (Phillips)
- 2. Shame of Christ’s words in this life leads to shame in Christ’s presence at His coming (Vs. 38)

Conclusion:

- 1. Are you saved? Have you confessed Christ in salvation (Rom. 10:9-10)?
- 2. Dear saint, what cross is Christ asking you to take up? Will you follow Christ on the Calvary road or will you listen to self and Satan and try and side step the cross?

The Transfiguration of Christ

Text: Mark 9:1-13 (Refer also Matthew 17:1-13 & Luke 9:28-36)

Introduction:

1. The word 'transfigured' is the word metamorphosis and means "changed into another for. It denotes a visible change of the outward form as expressive of the true inner nature." (Hiebert)
2. The transfiguration was really the crowning point of Christ's humanity and serves as a significant marker in the ministry of Christ. From here, our Lord's compass is clearly set in the direction of Jerusalem and Golgotha's hill.
3. We will study Mark's account of the Transfiguration in 5 sections.

I. The Prediction of the Transfiguration (Vs. 1)

A. The Context of the Prediction (Mk. 8:27-38)

1. Christ's discourse with the disciples at Caesarea Philippi.
2. Significantly, Christ had for the first time, openly taught His disciples of His coming crucifixion, a theme that would be reoccurring from this point on (Vs. 31)

B. The Content of the Prediction (Vs. 1)

1. The Few Involved (1a) – the 'some' are clearly Peter, James and John (Vs. 2)
2. The Foreshadowing Involved (1b) – these men would be given a glimpse of the glorified Christ and the coming kingdom.
3. Hiebert: "The glory of the Lord which the disciples saw there was in essence the very glory which will receive an open manifestation when Christ returns to establish His visible kingdom...the disciples were 'eyewitnesses of his majesty' (2 Pt. 1:16), seeing a foregleam of His future glory as the exalted Messiah."

II. The Situation of the Transfiguration (Vs. 2)

A. The Period – When? (Vs. 2a)

1. "after six days" = six days from the Caesarean discourse
2. The objective of the transfiguration clearly linked to Christ's discourse concerning His Person and work in the preceding verses.

B. The People – Who? (Vs. 2b)

1. These three men chosen as witnesses to this glorious event (See Matt. 18:16)
2. Why these particular three men are chosen for this privilege is unknown to us but they were clearly our Lord's inner circle.

C. The Place – Where? (Vs. 2c)

1. "an high mountain" = a mountain somewhere in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi. Mount Hermon a possibility.

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- Note: Consider the significant mountain peaks in Scripture – Mount Sinai and the giving of the law (holiness and justice of God revealed); the Mount of Transfiguration and the glorifying of the Lord; Mount Calvary and the crucifying of the Lord (grace, mercy and love of God revealed).

III. The Revelation of the Transfiguration (Vs. 3-4)

A. The Revelation of His Person (Vs. 3)

- Luke reveals this took place while Christ was praying – “...and went up into a mountain to **pray**. **And as he prayed**, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.” (Luke 9:29)
- Christ’s Deity and Divinity allowed to shine through for those few moments, giving the disciples a foretaste of how Christ will be known in His glorified state in the future kingdom.
- The radiance of Christ’s Person shone forth in both His countenance and His clothing:
 - His Countenance: Matt. 17:2 “*And was transfigured before them: and his **face did shine as the sun**, and his raiment was white as the light.*”
 - His Clothing: Matt. 17:2 “white as the light.” Mk. 9:3 “his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.” Luke 9:29 “his raiment was white and glistening.”
 - ‘shining’ = word was used of the reflection of polished metal surfaces or of the flashing of lightening. (Hiebert)
 - ‘glistening’ = to sparkle with light, to flash out like lightening
 - ‘fuller’ = the occupation of a fuller was to clean and dye woollen clothes. The brilliant whiteness far exceeded anything a man could achieve. “The robe without, ablaze with light, was a reflection of His stainless character within.” (Phillips)
- 1 John 1:5 “*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that **God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.***”
- John 8:12 “*Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.***”
- Note: In this foretaste of the future, we get a glimpse of our own future glorification. “The vision of the holy mount is a gracious pledge that glorious things are in store for the people of God.”

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(Ryle) In fact, we experience metamorphosis as believers in three stages:

- a. **Salvation** – 2 Cor. 5:17 *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*
- b. **Sanctification** – 2 Cor. 3:18 *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed** (metamorphosis) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* Rom 12:1-2 *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye **transformed** (metamorphosis) by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*
- c. **Glorification** – Php. 3:20-21 *“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall **change our vile body**, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”* 1 John 3:2 *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, **we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is.”*

B. The Revelation of His Purpose (Vs. 4)

1. The Figures in the Discussion
 - a. Moses – representative of the law
 - b. Elijah – representative of the prophets
 - c. Both the law and the prophets prophesied of the coming Messiah. Their presence was a further seal of confirmation upon Christ’s Messianic credentials.
2. The Focus of the Discussion
 - a. Matthew and Mark only mention that a discussion took place but don’t reveal the details of the discussion.
 - b. Luke highlights the theme of the discussion - Luke 9:31 *“Who appeared in glory, and **spake of his decease** which he should **accomplish** at Jerusalem.”*
 - c. The law demanded it, the prophets predicted it and Christ fulfilled it!
 - d. The cross stands as the centrepiece of eternity. It was for the cross that Christ came. He would ‘accomplish’ what had been determined in the eternal counsels of the Godhead; He would accomplish all the prophecies concerning His death; He would accomplish our salvation!
 - e. *“...Christ died for our sins...”* (1 Cor. 15:3)

IV. The Reaction to the Transfiguration (Vs. 5-6)

There are two things we can observe about Peter's response. There was:

A. Something Commendable (Vs. 5)

1. Peter recognized the value of the occasion – “it is good for us to be here”. Indeed, it is a wonderful thing to be in the presence of Christ!
2. Peter desired to prolong the occasion – Luke 9:33 indicates that Peter replied just as Moses and Elias were about to depart – “...as they departed from him, Peter said...” Appears Peter was suggesting they do something similar to what would take place at the Jewish feast of tabernacles.
3. ‘tabernacles’ = tents or booths, temporary shelters such as the Israelites used during the Feast of Tabernacles.

B. Something Carnal (Vs. 6)

1. Peter ‘answered’ even though he wasn’t addressed! (Vs. 5) Peter is a lesson to all of us who are inclined to blurt out our muddled thoughts even when we aren’t invited to do so!
 - a. Prov. 18:13 *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”*
 - b. Prov. 29:11 *“A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.”*
2. Peter said something because he didn’t know what to say! Luke adds “not knowing what he said.” So, Peter didn’t know what to say or what he actually said!
3. Peter was motivated by fear – “sore afraid”. The only other place this word is used is in Heb. 12:21, describing Moses’ terror on Mount Sinai.

V. The Validation of the Transfiguration (Vs. 7)

A. A Supernatural Sign (Vs. 7a)

1. “a cloud” = Matthew describes it as “a bright cloud”.
2. A cloud often associated with the presence of God in the Bible. For example, the pillar of cloud that led the Israelites in the wilderness; the cloud of Christ’s ascension (Acts 1:9).

B. A Supernatural Sound (Vs. 7b)

1. A declaration – “This is my beloved Son”
 - a. A reiteration of the Father’s declaration at Christ’s baptism. Mark 1:11 *“And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* At Christ’s baptism it was addressed to Christ, now it is addressed to the disciples.
 - b. Jesus Christ is the Father’s Eternal Son. This is the testimony of heaven!
2. A decree – “hear him”

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- a. Command is present imperative which sets forth a continuing duty. This is the Father's command to all to heed what Christ has to say.
- b. Heb. 1:1-2 *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us **by his Son...**"*
- c. This was a rebuke from above for Peter!
- a. Challenge: Do we take time to hear what Christ has to say to us through His Word? Or is His Voice crowded out by the many other voices that tend to till our lives?

VI. The Conclusion to the Transfiguration (Vs. 8-9)

A. The Person they Saw (Vs. 8)

1. The vision abruptly comes to an end – "And suddenly"
2. Christ now fills their vision. May Jesus fill our vision!
3. Maclaren: "Moses dies, Elijah fades, clouds and symbols and voices and all mortal things vanish, but Jesus Christ stands before us, the manifest God, forever and ever, the sole illumination of the world...We may make that scene the picture of our lives."

B. The Precept they Received (Vs. 9)

1. They were commanded not to share the vision till after Christ's resurrection.
2. The timing was to be according to Christ's will. The disciples were not ready yet to communicate these truths as their understanding was still so limited.

Conclusion:

1. Have you experienced the transformation of salvation?
2. Are we cooperating with the transformation of sanctification?
3. What fills your vision? Christ or other things?

Faith for Victory over Satanic Strongholds

Text: Mark 9:14-29 (See also Matt. 17:14-21; Luke 9:37-42)

Introduction:

1. Context: The Mount of Transfiguration. Events in these verses take place the day after the experience on the mount (Luke 9:37)
2. The disciples discuss the O.T. prophecy of Elijah as they descend from the Mount.
3. The contrast between the Transfiguration on the mountaintop and the terror in the valley is striking.
4. The theme of faith is imbedded into the account. Note Vs. 19, 23-24, Matt. 17:20. We will learn about the necessity of faith to overcome Satanic obstacles under 4 headings:

I. The Trial of Faith (Vs. 14-20)

A. The Disciples' Powerlessness (Vs. 14-16; 18b)

1. Christ finds the 9 waiting disciples embroiled in a debate with the scribes (Vs. 14). It would appear from the account which is to follow, that their failure to help the demon possessed boy had given them cause to discredit and undermine the ministry of Christ. The spiritual powerlessness of the disciples affected the people's view of Christ and His power. When we live powerless lives, it brings reproach upon the Name of Christ.
2. "could not" = they did not have the strength or power. This desperate man had sought help from the 9 disciples who stayed behind while Christ, Peter, James and John were on the Mountain top but they had failed.
3. Their failure is intriguing as they had cast out demons previously (See Mark 6:7-13)

B. The Father's Problem (Vs. 17-18a)

The child was possessed of an evil spirit. This had the following effects on the boy.

1. Loss of sanity – he is described in Matt. 17:15 as a 'lunatick' which is a word related to the moon (lunar). Word literally means "moon struck".
2. Loss of speech – "dumb spirit" He could not speak coherently. He would only make unintelligible shrieks and cries (Luke 9:39; Vs. 26)
3. Loss of hearing – "deaf spirit" (Vs. 25)
4. Loss of control
 - a. "taketh him" = to seize upon, lay hold of, to take possession of. These seizures were accompanied with sudden screams (Luke 9:39)

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- b. “teareth him” = graphic term for violent convulsions
 - c. “he foameth” = at the mouth
 - d. “gnasheth with his teach” = to grind and snap the teeth together
 - e. “pineth away” = to wither or dry up. Same word translated “withered away” (Matt. 21:19) and “dried up” (Mark 11:20) regarding the dying of a fig tree. Describes the state of weariness and exhaustion after these episodes.
5. Note: While not all sickness and disabilities are from the devil (e.g. 2 Cor. 12:7-9), some are the result of demon possession (e.g. this example and others like the woman with a spirit of infirmity recorded in Luke 13:10-17)

C. The Lord’s Perception (Vs. 19)

1. It was an Unbelieving Generation – ‘faithless’
2. It was an Unholy Generation. Matt. 17:17 & Luke 9:41 include the word ‘perverse’ which means twisted, distorted, perverted.
3. Morgan: “The use of the two words indicate a sequence. A generation that loses its faith, becomes distorted, out of shape.”
4. Note: It appears that the disciples were the main objects of this rebuke. Christ was justly exasperated and grieved at the spiritual weakness that confronted him.
5. “bring him unto me” = glorious words. Christ would accomplish what others had failed to do.

D. The child’s Presentation (Vs. 20)

1. “saw him” = the demon reacted violently at the sight of the Lord Jesus
2. ‘wallowed’ = to roll or tumble. Imperfect tense describes the continued twisting and rolling of the victim, while his mouth was foaming.

II. The Testing of Faith (Vs. 21-24)

A. The Question (Vs. 21)

1. The timing of the possession (Vs. 21)
 - a. Sometimes we have to go back to where it all started. We come to Christ with our trial, seeking His deliverance and the Lord does a work of probing. Christ dealt with the dad before the boy!
 - b. Christ asks this man to identify the timing when the Satanic breach occurred in his home. As fathers commissioned with the oversight and protection of our homes, we do bear a fearful responsibility to be alert and on guard to Satanic intrusion into the home. Somewhere this father had failed to be a godly umbrella of protection.
 - c. “of a child” = from childhood. Vs. 24 indicates he was still young at this point.

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- d. The question would also further draw the man's attention to the hopelessness of the situation so that he might be further driven to Christ in complete dependence.
2. The history of the possession (Vs. 22)
 - a. 'oftentimes' = these Satanic convulsions occurred on a regular basis. Imagine what this would have been like for the parents!
 - b. "to destroy him" = the malignant, murderous intent of this vile spirit. Satan is a liar, a murderer, a deceiver and a devourer (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8).

B. The Petition (Vs. 22)

1. It was sincere – a plea for compassion and help
2. It was doubtful – a plea that contained an element of doubt ("if thou canst do anything")

C. The Condition (Vs. 23)

1. Christ transfers the question mark from Himself and His power to the father and his faith; He corrects the focus of the capability.
2. "all things are possible" = to the prayer of faith all things are possible as genuine faith will not lead you to ask something foolish. "Faith-prompted prayer asks in harmony with the will of God." (Hiebert) Matt. 21:22 *"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."*

D. The Supplication (Vs. 24)

1. It was fervent prayer – "cried out, and said with tears"
2. It was believing prayer – "I believe"
3. It was humble prayer – "help thou mine unbelief" "They who feel their lack of faith are in the best condition for removing this lack." (Lenski) "Our faith may be weak but when we seek Christ for more faith, He will provide that which is lacking." (Sorenson)

III. The Triumph of Faith (Vs. 25-27)

A. Release (Vs. 25-26)

1. The character of the demon (Vs. 25a)
 - a. 'foul' = unclean. Word used in a moral sense
 - b. "dumb and deaf" = the evil spirit had made his victim dumb and deaf
2. The command to the demon (Vs. 25b)
 - a. "charge thee" = military style command. Christ exercises His Divine authority.
 - b. "come out" = he delivered the boy from the demon in the present
 - c. "enter no more" = he preserved the boy from the demon the future. Christ's work is permanent, He works for eternity.
3. The conduct of the demon (Vs. 26)
 - a. 'cried' = in rage

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- b. “rent him sore” = Satan does not give up his hold on lives without strong resistance. Even when faced with an ultimatum from the Almighty Son of God, this demon demonstrated one final act of defiance and sought to further damage the child.

B. Restoration (Vs. 27; Luke 9:42)

- 1. To the child’s person (Vs. 27)
 - a. The Lord not only has power to deliver from sin and Satan, He also has power to repair and heal the damage Satan leaves behind.
 - b. The life of Christ filled the void left by the evil spirit.
- 2. To the child’s parents (Luke 9:42)
 - a. Luke 9:42 “...and delivered him again to his father.”
 - b. Only Christ can heal and repair a damaged home

IV. The Teaching concerning Faith (Vs. 28-29)

A. The Question concerning their Failure (Vs. 28)

- 1. They acknowledged their failure and asked for help.
- 2. Failures can be great opportunities to learn much if we will humble ourselves and have a teachable spirit. There is a place for self-examination after the defeats in our Christian lives.

B. The Instruction concerning their Failure (Vs. 29)

- 1. The symptom of their failure – faithlessness
 - a. Matt. 17:20 “*And Jesus said unto them, Because of your **unbelief**: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith **as a grain of mustard seed**, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*” See also Mark 11:22-24
 - b. “mustard seed” = the smallest seed used in Agriculture in Israel.
 - c. “this mountain” = illustration to impress upon their minds the truth that God’s power is available to overcome impossible obstacles (like demon possession) through faith.
- 2. The source (root cause) of their failure – prayerlessness
 - a. “this kind” = Greek word is ‘genus’. This was a particularly powerful kind of demon. Not all demons are of equal power. Some are more wicked than others (Matt. 12:45)
 - b. “prayer and fasting” = God’s method for winning the big battles. More prayer equals more faith and more power.
 - i. Fasting is not to twist the arm of an unwilling God but rather it demonstrates our dependence upon him more fully and also sharpens the effectiveness of prayer in us.
 - ii. Warning! Modern versions have deleted the word fasting and in so doing, robbed the Christian of one of his most

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powerful secret weapons with which he can defeat the enemy! Matt. 17:21 totally removed from NIV.

- iii. A failure in the personal lives of the disciples resulted in a failure in the public ministry lives of the disciples. The disciples lacked preparation of heart and spirit.
- iv. Note: The time for fasting and prayer is **before** being faced with the Satanic battle. Once faced with the demon possessed boy, it was too late to go and prepare the heart. Often as believers we fail in the challenges, we face due to insufficient spiritual resources.

Conclusion: Are you saved? Jesus can set you free from sin and Satan. Fathers, are we being a channel of spiritual blessing to our families through faith?

Who Gets to be the Greatest?

Text: Mark 9:30-41 (See also Matt. 18:1-10; Luke 9:43-50)

Introduction:

1. Context: The healing of the demon possessed boy
2. Christ will now seek to further instruct the disciples concerning His impending death, burial and resurrection which will give rise to a dispute amongst the disciples concerning who would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom. Christ will then teach the disciples a simple, yet powerful lesson about the nature of true greatness.
3. We will divide the text into 3 divisions for this study.

I. The Model of Greatness (Vs. 30-32)

A. The Lord's Cross (Vs. 30-31)

1. The learners (Vs. 30-31a)
 - a. "they departed...and passed through Galilee" = Christ and his disciples commence the return journey from the northern area of Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum.
 - b. "he would not that any man should know it" = the reason for our Lord's desire for privacy is given in the next verse – "For he taught his disciples". Our Lord's focus was on preparing the disciples for their future ministry.
2. The lesson (Vs. 32b)

He taught them concerning...

 - a. The Son's crucifixion
 - i. "is delivered" = though the actual event was still future, in the mind of Christ it was already determined. The present tense reveals the certainty and imminence of the coming cross. On the human side, it appeared that Christ was delivered to death by the will of man. But in reality, Christ was delivered by the Father to be the sacrifice of for our sins.
 - Rom. 8:32 *"He that spared not his own Son, **but delivered him up for us all**, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"*
 - Acts 2:23 *"Him, being **delivered** by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."*
 - John 12:27 *"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: **but for this cause came I unto this hour.**"*

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- ii. “into the hands of men” = imagine! The Creator in the hands of the creature. The Saviour in the hands of sinners. Oh, my sins were those hands that laid hold on the blessed Saviour and nailed Him to the cross. My sins cried out that day, crucify him crucify him!
 - iii. “they shall **kill** him; and after that he is **killed**” = Christ would die a real death for sin. The Gospel message is that “Christ died for our sins”
- b. The Son’s resurrection
- i. “he shall rise the third day” = The second ‘shall’ is as absolute and sure as the first!
 - ii. See Luke 24:1-8
3. Challenge: Christ is the perfect example of true humility (Phil. 2:8)

B. The Disciples Callousness (Vs. 32)

1. “they understood not” = Matthew adds that Christ’s words made them “exceeding sorry” (Matt. 17:23). The disciples wrong thinking and expectations were the root cause of why they were unreceptive to our Lord’s instruction concerning the cross. Is it no wonder that before Christ began to teach them, he had exhorted them to “Let these sayings sink down into your ears.” (Luke 9:44)
2. Their concept of a reigning Messiah made them unreceptive to this truth. H.S. Paisley: “The thoughts of Jesus on the journey, were of His sacrifice, yet His followers were filled with selfish thoughts of elevation to chief positions in the Messianic Kingdom, which they expected to be set up upon their arrival at Jerusalem.”

II. The Maxim (principle) of Greatness (Vs. 33-37)

A. The Inquiry concerning Greatness (Vs. 33-34)

1. The location – in the house at Capernaum (possibly Peter’s house)
2. The question – Christ inquired as to the subject of their disputation. Christ already knew the answer to the question (Lk. 9:47) but asked them for their benefit.
3. The response – they held their peace as they had been arguing about who would be the greatest in Christ’s kingdom. Luke’s account links this dispute as the disciples’ response to Christ’s teaching concerning the cross – “**Then** there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.” (Lk. 9:46) The word ‘disputed’ means “vigorously discussing, arguing over a disputed point. The impf. tense implies that these arguments continued for some time.” (Hiebert)
4. Phillips: “We can well imagine the kind of things that they had said. Doubtless, Peter would have claimed primacy. After all, he was the one who had made the great declaration. He was the one whose

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name the Lord had changed in consequence. James and John, “the sons of thunder,” would have disagreed. If anyone stood highest in the Lord’s favour, it was they. After all, were they not the Lord’s cousins? Judas would have staked his claim on the grounds that he was a Judean; moreover, he was the only one to hold office. He was the treasurer.”

5. While Christ was consumed with the cross, they were consumed with carnality. While Christ was consumed with self-denial, they were consumed with self-promotion and self-glory.
6. Challenge: When confronted with the cross, the self-life rose up, claiming the crown. This is one of the key manifestations of the self-life, to seek the crown without the cross. The cross provoked a revolt in the self-life.

B. The Instruction about Greatness (Vs. 35)

1. “If any man desire to be first” = the word ‘desire’ is from the Greek word ‘thelo’ meaning “to will.” It “indicates one’s continuing resolve or determination to occupy the position of being first in relation to those around him.” (Hiebert)
2. “the same shall be last of all, and servant of all” = Christ states the truth about true greatness. Luke 9:48 “...for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.”
3. ‘servant’ = (diakonos) an attendant, one who renders free service to others.
4. Phillips: “In one short sentence, He turned upside down their whole scale of values, and ours as well. The way to true greatness in the Master’s service is to become the servant of all.”
5. What a simple and yet profound statement of truth. To be first in God’s economy you need to put yourself at the very last. To be great, you need to be the servant of all.
6. See Mark 10:35-45 where our Lord confronts the same problem in the disciples and declares Himself the ultimate example of humility.
7. See John 13:3-15 where Christ washed the disciples’ feet.

C. The Illustration of Greatness (Vs. 36-37)

Christ illustrates true greatness. The illustration of the child taught...

1. A lesson in salvation (Matt. 18:3)
 - i. ‘converted’ = to turn, turn around
 - ii. We need childlike humility to admit our need
 - iii. We need childlike faith to accept Christ’s gift
2. A lesson in service (Vs. 37)
 - i. Little children would have been the last people on the disciple’s minds concerning the kingdom. But Christ teaches that to be truly great in His eyes, you need to serve the smallest people.

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- ii. 'receive = means to receive to oneself, welcome, to give a kindly reception, to extend warm fellowship. Romans 15:7
*"Wherefore **receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.**"*
- iii. "receiveth me...him that sent me" = when we treat a child in that manner, Christ views it as an act of service done directly to Himself and the Father
- iv. Note: We get a window in this verse into Christ's heart towards children. Your attitude towards the little ones in Christ's kingdom reveals a lot about how Christlike you truly are.

III. The Misunderstanding of Greatness (Vs. 38-41)

A. John's Confesses (Vs. 38)

1. "followeth not with us" = mentioned twice. Reveals the carnal motivation of the disciples. They weren't concerned to assess whether this man was a true disciple of Christ or not. They were only concerned about their own position and prominence.
2. "we forbid him" = they actually obstructed this man's service for the Lord on account of their selfishness.
3. The disciples thought greatness meant self-promotion and self-assertion rather than self-denial. They were not concerned about the Lord's honour but their own.

B. Jesus' Corrects (Vs. 39-41)

1. Christ points out that the fruit of the man's life bore witness of his discipleship. In practice, he was actually a friend of the truth and therefore on their side! The disciples had drawn swords with the wrong man!
2. Christ gives a second illustration to further impress these truths on their minds. In the previous illustration, Christ taught that to greatness involves serving the smallest people. Now He teaches that greatness involves the smallest acts of service. To be great people we need to be little people, doing the little things for the glory of God!

Conclusion:

1. Have you been converted? Will you come to Christ with childlike humility and childlike faith?
2. What is your view of greatness? Does it line up with Christ's definition or the world's definition?

The Unquenchable Fire of Hell

Text: Mark 9:42-50 (Read also Luke 16:19-31)

Introduction:

1. Christ warns the disciples against being stumbling block to little ones (children) that believe in Him.
2. Christ then looks beyond the inner circle of the disciples to the sinful world (“Woe unto the world because of offenses...” Matt. 18:7) and gives a sobering warning concerning the reality of hell fire for unrepentant sinners.
3. At the end of the discourse, Christ concludes His challenge to the disciples concerning their ultra-competitive spirit (Vs. 50).
4. For the purpose of this sermon, we will focus our attention on Christ’s message of warning concerning hell and how to be rescued from it (Vs. 43-48). “The warning (Vs. 43-48), by an easy transition, passes from the danger of ensnaring others to that of allowing oneself to be ensnared. The warning is given in a solemn threefold reiteration.” (Hiebert) Essentially the same truth is reiterated 3 times under 3 members of the body – the hand, the foot and the eye.

I. The Defilement that Sends Men to Hell (Vs. 43a, 45a, 47a)

A. The Picture of Sin

1. The Hand – represents the things we do (Vs. 43a). The hand is pictured as the stumbling block into sin. The hand itself is not evil but merely carries out the dictates of a sinful heart (Mark 7:21-23). “The hand does not act independently of the will. It is the instrument for the gratification of the evil desires of the heart.” (Hiebert)
2. The Foot – represents the places we go (Vs. 45a).
3. The Eye – represents the lusts we indulge (Vs. 47a) Goes beyond the outward actions of the hands and feet to the sins of the inner man in the heart and spirit.
4. Note: The God given functions can be used as servants of sin and Satan.

B. The Problem of Sin

1. Who has sinned?
 - a. Ecc. 7:20 *“For there is not a just man upon the earth...”*
 - b. Romans 3:9-10 *“What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise...”*
 - c. Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned...”*
 - d. Romans 5:12 *“Wherefore as by one man, sin entered into the world...”*
2. What is sin?

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- a. 1 John 3:14 “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law.**”
- b. Rev. 21:8 “But the fearful, and unbelieving...”

II. The Description that Speaks to Men of Hell (Vs. 43c-44; 45c-46; 47c-48; 50)

A. The Definition of Hell

1. The word ‘hell’ in this passage is the Greek word ‘gehenna’ and is used 12 times in the N.T. Eleven of those usages are from the lips of Christ Himself.
2. Gehenna was a place south of Jerusalem called the valley of the son of Hinnom. In the Old Testament, it was a place of pagan worship where children were offered in fire to appease the heathen god Molech (2 Chro. 28:3; 33:6). Godly king Josiah turned the place into the city dump-heap where worm infested rubbish burned continually. It became a graphic illustration of eternal hell, a place “where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.” (Paisley; Macarthur)

B. The Description of Hell Itself

1. Hell is, eternal, unquenchable fire
 - a. The word ‘hell’ is mentioned 3 times.
 - b. The word ‘fire’ is mentioned 4 times.
 - c. Five times hell is described in these verses as an unquenchable fire. **Note:** In the NIV, they have removed Vs. 44 & 46! If you could pour all the water from all the oceans of the entire world onto the flames of hell, it wouldn’t even put it out slightly.
 - d. Lenski: “A fire that is ‘unquenchable’ is by that very fact eternal. It is useless to dispute about the kind of fire that this is...Let no man quibble about the kind of fire, let him make sure that he will escape that fire.”
 - e. Hell is called “everlasting fire”- *“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:”* (Matt. 25:41)
 - f. Hell is called “eternal fire” – *“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”* (Jude 1:7)
 - g. Hell is called a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:42, 50)
 - h. Hell is called a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8)
 - i. Hell is called a salting with fire (Vs. 49)

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- i. Salt is a preserving agent in Scripture. The picture is of the eternal suffering of the unrepentant. The sinner's body will not be consumed in the flames of hell, they will be tormented for all eternity. When Moses looked on the burning bush, the bush was not consumed. So, it will be with the unsaved in hell. They will be burning in the flames of God's wrath, but not consumed.
 - ii. John Gill: "The fire of divine wrath is always burning, with that fire every one of them shall be salted: that fire shall be to them, what salt is to flesh; as salt keeps flesh from putrefaction and corruption, so the fire of hell, as it will burn, torture, and distress rebellious sinners, it will preserve them in their beings; they shall not be consumed in it...these words show and prove, that the soul in torment shall never die, or lose any of its powers and faculties."
 - iii. Matthew Henry: "Coals of fire shall be scattered upon them, as salt upon meat, and brimstone, as fire and brimstone were rained on Sodom. It will be salting with burning."
 - j. Hell is a tormenting fire – Matt. 13:42 & 50 *"And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."* Rev. 14:11 *"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever:"*
 - k. Hell is a tormenting flame (Luke 16:23, 24, 28)
2. Hell is also described in Scripture as:
 - a. Everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:9)
 - b. Everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. The mist of darkness (2 Peter 2:17)
 - d. The blackness of darkness forever (Jude 1:13)
 - e. Outer darkness (Matt. 8:12, 13, 30)
 3. Hell is further described in Luke 16:23-31
 - a. A place of torment (3 times) (Vs. 23, 24, 28)
 - b. A place of fire (Vs. 24)
 - c. A place of no mercy or relief (Vs. 24)
 - d. A place of remembrance and regret (Vs. 25)
 - e. A place of no hope of escape (Vs. 26)
 - f. A place of unanswered prayers (Vs. 27)

III. The Deliverance that Saves Men from Hell (Vs. 43b, 45b, 47b)

To escape this terrible place, there's one thing you must not do and there are two things you must do.

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You must not...

A. Rely on Good Works (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5)\

You must...

B. Repent of Sin

1. Repentance clearly implied in the passage where the sinner is exhorted to “cut off” the offending member that is the source of stumbling. The command is figurative. “As a surgeon does not hesitate to cut off a gangrenous hand to save a life, so evil and destructive practices, though precious to us as a very part of our lives, must be sacrificed to save the soul.” (Hiebert) There is to be a clear cut turning from sin to Christ.
2. “better to enter into life maimed” = ‘life’ has the definite article and therefore is a reference to eternal life. Swete: “Better to live under a sense of partial mutilation and incompleteness than to perish in the enjoyment of all one’s senses.” H.S. Paisley “It is better to enter into life and into God’s kingdom without earthly things that would hinder, than to remain in unbelief, and finally be cast into hell.”
3. Matthew Henry: “Though, by abandoning sin, we may for the present, feel ourselves as if we were halt and maimed, yet it is for life...Either sin must die, or we must die!”
4. “...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3, 5)
5. Acts 3:19 **“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;”**
6. Isaiah 55:6-7 **“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”**

You must...

C. Receive the Saviour

1. Only Christ can save from hell (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)
2. Christ died in our place (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 6:23; 1. Cor. 15:3)
3. Christ rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:4)

Conclusion:

1. Where are you going to spend eternity? Heaven or hell? Its YOUR decision. Trust Christ today.
2. Are we seeking to reach the lost and pull them out of the fire (Jude 1:23)?

Jesus Christ's View of Divorce & Remarriage

Text: Mark 10:1-12

Introduction:

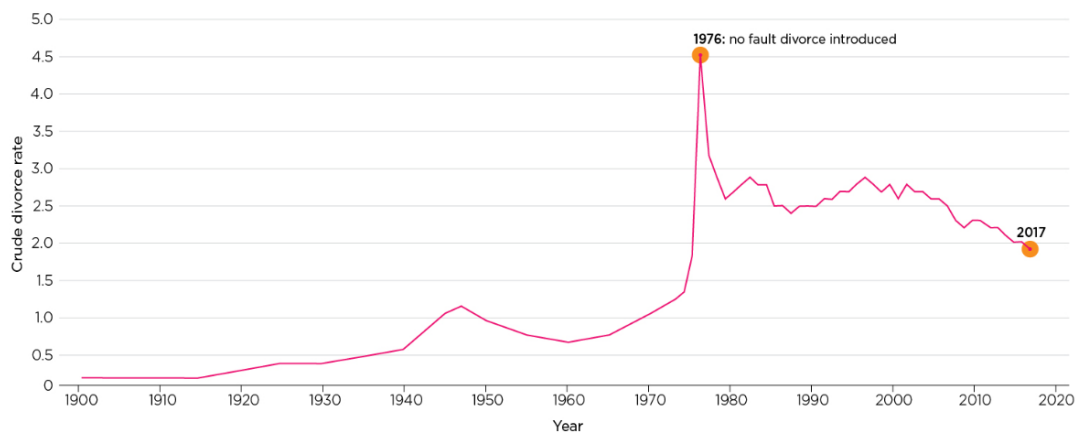
1. Marriage and the family as designed by God has been under attack from Satan from the beginning of time, starting with our first parents in the garden of Eden.
2. The breakdown of the family unit in our society has affected the church greatly. In many cases, churches and pastors have caved in to the pressure from the world and adopted a view of this issue that does not resemble the teaching of Scripture.
3. In this sermon we will seek to faithfully present our Lord's teaching on divorce and remarriage. Note: It is not possible to address every question relating to specific, real life examples of marriage breakdown that arise with a sermon on this subject. Our purpose in this sermon is to simply declare the Scriptural position on this subject.
4. Some marriage and divorce statistics¹
 - In 2017 there were 112,954 marriages
 - In 2017 there were 40,032 divorces in Australia
 - The average marriage lasts for 12 years in Australia
 - More couples are now living together before committing to marriage and are living together for longer periods of time. Many people see cohabitation as a precursor to marriage, and a means of testing their relationship before committing to marriage. **The number of couples living together has increased from 16% of couples in 1976 to 80.8% in 2016.**
 - Chart from Australian Institute of Family Studies²

Divorces

The crude divorce rate (divorces per 1,000 Australian residents) rose in the 1960s and 1970s and peaked at 4.6 per 1,000 resident population after the introduction of the *Family Law Act 1975*, which came into operation in January 1976 and allowed no-fault divorce.

The divorce rate started trending down in the 2000s. In 2016 it was 1.9, the lowest rate since 1976. It rose slightly in 2017 to sit at 2.0.

Crude divorce rate, 1901–2017



¹ <https://www.budgetdirect.com.au/blog/marriage-and-divorce-statistics-australia.html>

² <https://aifs.gov.au/facts-and-figures/divorce-rates-australia>

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I. The Contention of the Pharisees (Vs. 1-4)

A. Their Motive (Vs. 2)

1. “tempting him” = the Pharisees hoped to trap the Lord on a controversial subject and thereby discredit His ministry.
2. Note: The subject was a hotly debated at the time of Christ as well. Nothing has changed!

B. Their Mindset (Vs. 3-4)

1. They were trying to set a trap for the Lord but the Lord turns their question around and exposes their faulty thinking.
2. There were two schools of thought in Christ’s day among the Jews in relation to divorce:
 - a. The strict school of Shammai – allowed divorce only if the wife was guilty of unchastity.
 - b. The liberal school of Hillel – permitted divorce for even the most trivial reasons such as spoiling her husband’s dinner, going outside with her head uncovered, for being quarrelsome, childless or even if the husband found some other woman more attractive. (Phillips)
3. The Pharisees refer back to Deut. 24:1-4. Matthew records they refer to this as a ‘command’ (Matt. 19:7) but our Lord makes it clear in the next verse (Matt. 19:8) that it was a concession, not a command (‘suffered’). The word ‘suffered’ means to allow. It was permission, not a command.
4. Note: The Pharisees had their verses to justify divorce too!

II. The Refutation of the Lord (Vs. 5-9)

A. The Background to Moses’ Precept (Vs. 5)

1. “for the hardness of your heart” = Christ unmasks the heart issue behind Moses’ law of concession. It was not a precept given that reflected the heart and mind of God but was rather a concession given in response to man’s stubborn persistence in the sin of divorce.
2. A careful reading of Deut. 24:1-4 reveals that these measures were put in place, not for the promotion of divorce and remarriage, but to regulate what was already going on in the nation of Israel and to bring a measure of protection for the woman.
3. MacArthur: “Far from commanding or even permitting divorce, this injunction merely forbids a man to remarry a woman that he has divorced who has then been married to someone else. The passage recognizes and regulates the reality of divorce without condoning or condemning it.”
4. Hendriksen: “The real meaning of the passage is this: ‘Husband, you better think twice before you reject your wife. Remember that

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once you have put her away and she has become the wife of another you cannot take her back...”

5. “but from the beginning” = introduces a contrast between their view of marriage and the higher intention of God.

B. The Basis for Marriage Permanence (Vs. 6-9)

Christ takes them back to the beginning and to God’s original intent for marriage, outlining the following facts:

1. Marriage is rooted in the distinction between the sexes (Vs. 6). “The distinction of the sexes, established at creation, underlies the institution of marriage and is the foundation of the human family.” (Hiebert) Christ clearly believed in a literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis and its account of creation. Marriage according to God’s design can only be the joining together of one man and one woman. Any other inventions of man (e.g. unions of the same gender) are evil abomination and do **NOT** constitute marriage in the sight of God, no matter how many parliaments vote and say otherwise!
2. Marriage is the joining together of two (a man and a woman) into one unit (Vs. 7-9)
 - a. ‘leave’ = strong word meaning to leave behind, depart, forsake. While a special relationship with one’s parents should remain even after marriage, God’s design is for marriage to involve the establishment of a new family unit. If you are not ready to leave, you are not ready to cleave!
 - b. ‘cleave’ = also a strong word literally meaning to be glued to. Marriage is intended to be an unbreakable bond and if you break it, it leaves much damage. Illustration: Removing battens glued to the back of panels at previous job (Supawood).
 - c. Excerpt from Wedding Liturgy: *There is no tie on earth, so deep, so sacred, so binding, as that which joins a man and woman in the bond of marriage. Such a relationship, then, should not be entered into without prayerful thought, or due sincerity, but in the reverential fear of God.*
 - d. Marriage is “a union of two lives fused into one. They now form a unit, each forming part of the very existence of the other.” (Hiebert)
3. Marriage is a Divinely ordained institution and man is forbidden to interfere or tamper with it.
 - a. “God hath joined together” = yoked together by God. Marriage was created and ordained by God. God created male and female, making the marriage union possible (Gen. 1:27). It was God who said, “it is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen 2:18). God brought Even to Adam and performed the first wedding ceremony (Gen. 2:22-24). From every angle, it was God who established marriage as a Divine Institution!

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- b. “let not man” = no man has the right to separate those whom God has joined. This applies not just to the husband and wife in the marriage yoke but also to those external to a marriage who may try and interfere (e.g. family members, friends, counsellors and pastors that give unscriptural advice, immoral activities).
- c. “put asunder” = to divide, separate.
- d. Note: If a pastor takes a weak, unscriptural view of this issue, he will by default, weaken the marriages of the couples in the church he pastors.

III. The Education of the Disciples (Vs. 10-12)

A. The Disciple’s Question (Vs. 10)

- 1. Matthew’s account reveals the disciples were startled by Christ’s standard on this subject – “His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.” (Matt. 19:10) This is a sad reflection on the disciples view of marriage.
- 2. Note: If Christ’s position merely affirmed Shammai’s view that the only grounds for divorce was unchastity, it is doubtful the disciples would have been so surprised. Clearly our Lord was presenting a standard that was higher than both schools of thought prevalent at the time.

B. The Lord’s Instruction (Vs. 11-12)

- 1. Our Lord give a simple equation that applies to both men and women. It is this: Divorce + Remarriage = adultery. There is no way to escape the absoluteness of Christ’s position on this. If you marry a divorced person, you commit adultery!
- 2. Luke 16:18 *“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.”*
- 3. Question: What about the so-called exception clause in Matthew 19:9? *“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, **except it be for fornication**, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”* Some important considerations are as follows:
 - a. The Jewish context of Matthew is important. Both Mark and Luke wrote to Gentile audiences and left out the so called “exception clause”. Mark includes the scenario where a woman divorces her husband (Mk. 10:12) as this was common amongst Greeks and Romans but Matthew makes no mention of it as under Jewish law, only men could divorce their wives.
 - b. The modern versions use the word ‘adultery’ whereas the KJV translators wisely use the word ‘fornication’. Fornication, though a broad word that encompasses many different forms of

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immorality, primarily applies to pre-marital sex. Within the context of Matthew, and the Jewish betrothal system, it would refer to immorality committed during the betrothal period. Betrothal was as binding as marriage and could not be severed. However, our Lord gives the one exception to this where immorality was involved. Illustration: Joseph (Matt. 1:18-20)

Conclusion: Let me close with a three-fold challenge

1. A challenge to married couples – fight for your marriage! Resolve in your heart, if you haven't already, that there is NO place for divorce and remarriage and stay faithful to your vows no matter the cost. J.C. Ryle's three rules for marriage are helpful: "Happy are they, who in the matter of marriage observe three rules. The first is to marry only in the Lord, and after prayer for God's approval and blessing. The second is not to expect too much from their partners, and to remember that marriage is, after all, the union of two sinners, and not two angels. The third rule is to strive first and foremost for one another's sanctification. The more holy married people are, the happier they are. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it." (Eph. 5:25-26)
2. A challenge to remarried couples – if you find yourself in a position where you have violated the Bible's teaching you need to: 1. Repent of your sin of adultery 2. Stay committed to your present vows and marriage 3. Discourage others from doing the same thing. Don't promote divorce and remarriage Christian style!
3. A challenge to singles – do not enter into marriage lightly! Pray and seek God's will fervently. Apart from your salvation, it is probably the most significant decision you will ever make. Resolve in your heart **before** marriage that should God give you a spouse, it is "till death us do part." Remove from your heart and mind any thought there is an "out" if things don't work out.

Dedicating our Children to Christ

Text: Mark 10:13-16

Introduction:

1. This account is also found in Matthew 19:13-15 and Luke 18:15-17. Historically, this custom finds its roots in Jacob's blessing of Joseph's two sons in Genesis 48:14-15. It was a common practice for Jewish mothers to take their newborn children to the leader of the synagogue for a prayer of blessing.
2. Context: Christ and the disciples are journeying to Jerusalem. Christ and his disciples have retired to their lodgings (Vs. 10) before recommencing the journey (Vs. 17). They have just discussed Christ's teaching on divorce and remarriage (Vs. 1-9). While they are in the house, parents come to seek Christ in order that He might bless their children. It is of interest that this account comes right after Christ's teaching on divorce and remarriage. In these two sections we really get a comprehensive view of Christ's design for the family from the husband and wife relationship to the parent and child relationship.
3. This account teaches us some important principles concerning raising our children for Christ. We will consider these under 5 headings:

Look firstly at...

I. The Desire of the Parents (Vs. 13a)

A. The Purpose of their Desire

1. 'brought' = often translated 'offer'. This word was commonly used of sacrifices, hence suggesting the idea of dedication (Wuest)
2. "young children" = Exact age not mentioned but Luke uses the word 'infants'. Christ takes them in His arms (Vs. 16) so the plain sense indicates that these were little ones. They would be in what we today would call the pre-school age (Sorenson)
3. 'that' = indicates their goal, their specific desire
4. "touch them" = "*that he should put his hands on them, and pray:*" (Matt. 19:13) They wanted their little hearts to come under His gracious influence and power from a young age.
5. Getting practical: Bring your children to Christ...
 - a. In their infancy – bring them regularly before the throne of grace in prayer and surround them with a godly, Christ-centred home environment.
 - b. In early childhood – explain the Gospel to them and in time, challenge them to receive Christ as Saviour. Maintain regular prayer, family devotions and a Christ-centred, Bible-saturated home life (Deut. 6:7-8).

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c. Challenge: What is your number 1 priority for your child? Career? University? Money? To see our children saved and go on to fulfil God's plan for their lives should be our aim as parents.

6. Illustration: Moses – never underestimate the power of a godly home and its ability to shape a child at the youngest age.

B. The Persistency of their Desire

1. Efforts were made on the part of the parents to bring their children to Christ for His blessing upon their lives. The disciples repeated attempts ('rebuked' in impf. tense) were met by a persistent determination by the parents to get their children to Christ.
2. Godly parenting is not for the faint hearted. It requires discipline and dedication to maintain a godly home.

Look secondly at...

II. The Disapproval of the Disciples (Vs. 13b)

A. Their Inward Attitude

1. The disciples tended to be too conscious of rank and position – see 9:33-38. They had an inflated opinion of their own rank and importance. "They acted with an officious sense of their own importance as His protectors." (Hiebert)
2. They thought these little ones too insignificant to warrant the attention of the Master. Your attitude and actions towards little children says a lot about how Christlike and Spirit-filled you really are as a believer.

B. Their Outward Actions

1. 'rebuked' = to censure or correct
2. Getting practical: As Christian parents, we will encounter opposition as we seek to raise our children for Christ. Sometimes this opposition comes from Satan and the world.
3. Alarmingly, sometimes this opposition comes from the most unexpected quarters! In this case, the men closest to the Lord during His earthly ministry, completely got on the wrong side of the situation due to carnal thinking. Carnally minded Christians pose a real threat to the spiritual welfare of our children.
4. Challenge: we need to stand behind Christian parents and support them in their efforts to raise their children for Christ! Are you an encourager or discourager of Christian parents labouring for their children's spiritual well-being?

Look thirdly at...

III. The Defence from the Lord (Vs. 14)

A. Christ's Concern (14a)

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1. Encouragement to parents: You may or may not have the support of other people as you seek to raise your children for Christ but you can be assured of one thing, **Christ is on the side of parents whose aim is to raise a godly seed for God!**
2. “much displeased” = a term of strong emotion, means to feel pain. His heart was pained by what he saw. Gives us a window into the Saviour’s heart.
3. The disciples had failed to learn what Christ had just taught them (Mark 9:36-37)

B. Christ’s Command (14b)

1. ‘suffer’ = allow, permit
2. “forbid them not” = present imperative, “stop hindering them”
3. “for of such is the kingdom of God” = the kingdom is composed of those who possess these childlike characteristics.
4. Getting practical: When we have done all we can as parents to raise our children for Christ, we are ultimately dependent upon Christ to overcome the impossible situations we face and draw our children to Himself. We are reliant on the Lord in the battle for our children.

Look fourthly at...

IV. The Discourse of the Lord (Vs. 15)

A. The Conditions for Receiving Salvation (Vs. 15a)

Two key truths about salvation are presented by our Lord:

1. Truth # 1: Salvation must be received as a gift, it cannot be earned – “receive the kingdom of God” Salvation is not by works!
 - a. ‘receive’ = the kingdom must be accepted as a gift; it is not human achievement, is never gained on the basis of human merit. “Just as a child receives a gift from a loved one in guileless trustfulness, so the kingdom of God must be received as God’s gift in simple trusting faith. Here is the essence of the doctrine of justification by faith.” (Hiebert)
 - b. Eph. 2:8-9 “For by grace are ye saved...”
 - c. Titus 3:5 “Not by works of righteousness...”
 - d. Romans 4:4-5 “Now to him that worketh...”
2. Truth # 2: Salvation must be received with a child-like spirit
 - a. Children typify the qualities of heart that are required for salvation such as tender-heartedness, **humility** (lacking pride & self-righteousness), simple faith/trust, openness, receptivity, simplicity.
 - b. Matthew 18:3-4 “*And said, Verily I say unto you, **Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble***”

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himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven”

- c. We need humility to admit our sinful condition before God (Rom. 3:10, 23, 5:12, 1 John 3:4).
- d. We need humility to accept that no amount of good works on our part will save us (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).
- e. We need simple, childlike faith to believe the Gospel message and receive the gift of salvation (John 1:12; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 6:23).

B. The Consequences for Rejecting Salvation (Vs. 15b)

1. “shall not enter therein” = An absolute requirement. There is only ONE way to be saved and that’s by grace through faith.
2. The words “shall not” are from the double negative in the Greek text (ou me) and categorically exclude any other way of entry.

Look fifthly at...

V. The Dedication by the Lord (Vs. 16)

A. The Placement of His Hands upon them (Vs. 16a)

1. Christ now calls the parents and children to Him (Luke 18:16).
2. He takes these little ones in His arms, placing His hands on their little heads and praying for them. What a beautiful picture of the Saviour! “It reveals Christ’s love for children: - in its human side, as part of His character as man; in its deeper aspect as a revelation of the Divine nature.” (MacLaren)
3. Isaiah 40:11 *“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: **he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.**”*
4. Principle: the faithful efforts of these parents were blessed and rewarded by Christ. He fulfilled the desire of their hearts and honoured their attempts to bring their little ones to Him.

B. The Prayer of His Heart over them (Vs. 16b)

1. ‘blessed’ = in imperfect tense, signifying repeated action. This was no mechanical, cold prayer. This was a prayer that poured out of the heart of the Saviour for these little ones.
2. Note: No special grace, baptism or salvation took place. Christ simply blessed these little ones.

Conclusion:

1. Parents: Have you given your children back to God on a deep level, surrendering all your claims upon their lives?
2. Has there been a time in your life where you humbled yourself and with a child-like spirit, received Christ’s free offer of salvation?

Almost a Disciple

Text: Mark 10:17-31 (See also Matt. 19:16-22; Lk. 18:18-23)

Introduction:

1. In this passage we read of a man who came seeking the Lord Jesus Christ but who ended up turning away on account of his possessions. All three Gospel accounts reveal that he was in possession of great wealth. Matthew's Gospel reveals that he was a "young man" (Matt. 19:20) and Luke reveals that he was a 'ruler' (Lk. 18:18).
2. It contains a powerful challenge to those who would seek Christ for salvation. It also contains helpful principles for the ministry of soul-winning that the believer can learn from observing Christ the Master soul-winner.
3. We will divide the text into three portions for our study.

Look firstly at...

I. THE ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS CHRIST (VS. 17-22)

A. The Seeking of the Young Man (Vs. 17)

1. It was fervent (Vs. 17a)
 - a. 'running' = he was eager and earnest to meet Christ.
 - b. 'kneeled' = he was humble and respectful towards Christ.
Remember, he was a rich ruler so this was no small gesture.
2. It was faulty (Vs. 17b)
 - a. "Good Master" = his understanding of Christ's goodness was deficient as we will see. He viewed Christ merely as a good teacher, one who had wisdom and one whose standard of goodness could be achieved through self-effort. Matt. 9:16 "what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"
 - b. "what shall I do" = his focus was on what he could do to achieve his own salvation. He had been a zealous adherent of the legal code of the Pharisees and yet he sensed something was lacking. This is the common problem of mankind to turn to self instead of the Saviour to try and find the answer of salvation.
 - c. Remember! It's not about what you can do but about what has been done for you! "It is finished" (John 19:30). Romans 4:4-5 "Now to him that worketh..."

B. The Sifting of the Young Man (Vs. 18-20)

Christ, unlike too many soul-winners today, was not interested in a superficial outward profession with no inner substance. Christ was consistently sifting men and bringing them face to face with the realities of their sinful hearts, bringing them to the point of decision. Christ sifted this man in two key areas:

1. Concerning his understanding of the Lord (Vs. 18).

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- a. Christ's question is not a denial of His Deity. The issue was not whether Christ is good or not. The issue was this man's faulty understanding of goodness.
 - b. Christ makes it clear that goodness is not a human achievement but a Divine attribute. He is therefore confronting the seeker with the implications of calling Him good. If Christ is truly good, then that makes Him God! This is a bold affirmation of Christ's Deity consistent with His other claims but it is evident that this man is not prepared to accept this as the next time he addresses Christ he drops the word 'good' out of the title (Vs. 20).
2. Concerning his knowledge of the Law (Vs. 19-20).
- a. Christ quotes several commandments from the second table of the law that deal with one's relationship with his fellow man. Christ was not affirming this man's works-based system but rather seeking to use the law as the school master to lead him to Christ (Gal. 3:24).
 - b. The man's faulty understanding of the law is highlighted when he claims "all these have I observed from my youth." His understanding was similar to the Apostle Paul in his pre-conversion days. He thought that a strict outward conformity to the law was what was required and failed to understand the true spiritual nature of the law. "An answer more full of darkness and self-ignorance it is impossible to conceive." (Ryle)

C. The Stumbling block to the Young Man (Vs. 21-22)

1. The Divine Diagnosis (Vs. 21)
 - a. The Look from Christ (21a)
 - i. A searching look – 'beholding' The man's claim was exposed by the searching eyes of Christ. Christ saw right into the depths of the man's heart and knew the reality of his inner life and need.
 - ii. A rebuking look – our external show of righteousness is quickly penetrated by the eyes of Christ.
 - b. The Love of Christ (21b)
 - i. Love shone through the eyes of the Lord towards this man. Christ's heart towards sinners is revealed so touchingly. The word 'loved' "denotes not mere emotional affection but that high spiritual love which, regardless of the worthiness or unworthiness of the one loved, desires his highest welfare." (Hiebert)
 - ii. Note: This verse refutes the theory of Calvinism that God only loves the elect. "We deny that all mankind are the object of that love of God which moved him to send his Son to die..." (John Owen)
 - c. The Lack pointed out by Christ (21c)

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- i. It was Christ's love that lead him to point out the idol that was on the throne of the man's heart that stood in between him and salvation. Real love is connected to the truth and is uncompromising. Christ put his finger on the chief idol of the man's life. "His root sin was that his wealth had usurped the place of God in his life." (Hiebert)
 - ii. Christ's words contain the twin truths of repentance and faith. In order for this man to receive salvation, he had to turn from his idols and put his faith in Christ in whom alone is salvation. For this man it was his wealth but it can be many different things depending upon the individual.
 - iii. Isaiah 55:6-7 *"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: **Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts:** and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."*
 - iv. Note: The danger of much "gospel preaching" today is that it side steps repentance toward God. In effect, the sinner is told he can keep his idols and still add Jesus and eternal life to his life!
2. The Damnable Decision (Vs. 22)
- a. "sad...grieved" = the response of the man's heart was one of sorrow. He should have joyfully accepted the terms! The gain would have far outweighed the cost!
 - b. "went away" = how tragic! He turned his back on the Saviour and salvation. He turned his back on Divine love and forgiveness. He chose earthly riches over eternal riches; religion rather than redemption and ultimately therefore, hell rather than heaven.
 - c. Scroggie: "He wanted God, but not at the cost of his gold; he wanted life, but not at the expense of luxury; he was willing to serve but not to sacrifice."
 - d. Challenge: What decision will you make? Please choose Christ rather than your sin!

Look secondly at...

II. THE EDUCATION FROM JESUS CHRIST (VS. 23-27)

Christ now turns His attention to His disciples and uses what they have just witnessed to teach them an important lesson in the ministry of reaching others with the Gospel.

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A. The Problem of Riches (Vs. 23-25)

1. The declaration (Vs. 23)
 - a. “how hardly” = with what difficulty
 - b. “have riches” = riches make it hard for a person to enter the narrow gate. Riches tend to make a person less conscious of his spiritual need. There is a definite link between the affluence and materialism of our nation and the general indifference to the message of the Gospel.
 - c. In the young man, “wealth revealed its power beyond most other things in life to work a deadly effect upon the will when a seeker is confronted with the demand to choose between it and the kingdom.” (Hiebert)
 - d. Maclaren: “Riches may become a hindrance to entering the kingdom...That danger besets those who have them and those who have them not. Many a poor man is as much caught in the toils of the love of money as the rich are.”
2. The clarification (Vs. 24)
 - a. The disciples were shocked at Christ’s statement. They held the common misconception of the day that wealth was a sign of Divine favour. “The dominant Jewish view was that riches were an indication of Divine favour and a reward for piety.” (Brooks)
 - b. “trust in riches” = Christ further clarifies the truth of His statement and gets to the heart of the issue. The sin is not in the having of riches but in the trusting in riches. Riches are deceitful (Matt. 13:22) and have a way of luring the soul into a sense of complacency about spiritual things. This false reliance on wealth almost always comes with its possession.
 - c. Note: There is a challenge for the Christian here also concerning the need to have the right perspective on material wealth. “...*if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*” (Psalm 62:10) 1 Tim. 6:6-10 “But godliness with contentment is great gain...”
3. The illustration (Vs. 25)
 - a. Christ uses a startling word picture to further impress upon his disciples the truth of his statement.
 - b. H.S. Paisley “It is easier for the camel, the largest animal known in Palestine, to go through the eye of a common needle, the smallest opening known, than for one who trusts in riches to enter the kingdom of God.”

B. The Perplexity of the Disciples (Vs. 26)

1. Their emotional response (Vs. 26a). They were in utter shock and astounded beyond all measure by Christ’s words. This reveals there was a problem in their thinking otherwise they would not have been so shocked!

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2. Their verbal response (Vs. 26b). They begin to question among themselves “Who then can be saved?” The impossibility of salvation from a human standpoint dawns upon them not just in relation to the rich specifically but all men generally.

C. The Power of God (Vs. 27)

1. Salvation is impossible with men (Vs. 27a)
2. Salvation is possible with God (Vs. 27b). God has the power to transform men through His work of salvation.

Look thirdly at...

III. THE ENQUIRY TO JESUS CHRIST (VS. 28-31)

A. The Disciple’s Request (Vs. 28)

1. Peter’s claim – “we have left all”. In contrast to the rich young ruler, they had been willing to forsake all to follow Christ.
2. Peter’s question – “what shall we have therefore?” (Matt. 19:27). Peter and the other disciples were interested to know what their reward would be for following Christ.

B. The Disciple’s Reward (Vs. 29-30)

1. For the Apostles personally (Matt. 19:28).
2. For the Christians generally (Vs. 29-30)
 - a. The sacrifices made (29)
 - i. Sacrifice of Property – ‘house’
 - ii. Sacrifice of Family – “brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children”
 - iii. Sacrifice of Country – “or lands”
 - b. The rewards received (30)
 - i. Rewards now (30a)
 - The blessings of God’s provision and care.
 - The blessings of God’s family.
 - Note: This is not teaching the prosperity Gospel concept. That is made clear by the words “with persecutions”. There are hardships and afflictions that best the pilgrim on his journey through this life but how much greater are the blessings he experiences!
 - ii. Rewards in eternity (30b)

C. The Disciple’s Reminder (Vs. 31)

Conclusion:

1. What stands between you and Christ? What is holding you back from receiving salvation?
2. As believers are we living for now or eternity? Have we been deceived by the deceitfulness of riches?

Leadership Christ's Way

Text: Mark 10:32-45 (See also Matt. 20:17-28; Lk. 18:31-34)

Introduction:

1. There is much talk about leadership today, even amongst Bible believers. Leadership conferences have been a fad for a couple of decades now amongst some Independent Baptists. But what does leadership really look like from Christ's perspective? This passage reveals God's thoughts on what is true leadership. The central truth is this; servanthood equals true leadership.
2. It is vital that we frequently check our thinking on leadership against the principles set down by Christ in the Word of God as it is easy for the philosophies and ideals of the world to subtly creep in.
3. We will study this theme of servant leadership under 3 points:

I. THE EXAMPLE OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP (VS. 32-34)

A. Christ's Direction towards the Cross (Vs. 32a)

1. "in the way going up to Jerusalem" = Christ and His disciples have resumed their journey towards Jerusalem.
2. "Jesus went before them" = Christ walked out in front of the disciples. His face was set like a flint (Is. 50:7) towards Jerusalem knowing fully what would befall him there. Christ was walking the Calvary road of self-denial and self-sacrifice. The disciples were walking the carnal road of self-seeking and self-promotion.
3. "they were amazed...afraid" = the disciples' response to Christ's determined stride towards Jerusalem was one of astonishment and fear. They were conscious of the dangers that would be present in Jerusalem and as yet had not entered into an understanding of the impending cross.
4. Swete: "The Lord walked in advance of the Twelve with a solemnity and determination which foreboded danger...His manner struck awe into the minds of the Twelve, who were beginning at length to anticipate an impending disaster."

B. Christ's Discussion about the Cross (Vs. 33-34)

This is the third and final announcement to the Twelve of his coming Passion since Peter's historic confession at Caesarea Philippi (See Mark 8:31; 9:31-32). This third is the fullest of the three. Christ would be:

1. Delivered (Vs. 33). The word 'delivered' means to be handed over to. Christ would be delivered to the religious leader who would then deliver Him to the Roman authorities
2. Condemned (Vs. 33). Christ would be condemned to death by the religious leaders of his own nation but the execution would be

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performed by the Gentile rulers. The Jews did not have the power to enact capital punishment at this time. Christ's prophecy was fulfilled exactly.

3. Mocked (Vs. 34). Christ was mocked by Herod, the Roman soldiers, the religious leaders and others.
4. Scourged (Vs. 34). Christ was brutally whipped and lashed.
5. Spat upon (Vs. 34). To spit upon someone is to show them the utmost contempt.
6. Killed (Vs. 34). Christ died for our sins!
7. Raised (Vs. 34). Christ would rise again the third day, victorious over death.
8. Note: Luke 18:34 reveals the disciples again did not understand what Christ said. Wrong thinking hinders our receptivity to the truth!

II. THE ERROR FROM SERVANT LEADERSHIP (VS. 35-41)

A. The Three's Request (Vs. 35-37)

1. The Error in their Approach (Vs. 35-36)
 - a. "whatsoever we shall desire" = they tried to get the Lord of glory to commit to giving them what they wanted before telling Him the specifics of their request. This is the first hint that what was motivating the hearts of James and John was not of God. "Perhaps because of an inner consciousness that their selfish request might properly be refused by Him, they sought to bind Him in advance." (Hiebert)
 - b. Challenge: Very often we approach the Lord in a similar way. We have already thought things through from our perspective and decided what we think is best and then we simply want the Lord to endorse and approve of our plans! When are we going to learn that it is not about us getting God to fulfill our plans but about us submitting to His will!
 - c. Christ did not make such a promise! (Vs. 36) "He was not about to write them a blank check so that they could fill it in for any amount they desired. They were too much out of tune with reality for that."
2. The Error in their Ambition (Vs. 37)
 1. "right and left" = in a royal court, they were the places of highest honour.
 2. Their quest was after position, prominence and power. While Christ's heart and mind was filled with thoughts of crucifixion, theirs was full of self-glorification. While He thought about the cross, they thought about the crown! "While He strode before the Twelve, absorbed in thoughts of the Cross to which He was

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pressing, they, as they followed...were thinking not of what He would suffer, but of what they might gain.” (Maclaren)

3. Matthew’s account reveals that their mother Salome also formed a part of the delegation. Whether the idea originated with their mother or with themselves, her natural motherly desire for her sons to excel lead her to support the idea. Parents, be careful that your desires and ambitions for your children are surrendered to the Lord lest you be a stumbling block to the will of God in your children’s lives.
4. Challenge: The spirit of self-ambition of James and John is in each one of us. Beware of the self-life and how it can so easily get tangled up in our service for the Lord. E.g. “what’s my position in the church?” Our naturally tendency is to gravitate towards positions of service where there is a degree of recognition involved. All involved in some form of up-the-front ministry need to do a regular evaluation of their heart motives. The most important form of recognition is not on earth but in heaven where even the smallest acts of service are noted and rewarded (Mk. 9:41; Mt. 10:42).
5. Jeremiah 45:5 ***“And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not:”***

B. The Lord’s Reply (Vs. 38-40)

Christ points out...

1. The ignorance of their request (Vs. 38)
 - a. “the cup” = description of Christ’s sufferings used by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (E.g. Matt. 26:39).
 - b. “the baptism” = another reference to Christ’s sufferings. He was going to be immersed in shame, agony and unspeakable sufferings.
2. The implications of their request (Vs. 39)
 - a. “We can” = what rash self-confidence and yet at the same time, such simple-hearted devotion.
 - b. “ye shall indeed” = James and John would experience suffering as followers of Christ. James was the first Apostle to be martyred (Acts 12:2). John would be a living martyr, enduring exile and reproach for the Name of Christ.
3. The impossibility of their request (Vs. 40)
 - a. The positions they requested could not be given to them as they were prepared for others by the Father (Matt. 20:23).
 - b. Morison: “He who goes nearest in time to Christ the crucified shall get nearest in eternity to Christ the glorified.”
 - c. Challenge: Be content to occupy the position God has for you and be faithful!

C. The Ten’s Reaction (Vs. 41)

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1. “much displeased” = Same word used of Christ in Vs. 14. It means to feel pain, to grieve, to be indignant. The report of James and John’s request stirred a spirit of jealousy in the rest of the disciples. The other disciples were not grieved in a spiritual way over a request so carnal and selfish but because they coveted the same position for themselves! “The ten betrayed their spiritual shallowness by being indignant at the spiritual shallowness of the two.” (Hiebert)
2. The unity of the Apostleship was now under threat by these carnal attitudes and disputations.
3. This spirit of carnality over position can rear its ugly head in many ways in a church:
 - Feeling threatened by new members coming into the church.
 - Feeling misplaced when more ministry workers start participating in the same ministry as you.
 - Feelings and thoughts about whether your service in the church is appreciated or recognized.
 - Pulling rank on the preacher or other church members based on how long you have been a part of the church.
 - Being quick to sign up for an up the front ministry but slow to join a prayer clock or a behind the scenes ministry such as cleaning, yard maintenance, helping the preacher etc...

III. THE EXHORTATION FOR SERVANT LEADERSHIP (VS. 42-45)

“Our Lord shows the difference between that which is esteemed great in the Gentile world system, and the standard of greatness in the spiritual kingdom which he was inaugurating.” (Wuest)

A. Leadership the World’s Way (Vs. 42)

1. “ye know” = Christ begins with their knowledge of greatness as it operated in the Gentile world, the worldly principle of greatness.
2. “exercise lordship over them” = means to exercise dominion over, to bring under one’s power, to subdue, hold in subjection. “The compound verb is literally “lord it down on them.” It indicates the imposition of power from above; they use their lordship to their own advantage.” (Hiebert)
3. “exercise authority upon them” = to wield power over those under your control; “to impose authority from above, exploiting those beneath.” (Hiebert)
4. Note: Any position of authority can be misused in this way. It is vital that our authority be exercised in a Christ-like manner and within the boundaries set by God.

B. Leadership the Saviour’s Way (Vs. 43-45)

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This verse is the key verse in Mark's Gospel and contains the clearest statement as to the purpose of Christ's coming in the Gospels. "But this theological declaration was made to enforce a practical truth for everyday conduct." (Hiebert)

1. The Saviour's explanation of servanthood (Vs. 43-44)
 - a. "But so shall it not be among you" = "In the world, the higher men are, the more they are served; in Christ's kingdom, the higher men are, the more they serve." (Maclaren)
 - b. 'minister' = a helper, a servant. The root word is the same word translated 'deacon' elsewhere. The word is probably connected with the verb 'dioko,' to hasten after, pursue (perhaps originally said of a runner). The word 'deacon' is a compound word made up of 'through' and 'dust'. Picture = one who moves quickly to perform his duties and makes a trail of dust in his haste. Interestingly, the English word minister comes from the Latin word 'minus' meaning 'less'. So to be a minister is to be the lesser, the minimum!
 - c. 'servant' = a bond slave, one who forgoes his own rights in order to serve others for Christ's sake.
2. The Saviour's example of servanthood (Vs. 45)
 - a. "came not to be ministered unto" = Christ was served during his earthly ministry (e.g. Lk. 8:2-3) but that was not the **reason or purpose** for which He came. Christ spent Himself serving others rather than compelling others to serve Him.
 - b. "but to minister" = Christ came not to be served but to serve. This is the polar opposite to the thinking and philosophy of the world.
 - c. "to give his life a ransom" = Christ's service would take Him all the way to the cross. The word 'ransom' refers to the price paid to set slaves and captives free, the price of redemption (See 1 Peter 1:18-19). We are set free from sin today because of the servanthood and sacrifice of Christ the Servant of the Lord.
 - d. "for many" = the word 'for' means "instead of" and conveys the truth of substitution.
 - e. Challenge: If Christ, the Eternal Son of God, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe could humble Himself as a servant even to the point of death, then we have NO excuse for not adopting the attitude and position of a servant in our lives.

Conclusion: Do you desire true greatness? Then be a servant like Christ!

Twas Blind but Now I See

Text: Mark 10:46-52

Introduction:

1. The context: Christ and the disciples are journeying to Jerusalem and pass through Jericho (new Jericho built by Herod the Great about 1.6 km's from site of the O.T. Jericho). They were now on the last stage of the journey to Jerusalem, Jericho being about 15 miles (24 km) northeast of Jerusalem. They are joined by a great number of people making their way to Jerusalem for the Passover.
2. Christ has just taught the disciples a lesson in servant hood, pointing to himself as the supreme example (Vs. 45). This miracle is an example of the very truth Christ had just taught the disciples. We see the Lord of glory, serving a blind beggar by healing him.
3. This is the last miracle of healing recorded in Mark's Gospel. It presents a powerful picture of salvation and of Christian discipleship. We will study this miracle under 4 headings.

I. His Darkness (Vs. 46)

A. He was Blind (46a)

1. "blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus" = only Mark preserves the man's name. Possibly it was because he was well known to the early church.
2. Blindness was a common condition amongst people of that time. A Common belief was that blindness indicated a person was under the condemnation of God. Note question of the disciples concerning man blind from his birth in John 9:2 *"And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"*
3. Our hearts are darkened due to spiritual blindness (Rom. 1:21; Eph. 4:18).
 - a. There is religious blindness: Christ rebuked the Pharisees of His day for their spiritual blindness (John 9:39-41; Matt. 15:14)
 - b. There is Satanic blindness: 2 Cor 4:4 *"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."*
 - c. Spurgeon: "We are all by nature blind and poor. It is true we account ourselves able enough to see; but this is but one phase of our blindness. Our blindness is of such a kind that it makes us think our vision perfect; whereas, when we are enlightened by

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the Holy Spirit, we discover our previous sight to have been blindness indeed.”

B. He was a Beggar (46b)

1. This man was poor and hopeless. Without Christ, we are spiritual paupers.
2. Spurgeon: “We are also by nature poor. Our father Adam spent our birthright, lost our estates...blindness and beggary are the lot of all men after a spiritual fashion, till Jesus visits them in love.”

II. His Desire (Vs. 47-48)

A. The Stimulation of his desire (Vs. 47a)

1. “when he heard that it was Jesus” = the mention of Jesus’ presence ignited hope and faith in this man’s heart. Luke 18:36-37 “And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.”
2. This man had not seen Christ but had evidently heard of Him prior to this point in time and had come to believe He was the Messiah and able to heal him. “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” (Rom. 10:17) You don’t have to see Christ to come to faith! Hearing the truth about Him is enough!
3. This was a pivotal moment in the life of Bartimaeus. Maclaren writes, “Jesus Christ was passing by. He was never to be in Jericho any more. If Bartimaeus did not get his sight then he would be blind all his days. Christ and His salvation are offered to thee now. Perhaps if you let Him pass, you will never hear Him call again and may abide in the darkness for ever.”
4. **Challenge:** There comes a time in each of our lives where we are confronted with Christ and his claims and must answer the question, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” (Matt. 27:22) We come to a point of decision to either stay in our spiritual blindness or accept His healing touch. Perhaps today, this message is that very moment for you!

B. The Proclamation of his desire (Vs. 47b)

1. “began to cry out” = he shouted loudly so as to be heard. It was a loud and urgent cry.
2. “Jesus, thou Son of David” = a title of the Messiah. Reveals that this man understood who Jesus was. Messiah would come from the line of David (Matt. 1:1). It was an open confession of Jesus’ Messiahship. “I am the root and offspring of David...” (Rev. 22:16)
3. The O.T. prophesied that the Messiah would heal the blind: Isaiah 35:5-6 “***Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.***”

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4. “have mercy on me” = he knew he needed Christ’s mercy and it was a plea bound to be answered because mercy is an Attribute of God. It is in His nature to show mercy. Micah 7:18 *“Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because **he delighteth in mercy.**”* “On the mount of crucifixion fountains opened deep and wide; through the floodgates of God’s mercy flowed a vast and gracious tide. Grace and love, like mighty rivers, poured incessant from above, and heav’n’s peace and perfect justice kissed a guilty world in love.”

C. The Opposition to his desire (Vs. 48a)

1. “many charged him” = the word ‘charged’ means to rebuke or censure severely (Wuest).
2. “hold his peace” = to be silent. Reason not given but likely they thought this man to be of too low a standing to warrant the Lord’s attention. After all, according to the popular view of the day, he was just suffering God’s judgment because of his sin.
3. Challenge: A large chorus of voices attempted to silence the man and to prevent him coming to Christ. What voices are hindering you from coming to Christ?
4. The good news is that Jesus Christ came to save broken, sinful people:
 - a. Luke 4:18 Jesus said, *“**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,**”*
 - b. Romans 5:6-8 *“For when we were yet without strength...”*
 - c. 1 Timothy 1:15 *“This is a faithful saying...”*

D. The Determination of his desire (Vs. 48b)

1. “cried the more a great deal” = the opposition only strengthened his resolve to get the Lord’s attention. What made him so determined to continue seeking Christ? He was evidently convinced of two truths:
 - a. His condition. He knew he was a blind begger and he was in no doubt as to his need.
 - b. Christ’s cure. He was in no doubt as to who Jesus was and knew He had the power to help him. This reveals the strength of this man’s faith.
5. “thou Son of David, have mercy on me” = he repeats the same plea for mercy.

III. His Deliverance (Vs. 49-52a)

A. Jesus Heard (Vs. 49-50)

1. “Jesus stood still” = the cry of a helpless sinner, stopped the Lord of glory, God manifest in the flesh, the Creator of the universe, in His

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tracks. And Christ still responds to the cry of sinners for mercy. Oh how the loving heart of the Saviour is moved towards sinners (John 3:16-17).

2. “commanded him to be called” = a rebuke to those opposing this man.
3. “he casting away his garment” = “a large, heavy, outer garment. The poor often slept wrapped up in such a cloak.” (Phillips) It pictures his earnestness to respond to the call of Christ. He ran to Christ and cast aside anything that would hinder him from getting to Him. “You have to abandon something if you are to go to Christ to be healed...there is something that entangles your legs and keeps you from finding your way to Him.” (Maclaren)

B. Jesus Helped (Vs. 51)

1. “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” Christ questions this man to draw out a specific request. He had issued a general call for mercy but Christ wanted him to express his need more precisely.
2. Question: If Christ asked you this question, what would your answer be? What do you desire Christ to do for you? It is important that we understand what we are coming to Christ for. This man had a clear view of his need, to receive his sight. So, when we come to Christ for salvation, we need to have a clear understanding of what we are coming to be saved from.
3. ‘Lord’ = Same word used by Mary Magdalene when she saw the risen Christ in John 20:16. A title of deep reverence.

C. Jesus Healed (Vs. 52a)

1. Jesus had compassion on this man – “*So Jesus had **compassion** on them...*” (Matt. 20:34)
2. Jesus touched his eyes (Matt. 20:34).
3. Jesus pronounced him whole – “thy faith hath made thee whole”
 - a. “made whole” = comes from word most often translated ‘save’ in the N.T. (93 times).
 - i. He was made whole (saved) physically.
 - ii. He was made whole (saved) spiritually. The same phrase is expressed in Luke’s account as “thy faith hath saved thee.” (Lk. 18:42)
 - iii. Maclaren: “Faith was the path by which Christ’s mercy rushed into the man’s soul...My faith is the hand that grasps His; it is His hand, not mine, that holds me up. My faith lays hold of the rope; it is the rope and the Person above who holds it, that lift me out of “the horrible pit and the miry clay.”
 - iv. Note: The word is in the perfect tense indicating a permanent condition. He was changed forever!

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- b. Healing was instantaneous – “immediately” (one of Mark’s favourite words). Salvation takes place in a moment of time.

IV. His Discipleship (Vs. 52b; Luke 18:43)

A. He had a new Path (Vs. 52b)

1. “followed Jesus in the way” = he became a follower of Christ. He had a new attachment to the Lord.
2. Spurgeon: “There is but one thing the poor blind man now longs for – it is that he may always see the man who has opened his eyes. What a beautiful picture of the true convert this is. The moment his sins are forgiven, the one thing he wants to do is to serve Christ.”
3. Note: Observe the order. He was first saved by faith, then he became a follower of Christ. The modern, watered down, 21st century Gospel often tells people to “follow Jesus” but fails to emphasise that they must first be saved!
4. It is said of the 144 thousand in Revelation 14:4 “*These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.*”
5. The Christian life is described in the Book of Acts as “this way” We are called to a whole new life as followers of Christ. We no longer walk the broad road of destruction, having entered salvation through Christ the door/gate, we walk the narrow road. We no longer live autonomous, selfish lives. Our direction and destiny are in the hands of our new Master. His instructions are our new code for living. This is life, not legalism!

B. He had a new Praise (Luke 18:43)

Luke 18:43 “*And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*”

1. Christ receives glory from the man himself.
2. Christ receives glory from those who witness the miracle.
3. Psalm 40:1-3 “*I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: **many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.***”
4. Thanksgiving is to be a prominent part of our Christian walk: Col. 1:12-14 “Giving thanks unto the Father...”

Conclusion: Sinner, Christ has drawn near to you this day. Will you come to Him for salvation from your sinful condition? Saint, are you living the life of a disciple? Are we living in obedience to Christ and His Word?

The King Welcomed Yet Rejected

Text: Mark 11:1-10 (See also Matt. 21:1-11; Lk. 19:29-44; Jn. 12:12-19)

Introduction: Let's endeavour to paint the scene for this event.

1. The Timeline: In this chapter we enter the final week of the Lord's life before He was crucified. Christ and His disciples have been traveling to Jerusalem and have now arrived in Bethany from Jericho and are staying at the home of Lazarus and his two sisters Mary and Martha (John 12:1-2).
2. The Topography: In Vs. 1 we have mention of Jerusalem, Bethphage, Bethany and the Mount of Olives.
 - The village of **Bethany** was a short distance of 15 furlongs (approx. 2 miles or 3.2 kms) from Jerusalem according to John 11:18 situated on the Eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. It was about a mile in distance from the summit of the Mount of Olives.
 - The exact location of the village of **Bethphage** is unknown but it was also close to Bethany and the Mount of Olives. It was likely a village on the road from Bethany to the Mount of Olives to which Christ sent the two disciples to fetch the donkey.
 - The **Mount of Olives** is east of and adjacent to Jerusalem's old city. Alongside Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary, the Mount of Olives is one of the most significant mountains in Biblical history. From this Mount Palm Sunday procession commenced. From this Mount Christ ascended after His resurrection and to this Mount He will one day return at His Second Coming.
3. We will now study this momentous event commonly known as Palm Sunday or the Triumphal Entry under 4 headings.

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE KING (VS. 1-6)

There are two key aspects to the preparations for the Lord's procession:

A. An All-Knowing Instruction (Vs. 1-4)

1. The Omniscience of the Command (Vs. 1-3)
 - a. Christ's foretelling of these events is a testament to His Divine nature. Christ is exhibiting the Divine Attribute of Omniscience (all knowing) in this event.
 - b. This is further proof of the Divinity and Deity of Christ. He was more than just a good man, He was the God Man, God incarnate, God come in human flesh.
2. The Obedience to the Command (Vs. 4)
 - a. "And they went their way" = they were obedient to Christ's command. Matthew puts it this way "And the disciples went, and **did as Jesus commanded them,**" (Matt. 21:6).

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- b. Obedience is at the heart of discipleship and obedience requires faith; faith that God will come through and fulfill what He has said would happen.
- c. One of the great blessings of being an obedient disciple is the privilege of seeing God do marvellous and miraculous things as we walk in obedience.
- d. What a privilege that God allows us to participate and play a role in the unfolding of His grand, eternal plan!

B. An Available Instrument (Vs. 5-6)

Consider for a moment the unnamed owners of the donkey (Lk. 19:33) and his availability for the Lord to use:

1. The Surrender in their Obedience (Vs.6)
 - a. Initially the taking of the colt was questioned (Vs. 5) but at the mention of the Lord's Name (Vs. 3), the owners were willing to release it for the Master's use. Evidently, they were disciples of Christ since the Lord's Name meant something to him. Clearly their attitude was that their possessions were at the Lord's disposal to use as He pleased.
 - b. "the Lord hath need of him" = what a striking thought that the Lord would need me for His work! Christ does not need us in the sense that we need to provide something He lacks or in the sense that He cannot do His work without us. But He needs us in the sense that He has ordained in His perfect wisdom that His work be done through us.
 - c. Challenge: Are you and your possessions available for the Lord to use? Is your donkey available for the Lord?
2. The Speed of their Obedience (Vs. 3)
 - a. 'straightway' = the response would be immediate. Imagine what would have happened if they had hesitated and delayed? They would have missed the greatest honour of his life.
 - b. Challenge: Are we delaying our obedience to the Lord in some area?
 - c. Maclaren: "Many possibilities of joy and blessing are lost by us through not yielding on the instant to Christ demands...As soon as I know what Christ wants from me, without delay let me do it; for if I begin with delaying, I shall probably end with declining."

II. THE PREDICTION OF THE KING (VS. 7; MATT. 21:4-5)

Christ's riding on a donkey into Jerusalem on this particular day in history was very significant prophetically, a significance the Jews missed. There are 3 clear O.T. prophecies concerning this event:

A. Jacob's Prophecy (Gen. 49:10-11)

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1. Gen. 49:10-11 “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*. **Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine**; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:”
2. ‘Shiloh’ means “peaceful and prosperous one” (Matthew Henry) and is a title of Messiah.

B. Daniel’s Prophecy (Dan. 9:25)

1. Dan. 9:25-26 “Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the **Messiah the Prince** *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself:”
2. From the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. (Neh. 2:1-8) to restore and rebuild Jerusalem there would be 483 prophetic years until Christ was presented to the Jewish Nation as their Prince. Sir Robert Anderson in his excellent book “The Coming Prince” demonstrates that this prophecy was fulfilled to the very day when Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.
3. John Phillips summarizes this position as follows: “Probably the most convincing attempt to calculate the countdown from the signing of the decree to the death of Christ is that of Sir Robert Anderson. He put the edict for the rebuilding of the city as the first of Nisan, 445 B.C. From that date to Messiah the Prince was to be 69×7 of years = 483 years. The Hebrews used a 360-day calendar, so $483 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days} = 173,880 \text{ days}$. Sir Robert’s calculations show that from the tenth of Nisan, 445 B.C., to the end of the 173,880 days brings us to the tenth of Nisan in the eighteenth year of Tiberius, the day when the Lord made His public Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and presented Himself to the nation as “Messiah the Prince.” Sir Robert Anderson contends that this prophecy of Daniel was fulfilled to the very day.”
4. As Daniel’s prophecy predicted, Messiah the Prince would be cut off which is exactly what happened when Christ was crucified within a few short days.

C. Zechariah’s Prophecy (Zech. 9:9)

1. This prophecy is quoted in both Matthew’s and John’s accounts:
 - a. Matthew 21:4-5 “All this was done, **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet**, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.”

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- b. John 12:14-15 “And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; **as it is written**, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.”
2. Zechariah 9:9 “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and **having salvation**; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” Christ came to bring salvation to His people and He still brings salvation to needy hearts today. Matthew 1:21 “*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name **JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.***”
Significantly, Christ entered Jerusalem the same day that the Passover Lambs were being selected. Christ entered Jerusalem as the Perfect Lamb, chosen by the Father as the perfect sacrifice for sin (John 1:29, 36).

III. THE PRESENTATION OF THE KING (VS. 8-10)

A. The Honours Shown to the King (Vs. 8)

1. Garments Spread (Vs. 8a)
 - a. This was “a customary way of expressing submission to a monarch. It acknowledged that the king was elevated above the common people, and symbolically affirmed that they were under his feet.” (MacArthur) “It was an ancient practice of welcoming a new sovereign.” (Hiebert)
 - b. Illustration: Jehu’s Coronation – “Then they hastened, and took **every man his garment**, and put *it* under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king.” (2 Kings 9:13)
2. Palms Strawed (Vs. 8b)
 - a. John 12:13 “Took branches of **palm trees**, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna:”
 - b. Palm branches were a symbol of joy and victory (See Rev. 7:9). According to Jewish History as recorded in First Maccabees, when the Jews recaptured Jerusalem from the Syrians during the intertestamental period they “entered it with praise and palm branches.” (1 Macc. 13:51) (MacArthur)
3. While these outward displays of homage did not go far enough as we shall soon see, they were appropriate and fitting the Kingly position of our Lord Jesus Christ. How much honour do we show our King?

B. The Hosannas Shouted to the King (Vs. 9-10)

1. Matthew notes that there was “a very great multitude” (Mt. 21:8). Luke notes that the rejoicing and praise from the multitude

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commenced on Christ's descent from the Mount of Olives and was largely motivated by the miracles they had seen (Lk. 19:37).

2. 'Hosanna' = based on a Hebrew word meaning "save now we pray." Interestingly, this same Hebrew word is the root of the name 'Jesus' (J.A. Alexander). It was "probably an appeal for Divine help to bring about the expected messianic deliverance through Jesus." (Hiebert) The phrase "Hosanna in the highest" was a reference to this prayer being presented in the highest places (heaven itself).
3. "Blessed is he that cometh" = another Messianic reference. Literally means "the one coming". Luke says, "Blessed by **the King** that cometh in the name of the Lord..." (Lk. 19:38)
4. "Blessed by the kingdom of our father David" = a reference to the Messianic kingdom which had long been anticipated by the Jews. This brings us to the heart of the crowd's expectation and hope. They had not thought of a crucified Messiah who would take away their sin. Their thoughts were of a political Messiah who would deliver them from their Roman oppressors.

IV. THE LAMENTATION OF THE KING (LK. 19:41-44)

What a startling and touching scene! While the crowd was shouting and rejoicing, the Lord Jesus was weeping. Christ saw beneath the surface; He saw beneath the superficial acts of rejoicing to the reality of their hearts condition. Christ wept over the blindness of the people. They were...

A. Blind to the Day that was Unfolding (Vs. 42 & 44b)

1. "in this thy day" = this was Israel's day and yet she missed it. They didn't know what time it was. This was the day for them to repent of their sins and receive Christ as Saviour from sin. In just a few short days this same crowd would shout "crucify him, crucify him!" Are you blind to how crucial this moment is in your life? "...**now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**" (2 Cor. 6:2)
2. The problem was that they wanted deliverance from their suffering (problems) not deliverance from their sin. They cried out, "Hosanna", God save us, but it was not the cry of a repentant heart desiring salvation from sin. "The people were not pleading for salvation from sin but for blessing, prosperity, and deliverance from Roman rule and oppression." (MacArthur)
3. Illustration: The cursed fig tree (Vs. 12-13). This was a picture of Israel. Outwardly they looked promising (leaves) and yet there was no fruit of genuine repentance.
4. Challenge: Many today are the same. They want deliverance from their problems but not deliverance from their sin!

B. Blind to the Doom that was Coming (Vs. 43-44)

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1. Christ predicts the judgment that would come upon Israel for rejecting Him as their Messiah. This was literally fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Roman General Titus sacked the city of Jerusalem and the Jews were slaughtered in horrific numbers with shocking brutality.
2. Challenge: To reject Christ and retain your sinful ways has serious, eternal consequences. God's judgment awaits all those who reject His offer of salvation. Rev. 21:8 "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." **Are you blind to the doom that is coming to you if you die without Christ?**

Conclusion:

1. **Sinner**, will you receive Christ today as your Saviour from sin?
2. **Saint**, will you be an available instrument for God to use?

Principles for a Powerful Prayer Life

Text: Mark 11:11-26

Introduction:

1. Review: In this chapter we enter the final week of the Lord's life before He was crucified.
2. The events recorded in the section before us today cover a further two days in that final week of our Lord's earthly ministry.
3. Prayer is the central theme of these verses as our Lord uses the occasion of the cursing of the fig tree to teach His disciples more about effective prayer.
4. Challenge: Is your desire to have a powerful and effective prayer life?
5. We will note a number of principles for effective prayer in the text.

I. THE FIGURE FOR EFFECTIVE PRAYER (VS. 12-14)

Consider Christ's cursing of the fig tree which would become the illustration he would use to teach His disciples on prayer.

A. The Sight of the Tree (Vs. 12-14)

1. The Outward Presentation of the Tree (Vs. 13)
 - a. "having leaves" = from a distance the tree gave the appearance of fruitfulness on account of its foliage. Sometimes certain fig trees would bear fruit early in the season, the fruit appearing the same time as the leaves or even before the leaves (Hiebert).
 - b. "he came, if haply he might find any thing" = the word 'haply' means "perhaps, by chance." The humanity of Christ is in view here. Repeatedly in the Gospels we see both the Humanity and Deity of Christ displayed on the same occasion. In this example, Christ comes seeking fruit and finds none, that's His humanity but then He supernaturally curses the fig tree so that it dies, that's His Deity. Some other examples:
 - i. As man, Christ sleeps in the back of the boat, as God He stands and calms the stormy sea.
 - ii. As man, Christ weeps at the grave of Lazarus, as God He raises Lazarus from the dead.
 - iii. Hiebert: "Jesus did not use His supernatural knowledge or power to meet His own needs. He accepted the ordinary limitation of human nature and uses His supernatural knowledge only where and when it was needed to fulfill His mission."
2. The Inward Poverty of the Tree (Vs. 13b-14)
 - a. "he found nothing but leaves" = there was a complete absence of fruit.

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- b. Christ then takes the startling action of cursing the tree. This was the Lord's only judgment miracle we see in the Gospels, the only time He uses His power to destroy something during His earthly ministry.

B. The Significance of the Tree

1. The fig tree is a type and symbol of the nation of Israel (See Hos. 9:10; Nah. 3:12; Zech. 3:10). Christ's action of cursing the fig tree sits between two significant events – the Palm Sunday procession and His cleansing of the temple.
2. On Palm Sunday, the warm welcome displayed by the multitudes looked promising from the outside. But in reality, it was “nothing but leaves”. There was not genuine fruits of repentance toward God.
3. The temple was also a hive of activity. There was an outward show of religion and devotion to God but at heart, the majority would reject Christ and His gift of salvation.
4. Challenge: Does this describe you? Do you have an outward show of faith in God and yet in reality when Christ looks at you and sees beneath the surface, He knows you have never repented of your sin and received Christ as your Saviour?

C. The Schooling from the Tree (Vs. 21-22)

II. THE FREEDOM FOR EFFECTIVE PRAYER (VS. 15-19)

A. The Inspection of God's House (Vs. 11)

1. The previous evening, Christ had entered the temple and looked around with his searching, All-knowing gaze. Christ's eyes detected the sin and corruption that was there and determined to deal with it.
2. Note: This verse demonstrates that Christ's purging of the temple the next day was not the actions of a man who had lost his temper in an ungodly manner. Rather, his actions were premeditated. This was a display of righteous anger and chastisement.
3. Challenge: For us to be the house of prayer God wants us to be, we will need to allow Christ to conduct His Divine inspection and remove all that does not please Him in our lives and in our church.

B. The Purification of God's House (Vs. 15-16)

This is the second time Christ cleanses the temple. The first was at the beginning of His ministry (John 2:13-17).

1. The Trafficking in God's House (Vs. 15)
 - a. The background: There were four courts in Herod's Temple:
 - i. The Court of the Gentiles.
 - ii. The Court of the Women.
 - iii. The Court of Israelites (men only).
 - iv. The Court of the Priests (the temple proper).

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- b. The temple bazaar was being conducted in the court of the Gentiles, thus making it virtually impossible for people of other nations to seek the God of Israel.
 - c. The house of God had been turned into a place of religious racketeering, a place of commerce, a place to exploit the worshippers financially.
 - d. “them that sold and bought” = both buyers and sellers
 - e. ‘moneychangers’ = “every male Jew twenty years or over was required to pay yearly a half shekel toward the cost of the religious services in the temple (See Ex. 30:11-16). The moneychangers were in the temple court to change the Greek and Roman coins of the pilgrims into the Jewish coinage which alone could be used for the payment. But a fee, sometimes as high as 10 or 12 percent, was charged for making the exchange.” (Hiebert)
 - f. “them that sold doves” = doves were the prescribed offering for the poor who could not afford an animal (Lev. 12:6; 14:22; 15:14, 29; cf. Lk. 2:22-24).
2. The Traffic in God’s House (Vs. 16)
 - a. Not only was the temple being used as a place to make money, it was being used as a thoroughfare/shortcut from one part of the city to the other (e.g. between the city and the Mount of Olives).
 - b. The picture is that of turning that which is sacred into that which is commonplace and profane.
 - c. In summary, there was so much clutter, noise and din in the house of God that it could not longer be a place of prayer.
 3. Challenge: If we are going to be a house of prayer as a church, it will mean we will need to let Christ clean house! If we are going to be effective in the place of prayer in our personal lives, we will need to do some house cleaning in our bodies which are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

C. The Admonition concerning God’s House (Vs. 17-19)

1. “it is written” = a quotation from Isaiah 56:7
2. “of all nations” = reveals that God’s heart even under the whole dispensation was for all people.
3. “ye have made it a den of thieves” = a graphic picture drawn from the bands of thieves that would hide out in caves along the roads in Judea and rob unsuspecting travellers. Christ’s words allude to Jeremiah 7:11.
4. The murderous desires of the religious leaders were stirred white hot when Christ put his hand on their corrupt trade (Vs. 18).

III. THE FAITH FOR EFFECTIVE PRAYER (VS. 20-24)

A. The Picture of Faith and Prayer (Vs. 20-23)

1. “Have faith in God” = Christ’s response to Peter’s surprise at the fig tree’s withering away. Christ is going to emphasize the necessity of faith for effectual prayer.
 - a. The reason we lack faith in prayer is because we are so often ignorant of the Power and Ability of the One to whom we are praying. When God and all He is and all He is able to do is sharply in focus, our hearts will be filled with faith in the place of prayer. Heb. 11:6 “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
 - b. Hendriksen: “Faith is...the soul’s window through which God’s love comes pouring in; the open hand whereby man reaches out to God, the Giver; the coupling that links man’s train to God’s engine; the trunk of salvation’s tree, whose root is grace, and whose fruit is good works. Faith was...the means of Abraham’s justification; the magnet that drew Moses away from the pleasures of Egypt; the force that overthrew Jericho’s wall; the secret that enabled Ruth to make her stirring confession; the weapon that killed Goliath and destroyed Sennacherib’s host; the deciding factor in Carmel’s contest; the shield that protected Job in the midst of his trials; the muzzle that closed the mouths of Daniel’s lions and the remedy that cured the centurions servant and many others.”
2. “whosoever shall say unto this mountain” = Christ uses an illustration he has used before to impress on His disciples hearts the possibilities faith opens up through prayer. Christ’s language is figurative. The mountain represents something big, something impossible. This is how the figure is used the first time when Christ healed the demon possessed boy (Compare Mark 9:14-29; Matt. 17:20-21). It means that impossible situations in the Christian life and ministry can be miraculously overcome when we exercise faith!

B. The Promise concerning Faith in Prayer (Vs. 23b-24)

1. The condition of the promise (Vs. 23b)
 - a. The heart must be free of doubt - “and shall not doubt in his heart”. The word ‘doubt’ “pictures the mind in dispute with itself; the doubter wavers between his conflicting thoughts, now thinking that the petition will be granted, now yielding to the thought that it will not be granted.” (Hiebert)
 - b. This is so often our problem. We are praying prayers from our lips and at the same time, our hearts are filled with doubts and fears the prayer won’t be answered. The phrase we often

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connect to the end of our prayers “if it be thy will” is right and proper if it is for the sake of reverence for the supreme authority of God but beware it is not coming from a spirit of doubt. When the answer to a prayer is no, let us remember that the problem was with the request, not the power and ability of God to so mighty and miraculous things.

- c. Don't stop praying with faith because you are still learning the ways of God in prayer and a prayer appears to you to be unanswered or not being fulfilled as you expected.
 - d. Note: We also need to remember that while this promise is broad in its scope, it needs to be understood in light of the rest of the Bible's teaching on prayer. This verse is not a blank cheque for us to fulfill all our worldly and sinful lusts, desires and aspirations! This verse has nothing to do with the prosperity teaching that is often based upon such verses. Christ is speaking in the realm of spiritual matters, not the carnal and self-seeking! It is possible for us to ask amiss according to our lusts (James 4:3) or ask for something outside of God's will (1 John 5:14) **But if the prayer has the Word of God as its foundation, the Holy Spirit as its guide and the glory of God as its aim, we can expect with complete confidence that the request will be granted in God's timing and in His own way.**
2. The claiming of the promise (Vs. 24)
- a. 'therefore' = Christ summarizes the principle on the basis of what He has just said.
 - b. “What things soever ye desire, when you pray” = Christ is exhorting us that **all** our requests are to be made with faith. God wants us to have a prayer life that is filled with faith.
 - c. “believe that ye receive them” = the word 'receive' is in the present tense. Faith not only brings its request to God but also lays its hand upon the answer. In one hand we bring our request, with the other hand we reach out in anticipation to receive the answer from the hand of God.
 - d. Scroggie: “To faith God's promise is as good as His performance, and so the believing soul enjoys the answer before it arrives.”

IV. THE FORGIVENESS FOR EFFECTIVE PRAYER (VS. 25-26)

Christ attaches another condition to the fulfillment of His promise. Successful praying requires forgiving as well as believing!

A. When We are to Forgive (Vs. 25a)

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1. A readiness to forgive is another essential requirement of effective prayer. Not only must our hearts be free of doubt, they must also be free of bitterness and unforgiveness to others.
2. “when ye stand praying” = we are to exercise forgiveness of heart and spirit in the very act of praying.
3. “if ye have ought against any” = the word ‘ought’ means anything, any part, the smallest, a jot or tittle. The word ‘any’ means everyone is included, family, friends and foes. Challenge: Do you have ought against someone? Even a just cause for offense? Unless you exercise a spirit of forgiveness towards that individual, your prayers will be sapped of their power and effectiveness.
4. Challenge: Sadly, many Christians practice the complete opposite to what Christ commanded – they show a readiness to hold on to offences and hurts and a slowness or unwillingness to forgive. Years later, they are still licking their wounds and won’t move on for God’s glory. Worse still, many become bitter and terribly damage their own lives and defile the lives of others.
5. Col. 3:13 *“Forbearing one another, and **forgiving** one another, if any man have a **quarrel** against any: **even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**”*
6. Eph 4:31-32 *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.**”*

B. Why We are to Forgive (Vs. 25b-26)

1. We need God’s forgiveness every day as His children for our mistakes, sins and failings. Think about how many times you have to say sorry to the Lord on a daily basis. Imagine if those prayers for forgiveness went unanswered by the Lord! What a terrible state we would get into as believers.
2. The warning is clear. If we come before God requesting His forgiveness and yet in our own hearts are harbouring unforgiveness, essentially Christ says, you forgive first, then I’ll forgive you!

Conclusion:

1. **Sinner**, will you receive Christ today as your Saviour from sin?
2. **Saint**, what blockages are in your life that are hindering you from effective prayer? Is it clutter and noise? Is it a lack of faith? Is it unforgiveness?

Who is Your Final Authority?

Text: Mark 11:11-27-12:12

Introduction:

1. In this section of Mark's Gospel, the religious hierarch again attack Christ and His claims. There are four questioners that present four different challenges to Christ. In the first instance, Christ's authority is challenged.
2. Hiebert: "The public teaching in Jerusalem consisted of Jesus' answers to a series of questions asked by His enemies (11:27-12:34), His counterattack on the Jewish leaders (12:41-44), and His commendation of the widow's giving (12:41-44)."
3. Christ refutes His challengers and then exposes the wickedness of their hearts in the parable of the vineyard.
4. We will study this challenge to Christ's authority by the religious leaders in 3 units.

I. THE DEFIANCE FROM THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (VS. 12-14)

A. The Motivation of the Religious Leaders (Vs. 27)

1. Verse 18 gives us a window into the hearts of these religious fakes. They were looking for ways in which they could destroy him.
2. The three groups that made up the Sanhedrin are represented in the delegation.
3. This event takes place in the temple.

B. The Question of the Religious Leaders (Vs. 28)

They ask two questions concerning Christ's authority:

1. What? They inquire as to the character and nature of Christ's authority; of what sort it was. There mention "these things" which was a reference to Christ's cleansing of the temple (Vs. 15-16).
2. Who? They inquire as to the source of His authority, where it came from.

II. THE DEFENSE TO THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (VS. 29-33)

A. The Counterquestion from Christ (Vs. 29-30)

1. Asking a counterquestion was a common practice in debates between rabbis.
2. This was not an attempt to evade the question on the part of Christ by changing the subject. In actual fact, Christ was striking at the heart of the issue. If they did not acknowledge and accept the Divinely given authority of the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner, then they would not accept His authority either. After all, John the Baptist pointed to Christ as the Lamb of God and

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promised Messiah. If they had accepted John's authenticity then they would have accepted Christ's also.

3. "from heaven" = a ministry of Divine origin
4. "from men" = a ministry of human origin

B. The Confounding of the Questioners (Vs. 31-33)

1. Their reasonings (Vs. 31-32)
 - a. "reasoned with themselves" = they deliberated over how to answer the question. They consider the implications of both possible answers to the question.
 - b. "If we shall say" = their primary concern was themselves and their own position rather than being motivated by which answer would represent the truth.
 - c. Note: This is the mark of the politician as opposed to a true man of God. The politician tailors his answers to ensure popular support. His primary concern is for himself and his own position rather than for the truth.
2. Their reply (Vs. 33)
 - a. "we cannot tell" = their terse expression of their unwillingness to answer the question.
 - b. "neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things" = Christ's reply to their decision. They had failed the simple test. To try and tell these men that His authority was from His Father in heaven would be pointless and futile as their hearts were already calculated not to accept that answer.

III. THE DISCOURSE EXPOSING THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (12:1-12)

"After putting His questioners to silence, Jesus proceeded to expose their true character." (Hiebert)

A. The Story of the Parable (explanation) (Vs. 1-8)

Let's take a brief walk through the details of the story.

1. The Context of the story. There was a vineyard established.
 - a. A hedge around the vineyard for its protection from thieves, predators and foxes.
 - b. A winepress for processing the grapes.
 - c. A tower for storage, shelter and most importantly for the watchman to be on the look out for threats the vineyard.
2. The Characters in the story. There are four main characters in the story.
 - a. The Owner (lord) of the vineyard – He establishes and owns the vineyard and appoints caretakers for it.

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- b. The Owner's overseers – the husbandmen responsible to protect and tend the vineyard to ensure its productivity for the owner.
 - c. The Owner's servants – those sent to retrieve the fruit of the vineyard on behalf of the owner.
 - d. The Owner's son – his wellbeloved and only son who is sent in a final attempt on the part of the owner to appeal to the husbandmen.
3. The Crux of the story
- a. The owner sends his servants repeatedly to receive the fruit that was rightfully his but the husbandmen respond with vicious hostility, beating, injuring and even murdering some of the owner's servants.
 - b. The owner finally sends His only, beloved Son in the hopes they will show Him reverence but the wicked husbandmen rather see it as an opportunity to kill him and then secure the vineyard for themselves.
 - c. The consequences of their blatant disregard for the owner's authority and repeated acts of mercy and longsuffering despite their wickedness is spelled out in verse 9. They would be destroyed and the vineyard would be given to others.

B. The Substance of the Parable (interpretation) (Vs. 10-11)

Christ's quotation from Psalm 118:22-23 Provides the key to unlock the meaning of the parable. The rejected son in the parable represents Him. Therefore, the key elements of the parable are to be interpreted as follows:

1. **The Vineyard** – represents Israel. The imagery of this parable is clearly drawn from Isaiah 5:1-7. The figure of the vine is used repeatedly in the O.T. as a picture of Israel (**references?**). The hedge, tower etc... picture the abundant provisions God made for Israel's protection and well-being.
2. **The Owner** (lord of the vineyard) – represents God the Father. His longsuffering, patience and mercy with rebellious Israel is highlighted in this parable. A human owner would have immediately evicted the husbandmen from his vineyard based on their treatment of the first servant but God appeals again and again through his servants, giving multiple opportunities for them to repent.
3. **The Husbandmen** – represent the religious leaders of Israel. They were supposed to act in the interests of the Owner and work under His authority and direction. In reality, they were self-seeking, selfish and rebellious against their master's authority. Their rejection of the Owner's Son amounted to a rejection of the Owner Himself. They would be severely judged for their wickedness and the vineyard would be given to others. This literally was fulfilled in A.D. 70 with

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the destruction of Israel. Israel is now temporarily set aside as God builds the church mainly comprised of Gentiles (See Rom. 11:25). Israel temporarily forfeited her privileged position when she rejected her Messiah. Matthew 21:43 “Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

4. **The Servants** – Jehovah’s messengers, the prophets, sent to Israel to call her to repentance, and yet they rejected and mistreated them. The history of Israel demonstrates that this is exactly what happened. Note Jesus’ words in Matthew 23:37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, **thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee**, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not.” Stephen traces a similar theme in Acts 7. For example, tradition says Isaiah the prophet was sawed in half at the command of evil king Manasseh.
5. **The Son** – represents Christ. There is a touching revelation of the self-knowledge of the Son of God in this parable. He knew He was the Father’s only Son and the object of His eternal love and delight. The sending of the Son by the Father was the crowning act of God’s grace and mercy. It reveals the unfathomable love of God for Israel and for the whole world.
6. **The Stone** – the quotation from Psalms introduces another figure but the meaning is the same. The builders tasked with building God’s house had rejected the stone of God’s choosing. But that rejected stone would become the Cornerstone. Architecturally, the cornerstone was the most important stone in the structure. It is the stone binding together two adjoining walls.” (Hiebert) Jesus Christ would be crucified but He would rise triumphantly over death and all his enemies.
 - a. Acts 4:11 “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.”
 - b. Eph. 2:20 “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,**”
 - c. 1 Peter 2:6-7 “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,”

C. The Schooling from the Parable (applications)

1. Lessons about the Character of God:

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- a. God loves sinful men. God sent His only Son to redeem all those who will turn in repentance and receive His free gift of salvation.
 - b. God is longsuffering. He gives men generous opportunity to repent. Are you heeding His loving calls to you or are you like the religious leaders and stubbornly rejecting God's offer of salvation?
 - c. God is just. He will severely judge all those who reject His offer of salvation.
2. Lessons about the Christian life
- a. Do we accept God's authority in **all** things? If you are struggling with surrender on a particular issue in your life, the ultimate issue has to do with who is your final authority. Being a Christian means total surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
 - b. What is your attitude to God's servants? Those who are tasked with the responsibility of delivering God's message to you.

Conclusion: Are you saved? Will you accept God's invitation to salvation? If you are saved, is there an area in your life that needs to come under Christ's authority?

Questions, Confrontations and Challenges

Text: Mark 12:13-40

Introduction:

1. In this section of Mark's Gospel, the religious hierarchy again attack Christ and His claims. There are four questioners that present four different challenges to Christ.
2. Hiebert: "The public teaching in Jerusalem consisted of Jesus' answers to a series of questions asked by His enemies (11:27-12:34), His counterattack on the Jewish leaders (12:41-44), and His commendation of the widow's giving (12:41-44)."
3. Summary: Three challenges are brought to Christ which end in the silencing of His critics (Vs. 34). Christ then issues His own challenge concerning Himself and His claim to Deity (Vs. 35-37). Then, Christ once again exposes the fake façade of the religious leaders (Vs. 38-40) and commends a poor widow whose genuine faith and piety stand in contrast to the corruption of the religious establishment (Vs. 41-44).
4. We will study the narrative under its six natural divisions.

I. THE CHALLENGE ABOUT TAXES (VS. 13-17)

A. The Plot of the Religious Leaders (Vs. 13-14)

1. Verse 13 gives us a window into the hearts of these religious fakes. They were looking for ways to trap and discredit Christ and His ministry.
2. The subject of taxes back then, as it is now, was a hot topic!
3. The trap was a clever one from man's standpoint. If Christ affirmed the necessity of paying taxes, he would alienate the common people. If he denied the necessity of paying taxes, they would have an immediate cause to bring Christ before the governor and accuse him of sedition.

B. The Exposing of the Religious Leaders (Vs. 15-17)

1. Christ knew their hypocrisy (play acting) and immediately exposes it in the words "Why tempt ye me?"
2. A 'penny' was a denarius which was a day's wage for a labouring man (Matt. 20:2)
3. "whose is this image" = the image was that of either Augustus or Tiberius, his successor; coins of both emperors were in circulation at the time (Hiebert).
4. 'superscription' = the superscription on the coin during the reign of Tiberius read "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, the son of the Divine Augustus," and on the reverse said, "Chief Priest." (Hiebert)

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5. Christ revealed that one's attachment to God does not loose him from his duty and obligation to earthly rulers. We are to render to each their due:
 - a. To Caesar the things that are Caesar's – The Christian is to pray for his leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-2), submit to lawful demands (Rom. 13:1-5) and pay his taxes (Rom. 13:6-7).
 - b. To God the things that are God's – this was a challenge to the Caesar's claim to divinity. The right to collect taxes was theirs but not to claim to be divine. So human government must never demand that which should only be rendered to Almighty God.
 - c. Prayer read in Australian Parliament: "Almighty God, we humbly beseech Thee to vouch safe Thy blessing upon this Parliament. Direct and prosper our deliberations to the advancement of Thy glory, and the true welfare of the people of Australia."

II. THE CHALLENGE ABOUT RESURRECTION (VS. 18-27)

A. The Sadducees Argument Presented (Vs. 18-23)

1. Vs. 18: The Sadducees were the theological liberals and rationalists of the day. They denied the truth of the bodily resurrection (Vs. 18) along with other truths such as the immortality of the soul.
2. Vs. 19: They present Christ with the Scriptural basis for their argument. They are referring to the law found in Deuteronomy 25:5-6 – "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be, *that* the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother *which is* dead, that his name be not put out of Israel." William Macdonald explains, "In order to preserve the family name and to keep the property in the family, the Law stipulated that if a man died childless, his brother should marry the widow."
3. Vs. 20-23: They proceed to present their case of the seven brethren who all had the same wife in succession but with no children and then present what they believe is the knockout blow to the doctrine of the resurrection in Vs. 23.

B. The Sadducees Argument Refuted (Vs. 24-27)

1. Vs. 24: In plain language, Christ exposes their lack of understanding (Vs. 24). It wasn't that these men were not familiar with the text of Scripture but rather that they had failed to understand the meaning of the Scriptures. Their denial of the resurrection revealed their lack of understanding of the power of God.

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2. Vs. 25: Christ deals with the issue of marriage and the afterlife, refuting the case they had presented. In heaven there is no marriage. The Sadducees had wrongly assumed that life in heaven would follow the same pattern as that of life on earth.
3. Vs. 26-27: Christ deals with the issue of the truth of the resurrection. The quotation is taken from Exodus 3:6. When God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were dead. But the fact that God said “**I AM** THE GOD” of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob revealed that their physical death did not mean they had ceased to exist. Christ clearly affirms the truth of the immortality of the soul and the future resurrection. Christ begins and ends his answer to them with a bold, abrupt statement of their error – “Do ye not therefore err” (Vs. 24), “ye therefore do greatly err” (Vs. 27).

III. THE CHALLENGE ABOUT COMMANDMENTS (VS. 28-34)

A. The Inquirer’s Question (Vs. 28)

1. Matthew identifies this man as “a lawyer”, an expert in the interpretation of the law.
2. Unlike the other questioners, this man was sincere as Vs. 34 indicates. He was genuinely interested in Christ’s perspective on which commandment in the law was first in rank and importance. This topic was one of much discussion amongst the religious leaders of the day.
3. Christ offers no rebuke to this man as He did with the Pharisees and Sadducees as this man did not have a hidden motive in asking the question. His inquiry was one of sincerity.

B. The Lord’s Reply (Vs. 29-31)

1. The first commandment (Vs. 30) – to love God supremely. God is to have first place in our affections. We are to love God with all of our being. No other love can be allowed to rival our love for God. This command is impossible in our natural, sinful state but through salvation we can begin to love God as we ought. “Love to God must possess the whole heart, the seat of personality, the whole soul, the self-conscious life, the whole mind, the rational faculties, and the whole strength, the entire active powers of man.” (Hiebert)
2. The second commandment (Vs. 31) – to love mankind equally. This is an exact quotation of Lev. 19:18. We are to exercise a love equal to that which we have for ourselves towards our neighbour.
3. Note: The first commandment summarizes the first table of the ten commandments that relate to our duties to God and the second the second table dealing with our duties to our fellow man.

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4. All of the law hangs on these two commandments. Matthew 22:40
“On **these two** commandments hang **all the law** and the prophets.”
5. Macdonald: “We are to love God more than ourselves, and our neighbour as ourselves. The life that really counts is concerned first with God, then with others.”

C. The Inquirer’s Response (Vs. 32-34)

1. Vs. 32-33 – The scribe’s affirmation of Christ’s words.
2. Vs. 34 – Christ declares that the man is not far from the kingdom of God. His openness to the truth as presented to Christ meant that his heart was in a favourable disposition to salvation.

IV. THE CHALLENGE ABOUT CHRIST (VS. 35-37)

Christ now goes on the offensive and asks His own challenging question of His listeners. The question goes to the heart of who Christ is. Christ was constantly bringing men to a point of decision concerning Himself and His claims.

A. The Question (Vs. 35)

1. The scribes taught that the Messiah (Christ, anointed one), would come of the lineage of David. That Christ would come of the line of David was clearly taught in the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Sam. 7:8-29; Ps. 89:3-4; 132:11; Is. 9:2-7; 11:1; Jer. 23:5-6; Ez. 34:23-24; 37:24). Only two days prior, the crowd had acclaimed Christ as “the son of David” (Mt. 21:9; Lk. 19:38).
2. The problem was that the scribes didn’t go far enough. Whilst they recognized the lineage of Messiah as far as His humanity was concerned, they failed to recognize His Divinity. That Christ was the Son of David according to the flesh it was true, but He was also the Son of God. Christ is the “root and the offspring” of David (Rev. 22:16). Christ preceded David in eternity as Son of God and then came as Son of man in the line of David in time.

B. The Quotation (Vs. 36)

1. “David himself said by the Holy Ghost” = David’s own words confirmed the truth of Christ’s Divinity. **David’s Son is David’s Lord.**
2. The quotation is from Psalm 110:1 and is quote directly five times in the New Testament (Acts 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13; 5:16; 7:17, 21). Take Acts 2:34-36 as an example – “For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, **both Lord and Christ.**”
3. “The LORD” = Hebrew YHWH, Jehovah.
4. “my Lord” = Hebrew Adonai, “my Lord” or “my master”.

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5. Hiebert: “The Psalm shows that the reference is to one who is more than a mere man. It is clear that both names refer to Persons of the Godhead.”

C. The Conclusion (Vs. 37)

1. The scribes view that Messiah was simply a descendent of David and a conquering king for the nation did not go far enough. If the Messiah is David’s Lord, He must be greater than David and more than just a man. Christ was pointing to the Divine-human nature of the Messiah.
2. That the religious leaders understood Christ’s claim is evidenced in Mark 14:61-64.

V. THE CHALLENGE ABOUT CORRUPT RELIGION (VS. 38-40)

Christ then issues a warning to the people about the corrupt religious establishment. Christ warned about false teachers and so must we. It is Christlike to warn!

A. They were Self-promoting (Vs. 38-39)

1. They loved the praise of men (Vs. 38)
 - a. They loved walking around in long clothing which to them was a mark of their spirituality and scholarship.
 - b. They loved the recognition of men in the marketplace.
2. They loved the positions of men (Vs. 39)
 - a. The “chief seats” in the synagogue were at the front of the synagogue before the ark or chest where the sacred scrolls were kept (Hiebert). It was reserved for leaders and people of notoriety.
 - b. The “uppermost rooms” were reserved for the honoured guests at a meal.

B. They were Self-serving (Vs. 40)

1. They took advantage of the venerable under a cloak of fake religiosity. The word ‘devour’ reveals their true character.
Illustration: 50 Years in the Church of Rome
2. The word ‘pretence’ means a show, “A holding out or offering to others something false or feigned; a presenting to others, either in words or actions, a false or hypocritical appearance, usually with a view to conceal what is real, and thus to deceive.” (Webster) Their “long prayers” were a false front to hide their true motives.
3. Because of their misuse of their positions of power, they would receive a heavier sentence at the judgment – “greater damnation.”
4. Macdonald: “In short, they loved peculiarity (long robes); popularity (greetings); prominence (best seats); priority (best places); possessions (widow’s houses) and mock piety (long prayers).”

VI. THE CHALLENGE ABOUT GIVING (VS. 41-44)

This beautiful narrative forms a bright contrast to the greed of the scribes just described.

A. Christ's Observation of the Giving (Vs. 41-42)

1. Christ sits and watches the givers come and give their offerings in the temple.
2. The 'treasury' was a setup with 13 trumpet shaped chests to receive temple offerings. Each one bore an inscription indicating what the money would be used for. Six of these were labelled "Freewill Offerings."
3. Christ saw two types of givers:
 - a. Rich men with poor gifts. Their offerings were large from a human standpoint but poor from Christ's perspective.
 - b. A poor woman with a rich gift. Her offering was poor from man's point of view but precious in God's sight. A mite was a Greek copper coin, and the smallest coin in use. Her gift had the value of one sixty-fourth of a common daily wage (Matt. 20:2).
 - c. Challenge: Christ takes an interest in our giving.

B. Christ's Instruction on Giving (Vs. 43-44)

Christ uses the poor widow as a living illustration, an object lesson to teach His disciples about what constituted true giving in His eyes. The principles are as follows:

1. True giving in Christ's eyes is more about the **heart** and **motive** of the giver than the size of the gift.
2. True giving in Christ's eyes involves **sacrifice**. The gifts of the rich were large but did not involve sacrifice as their lifestyle would remain unchanged by the abundance they had held in reserve.
3. True giving in the eyes of Christ is evaluated not by the amount that is given but by the amount that is **held back**.
4. True giving in the spirit of the New Testament therefore goes **beyond** the tithe.
5. True giving is proportionate giving – 1 Cor. 16:2 "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

Conclusion: In summary we can learn the following lessons from these encounters with Christ.

1. The believer has God-given duties to both God and government.
2. The believer can be assured of eternal life and the resurrection.
3. The believer is to love God supremely and his neighbour equally.
4. The believer can be assured of the truth of Christ's Divinity.
5. The believer is to beware of false teachers and warn against them.
6. The believer is to give from the heart sacrificially to the Lord.

The Olivet Discourse Part 1

Text: Mark 13:1-7

Introduction: To set the framework for a fruitful study of the Olivet Discourse, the following introductory points are of great importance.

1. This is the longest recorded answer of Christ to a question in the Gospels which says something of its importance. Some have called it “the Little Apocalypse.”
2. Matthew and Mark emphasis the tribulation period whereas Luke majors more on A.D. 70.
 - Constable: “Matthew and Mark both stressed Jesus' teaching that focused on His second coming. Matthew and Mark also recorded more about Jesus' answer to the disciples' second question, "What will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?" (13:4b). Luke concentrated more on His answer to their first question, "When will these things be?" (13:4a). Matthew wrote to answer the questions of Jewish unbelievers. Mark wrote primarily to respond to those of Gentile Christians living under Roman persecution and in a hostile world. Mark stressed Jesus' exhortations to watchfulness and His preparation of the disciples for future hardships.”
3. Israel is in view, not the church.
 - a. Internal Evidence (within the chapter)
 - We have mention of ‘synagogues’ (Vs. 9), ‘Judea’ (Vs. 14) and the “Sabbath day” (Matt. 24:20).
 - The whole passage has a Jewish tone with allusions and quotations to O.T. prophecies concerning Israel (e.g. Vs. 14 and Dan. 9:27).
 - Barclay: "Mark 13 is one of the most difficult chapters in the New Testament for a modern reader to understand. That is so because Mark 13 is one of the most Jewish chapters in the Bible. From beginning to end it is thinking in terms of Jewish history and Jewish ideas."
 - At this point the church was still a ‘mystery’ which was not fully unveiled until the New Testament Epistles (Eph. 3:4-6).
 - b. External Evidence (within the Bible)
 - The tribulation period is distinctly Jewish and not for the church. It is called “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7). The seventy weeks are “determined upon **thy people** and upon **thy holy city**” (Dan. 9:24).
 - The church is promised total deliverance from this future period of God’s wrath in verses such as 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9 & Rev. 3:10. This is why the church is not mentioned in Revelation 6-18 which detail the judgments of the tribulation.

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4. The Revelation (Second Coming) of Christ is in view, not the Rapture.
 - The rapture was another mystery doctrine that was again revealed through the N.T. Epistles (1 Cor. 15:51-52).
 - Christ's return to earth is in view, not His coming in the sky to rapture the church.
5. The law of double reference needs to be understood and applied with this passage.
 - The law of double reference states that “the Bible sometimes refers to a near and a far subject in the same passage.” (Robert Sargent)
 - To illustrate, Ezekiel 29:1-19 is apparently addressed to the king of Tyre who was Ethbaal II. However, it clearly goes beyond the immediate earthly reference to give great detail of the original estate and fall of the evil one behind Ethbaal – Satan. Hosea 11:1 applies primarily to the nation of Israel, but the Holy Spirit also uses it of God's “greater Son,” the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 2:14-15).
 - In the Olivet discourse, the near event is the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, the far event (future) is the seven-year tribulation period. The destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 would foreshadow the future tribulation period. John Phillips writes, “Some overlap occurs between the two prophecies...Like much Bible prophecy, this end-times prophecy had both a near, impending and partial fulfillment (the burden of Luke) and a final, end ties, complete fulfillment (the burden of Matthew and Mark).”
 - Cranfield: “The key to...understanding is the recognition that there is here a double reference. The impending judgement [sic] on Jerusalem and the events connected with it are for Jesus as it were a transparent object in the foreground through which he sees the last events before the End, which they indeed foreshadow.”
6. Chapter divisions. The chapter can be divided as follows:
 - Vs. 1-4 – The Disciples Questions
 - Vs. 5-7 – The Present Age
 - Vs. 8-13 – The Beginning of Sorrows (first half of tribulation)
 - Vs. 14-18 – The Abomination of desolation (midpoint of the tribulation)
 - Vs. 19-23 – The Great Tribulation (second half of the tribulation)
 - Vs. 24-27 – The Second Coming of Christ
 - Vs. 28-37 – Parables and exhortations

I. THE SETTING OF THE DISCOURSE (VS. 1-4)

A. The Occasion of the Discourse (Vs. 1-2)

1. The Disciples Admiration of the Temple (Vs. 1)
 - a. “as he went out of the temple” = it had been an eventful day of teaching in the temple (11:27-12:44)

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- b. “see what manner of stones...!” = notice the exclamation point at the end of the sentence. There was feeling and wonder in the disciple’s voice.
 - i. The temple structure was impressive. According to Josephus, part of it was built of strong; white stones, each measuring 25 cubits long, eight high, and about twelve in breadth. Some of these massive stones weighed more than one hundred tons.
 - ii. “Built of polished white stone, with its eastern wall covered in gold, the temple’s main structure gleamed in the evening light as if it were a massive jewel.” (Macarthur) According to John Phillips, “Herod the Great began work on the temple in 20 B.C. and it wasn’t completed until A.D. 64, having taken some 85 years to build.”
 - c. ‘buildings’ = “denotes the temple proper as well as the various courts with their chambers and magnificent colonnades.” (Hiebert)
2. The Lord’s Prediction concerning the Temple (Vs. 2)
 - a. Christ prophecies the total destruction of the temple. The temple was the headquarters of the corrupt religious establishment that rejected Christ as Messiah. It would be dealt a smashing blow by the iron fist of Rome under General Titus in A.D. 70.
 - b. “not be left one stone upon another” = this was fulfilled exactly as the Roman soldiers, eager to glean the melting gold from the huge fires, turned each stone over. Josephus remarks that the temple and the city walls, except for a few towers, were so thoroughly “dug up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.”

B. The Location of the Discourse (Vs. 3a)

1. The discourse was given on the Mount of Olives within sight of the temple. “From where they sat, they had a panoramic view of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives is almost 150 feet higher than the Temple Mount.” (Hiebert)
2. We again note the very Jewish context. The disciples are sitting with Christ on the Mount of Olives staring at the temple. The last thing in the disciples’ minds at that moment was the church as we know it with the advantage of holding in our hands the completed Word of God. They were still anticipating the kingdom and were struggling to come to terms with understanding the impending cross.
3. Even after Christ’s resurrection, the disciples were still focused on the kingdom! Acts 1:6 “When they therefore were come together,

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they asked of him, saying, Lord, **wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**” The disciples were thinking about the kingdom, not the church! The truth of the church was still largely hidden from them (Eph. 3:4-6).

C. The Question of the Discourse (Vs. 3b-4)

1. “Peter and James and John and Andrew” = two sets of brothers and Christ’s inner circle of disciples.
2. “when shall these things be” = this part of the question relates to the destruction of the temple.
3. “what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled” = looks beyond the destruction of the temple to the end of the age. “The disciples clearly did not foresee the long interval between the two events.” (Hiebert)
4. Matthew’s account expresses it as follows: “And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matt. 24:3) So in essence we have three questions or two questions, the second with two parts:
 - a. “When shall these things be?” – question relating to the destruction of the temple. Luke focuses more on this question than Matthew and Mark.
 - b. “What shall be the sign of thy coming?” – the second coming of Christ. Notice the emphasis on the ‘sign’. Remember, **Israel looks for signs, the church listens for sounds.**
 - c. “and of the end of the world?” – the end of the age. The disciples therefore wanted to know more than just the details surrounding the prophesied destruction of the temple.

II. THE PRESENT AGE (VS. 5-7)

A. Deceptions (Vs. 5-6)

1. “Take heed” = means to see, behold and therefore refers to a watchful, discerning mindset. This call to watchfulness is repeated four times in the chapter (Vs. 5, 9, 23, 33) They were to be alert for deceptions. While we understand this is not speaking directly to the church, we understand the application that as believers we are to exercise discernment and to be alert to the seducing spirits of the last days (1 Tim. 4:1).
2. “many shall come” = many false Christ’s would appear between Christ’s first and second coming. Feinberg documents that up to 1953 there is a record of some 64 false messiahs who have tried to lead Israel astray.
3. “shall deceive many” = the terrifying and tragic success of these pretender messiahs.

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4. The ultimate fulfilment of this will be the Antichrist who is pictured in Revelation 6:2 riding on a white horse as a man of peace. He will make a peace treaty with Israel for a seven-year period (Dan. 9:27) and the world will think that world peace has been achieved at last. But it will be short lived! 1 Thessalonians 5:3 warns, “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as **travail** upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

B. Wars (Vs. 7-8a)

1. “wars and rumours of wars...such things must needs be” = wars would be an inevitable feature of human history and not a specific sign of the end. Wars and threats of wars will characterize the entire age. The history of mankind has been a blood stained one on account of man’s sinful heart.
2. “but the end is not yet” = “these events do not constitute the immediate sign of the consummation of the age.” (Hiebert)

Conclusion:

1. Are we living for eternity? Prophecy puts this world in proper perspective.
2. Are we discerning believers, on the alert for error and false doctrine?
3. Will we stand for the truth of the pre-tribulation rapture in these last days?

The Olivet Discourse Part 2

Text: Mark 13:8-18

Introduction:

1. This is the longest recorded answer of Christ to a question in the Gospels which says something of its importance. Some have called it “the Little Apocalypse.”
2. Brief review: Israel in view, not the church. Remember the law of double reference.
3. In our previous lesson we looked at the setting of the discourse and then some features of the present age. In this lesson we will look at the beginning of sorrows which describes the first half of the tribulation period.

I. THE SETTING OF THE DISCOURSE (VS. 1-4)

- A. The Occasion of the Discourse (Vs. 1-2)
- B. The Location of the Discourse (Vs. 3a)
- C. The Question of the Discourse (Vs. 3b-4)

II. THE PRESENT AGE (VS. 5-7)

- A. Deceptions (Vs. 5-6)
- B. Wars (Vs. 7-8a)

III. THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS (BIRTH PANGS) (VS. 8-13)

The phrase “beginning of sorrows” refers to the early birth pangs of the tribulation period (the first 3 ½ years). The word ‘sorrows’ comes from the Greek word ‘odin’ (ὠδίν) which means “the pain of childbirth, travail pain, birth pangs” (Strongs). The word is translated ‘travail’ in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as **travail** upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” There will be a number of nasty contractions in the early part of the tribulation as follows:

A. Conflicts (Vs. 8a)

1. “nation shall rise against nation” = these are large scale wars involving whole nations. The first part of the tribulation will be characterized by war and bloodshed as pictured by the red horse in Revelation 6:4.
2. “these are the beginnings of sorrows” = large scale warfare and bloodshed will be a feature of the ‘beginnings’ of the tribulation period. The birthing language paints a picture of the tribulation period progressing in intensity as the 7 years progress. The first half will be like nothing the world has ever seen (the seal and trumpet

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judgments) but the second half will be on another whole level of severity again.

B. Disasters (Vs. 8b)

1. Earthquakes – there have been more than 10,000 strong quakes with magnitudes of 6 or greater around the world in the last 100 years (approx.). Earthquakes also appear to be on the increase. However, these are but a tiny foretaste to the earthquakes that will shake the world in the tribulation period. One such earthquake is described in Revelation 6:12-17 with the opening of the sixth seal.
2. Famines – the inevitable result of warfare and natural disasters such as earthquakes. Even in our day, around 9 million people die of hunger each year and there are now concerns that figure will double due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ Approximately 3.1 million children die from undernutrition each year.² While these are heart breaking statistics, the tribulation period will be much worse as pictured in the black horse with the opening of the 3rd seal (Rev. 6:5-6).

C. Divisions (Vs. 8c)

1. 'trouble's = the word means "disturbance, commotion; metaphorically a tumult, sedition" (Strongs).
2. There will be uprisings, riots and civil unrest in the last days. While we are not in the tribulation period, we see the world moving towards it rapidly with the widespread anarchy and rebellion erupting across the world (e.g., BLM & ANTIFA in the USA).

D. Persecutions (Vs. 9-13)

"The previous warning (Vs. 5-8) stressed the perils arising from what would happen in the world; this warning directs attention to what would happen to them personally." (Hiebert) While these verses have application to persecution against Christians generally, we understand that it looks forward to the seven-year tribulation period where the worst persecution of believers in history will occur just before the Lord returns.

1. The Source of the Persecutions (Vs. 9, 12-13)
 - a. From Governmental Authorities (Vs. 9)
 - i. Ecclesiastical Rulers – "councils...synagogues" (Vs. 9a)
The 'councils' were "local, Jewish disciplinary courts attached to the synagogues. They handled cases of infraction of the law and charges of heresy. Cases that were too difficult were referred to the high Sanhedrin in Jerusalem." (Hiebert)

¹ <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/05/05/850470436/u-n-warns-number-of-people-starving-to-death-could-double-amid-pandemic>

² <https://www.worldhunger.org/world-child-hunger-facts/>

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- ii. Civil Rulers – “rulers and kings” (Vs. 9b)
 - iii. Note: Again, we note the law of double reference. This warning was pertinent for the Apostles who would go on to suffer persecution and martyrdom (except John) for the cause of Christ (e.g., Acts 5:40-41). And the persecution of Christians has been a hallmark of history from then to the present time. But we understand that it also looks forward to the future tribulation period where there will be unprecedented persecution of the tribulation saints.
 - iv. Luke 6:22 “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach *you*, and cast out your name as evil, **for the Son of man's sake.**”
- b. From Close Family (Vs. 12)
- i. Siblings betraying siblings (12a).
 - ii. Parents betraying children (12b).
 - iii. Children betraying parents (12c).
 - iv. Matthew 10:34-39 “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household. 37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”
- c. From People Generally (Vs. 13)
- i. “hated of all men for my name’s sake” = the hatred directed against Christians is on account of their attachment to Jesus Christ.
 - ii. 1 John 3:13 “**Marvel not**, my brethren, **if the world hate you.**”
 - iii. John 15:18-21 “**If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you.** If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: **but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.** Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours

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also. But all these things will they do unto you **for my name's sake**, because they know not him that sent me.”

- iv. Morison: "As there is nothing that excites such love as the gospel, when intelligently received, so there is nothing that occasions such hate as this same gospel, when passionately rejected."
2. The Sharing amidst Persecutions (Vs. 10)
 - a. The Gospel will be published throughout the world during the first half of the tribulation period by the 144,000 Jewish Evangelists (Revelation 7) and the two witnesses (Rev. 11:3). Matthew specifically says, "the gospel of the kingdom." (24:14)
 - b. Thomas L. Constable: "This verse is not a promise, that if disciples will preach the gospel to all nations in a particular generation, God will then begin the kingdom—as postmillennialists teach. Man cannot bring in the kingdom by the universal preaching of the gospel. God will bring it in at His appointed time. This is not a promise that everyone will become a believer in Jesus, either."
 - c. Note: This gives us a window into the heart of God. In every dispensation, men are given an opportunity to repent and receive His forgiveness. "It is part of God's eschatological purpose that before the End all nations shall have an opportunity to accept the Gospel." (Hiebert)
3. The Succor in the Persecutions (Vs. 11)
 - a. "take no thought" = means "to be anxious beforehand", thoughts in the sense of worried and troubling thoughts.
 - b. "whatsoever shall be given you in that hour" = they would be supernaturally enabled by the Spirit of God to face that moment.
 - c. Church history is replete with examples of courageous, Spirit enabled and anointed testimonies by believers in the face of persecution and martyrdom. Hugh Latimer was martyred along with Dr Nicholas Ridley in 1555 during the reign of bloody Queen Mary who viciously persecuted the protestant believers. As a lighted fagot was laid at Dr. Ridley's feet, Hugh Latimer said, "Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust never shall be put out." (Foxes Book of Martyrs)
 - d. Note: If you face persecution in the will of God, you can be sure He will fulfill this promise to you. But this is different to those who seek persecution or martyrdom in a self-generated zeal that masquerades as spiritual fervor.
4. The Sustaining in the Persecutions (Vs. 13b)
 - a. Within the context of the tribulation period, it means that those who survive to the end of that period will have their lives spared.

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- b. In relation to salvation, perseverance to the end is evidence of genuine faith. It is not teaching that one must endure in order to be saved but rather that one who is saved will evidence the reality of their salvation by patience endurance of such trials.

IV. THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION (mid-point of the tribulation) (VS. 14-18)

“This section forms the heart of the Olivet Discourse as recorded in Mark. It divides naturally into two paragraphs: 1. The event which inaugurates the unparalleled tribulation and offers appropriate guidance to His followers (Vs. 14-23). 2. The return of the Son of man in glory (Vs. 24-27).” (Hiebert)

A. The Sign the Jews are to Watch for (Vs. 14a)

1. The Prophet’s Prediction – “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” (Dan. 9:27)
2. The Antichrist’s Desecration – the antichrist will desecrate the temple, setting up an image of himself and declaring himself to be God.
 - a. 2 Thess. 2:4 “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”
 - b. Rev. 13:14-15 “And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.” This chapter in Revelation documents the fearful, one world order of the Antichrist that will dramatically increase in scope and power during the last 3 ½ years of Daniel’s 70th week. The Antichrist will control the world politically, spiritually and economically.
 - c. Illustration: Modern Hologram Technology – “The ultimate fantasy pop idol is Hatsune Miku. One of the most popular Japanese pop singers of all time, she performed sold-out concerts attended by tens of thousands of screaming fans and opened for Lady Gaga. But she doesn’t exist. One hundred percent fantasy, she is an avatar created by the Japanese company Crypton Future Media. She is projected onstage as a dancing hologram. She is the ultimate scantily clothed pop

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singer of youthful fantasy with an unrealistically proportioned figure and a hyper-cute, Manga-influenced face. Girls fantasize that they are Hatsune, and boys fantasize that she is their girlfriend. One fan said, “She’s rather more like a goddess: She has human parts, but she transcends human limitations. She’s the great post-human pop star” (“Hatsune Miku: The world’s fakest pop star,” *CBN News*, Nov. 9, 2012).” (David Cloud – Fantasy Dangers)

B. The Site the Jews are to Run for (Vs. 14b-18)

1. The Speed of their Flight (Vs. 14b-16)

Note that this instruction is “not for the listening disciples but for future readers of Scripture. In the years immediately prior to the second coming, people will read Jesus’ words and, realizing they are in the midst of the final tribulation, be equipped to understand and endure the trials of that unparalleled trouble.” (Macarthur) To impress upon the **reader** just how urgent it was for them to flee without delay, Christ gives two scenarios:

- a. The Housetop Scenario (Vs. 15). The ‘houstop’ refers to the flat roof of the Oriental house. It was generally reached by an outside stairway (Mk. 2:2-4). It was used for various purposes such as sleeping (1 Sam. 9:25-26), keeping a watch (Isa. 22:1), worship (Zeph. 1:5; Acts 10:9), proclaiming tidings (Matt. 10:27) and the like. If a man happened to be up there when the crisis broke, he must rush down and flee without even stopping to remove anything out of his house for his flight.” (Hiebert)
- b. The Field Scenario (Vs. 16). The picture is of a man working without his cloak, the outer garment. He is not to return to the house or to the entrance to the field to take it.” (Hiebert) “The danger is so great that there is no time for any delay. Life itself is at stake.” (James A. Brooks)

2. The Sorrow of their Flight (Vs. 17)

3. The Supplication for their Flight (Vs. 18)

- a. This verse teaches the principle of praying for circumstantial mercies.
- b. Note: Have you thought of praying for that future day for Israel that God will grant them favourable weather for their flight from Antichrist?

Conclusion: Bible prophecy puts things in perspective. Are you living for eternity? “The purpose of prophecy is not to entertain the curious, but to encourage the consecrated.” (Wiersbe) Are you facing persecution and opposition for being a consecrated Christian? Facing battles with close family? Stay faithful to Christ and He will be with you. Remember their opposition is on account of your loyalty to Christ.

The Olivet Discourse Part 3

Text: Mark 13:19-27

Introduction:

1. This is the longest recorded answer of Christ to a question in the Gospels which says something of its importance. Some have called it “the Little Apocalypse.”
2. Remember! Israel is in view, not the church. Keep the law of double reference in mind (the near and far principle).
3. In our previous lesson we looked at the beginning of sorrows (first half of tribulation) and the abomination of desolation (mid-point). In this lesson we will look at the great tribulation (second half of tribulation), the second coming and the concluding exhortations.
4. Review of outline so far:
 - I. The setting of the discourse (vs. 1-4).
 - II. The present age (vs. 5-7).
 - III. The beginning of sorrows (birth pangs) (vs. 8-13).
 - IV. The abomination of desolation (mid-point of the tribulation) (vs. 14-18).

V. **THE GREAT TRIBULATION (2nd half of the tribulation) (VS. 19-23; Matt. 24:21)**

The great tribulation will be characterized by two phenomena according to Christ:

A. Devastations (Vs. 19-20)

1. The severity of those days (Vs. 19)
 - a. Unbearable Tribulation. The word ‘affliction’ comes from the Greek word θλιψις (thlipsis) which means “a pressing together.” It is most commonly translated as ‘tribulation’ in the N.T.
 - b. Unparalleled Tribulation. This time of tribulation will be worse than anything else in human history, past or future – “such as was not from the beginning of creation...neither shall be.” The Book of Revelation gives us the details of this terrible time with the pouring out of the vial plagues upon the earth (bowl judgments).
2. The Shortening of those days (Vs. 20)
 - a. What if they weren’t shortened? (Vs. 20a)
 - i. This further adds to the picture of the intensity of this period. Except God had set a Divine time limit on these days of tribulation, the entire planet would be wiped out.
 - ii. Note: This verse is not teaching that the 7-year tribulation period will be shortened but rather that God has set the

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time limit on this period already. “If those days with their awful judgments were allowed to continue indefinitely, the human race would be totally destroyed. God will allow that period to run its course but will terminate it according to His timetable so that a remnant will be spared.”
(Pentecost)

- b. Why they were shortened? (Vs. 20b)
 - i. “for the elect’s sake” = the reason God has shortened the days. Within the context of this passage, the elect would be believing Israel.
 - ii. The world has little idea how much judgment it is spared and how many blessings it receives on account of the presence of God’s Redeemed people.

B. Deceptions (Vs. 21-23)

1. The People of the Deceptions (Vs. 21-22)

During this time there will be...

- a. False Messiahs (Vs. 21-22a)
 - i. It appears there will be an attempt to lure the godly Jewish remnant out of the safety of their hiding during this time. Matt. 24:26 “Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; **go not forth**: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not.”
 - ii. The Antichrist will be the most prominent false messiah during this time but the plural indicates there will be others also making false claims in the tribulation period. It will be a time of unparalleled deceptions with the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit removed from the earth (See 2 Thess. 2:7).
 - iii. Macarthur: “Due to the chaos and catastrophes that will characterize the great tribulation, religious liars and deceivers will take advantage of people’s terror and desperation.”
- b. False Messengers (Vs. 22b)
 - i. False prophets will also abound during this time as the messengers for the false messiahs. Again, the most prominent example will be the Antichrist’s false prophet who is described in Rev. 13:11-18. See also 2 Thess. 2:8-9.
 - ii. These prophets will have seductive, satanic power to the point they will almost be able to seduce God’s elect people. The phrase “signs and wonders” is “a common phrase for miracles. ‘Wonders’ views these signs with reference to the astonishment that they produce; they are startling, amazement-evoking portents.” (E. Hiebert)

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- iii. **Warning!** Signs and wonders do not automatically mean a movement is of God. The signs and wonders movement sweeping the world today is preparing the way for the Antichrist.
2. The Protection against the Deceptions (Vs. 23)
 - a. “take ye heed” = the phrase “take heed” comes from the Greek word ‘blepo’ which literally means “to see”. Spiritual vigilance and watchfulness are re-occurring themes in the Olivet Discourse. This is the antidote for the godly Jewish remnant during the tribulation period.
 - b. “behold, I have foretold you al things” = the Lord’s words of warning were to be their guide to be discerning.
 - c. Challenge: These principles of spiritual discernment that will be vital for that godly Jewish remnant in the Tribulation Period are the same principles that we need to apply in order to guard ourselves against the end times apostasy we are faced with today. With the Word of God as our guide, and the help of the Holy Spirit, we can discern the deceptions that come our way.

VI. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST (VS. 24-27)

Look at...

A. The Signs Announcing the Coming (Vs. 24-25; Isaiah 13:9-11)

There will be supernatural, cosmic signs in the heavens that will precede the coming of Christ. There will be...

1. The Sun and Moon darkening (Vs. 24) Imagine how dark the world will be without the light of the sun or moon. The whole earth will be enveloped in thick darkness. “The cosmic backdrop for history’s most climactic moment will be total darkness, after God extinguishes the sun, moon, and stars.” (Macarthur)
2. The Stars falling (Vs. 25a) The picture is of star after star falling (lit. “shall be falling”).
3. The Heavens shaking (Vs. 25b) There will be vast convulsions in the heavenly world. In Acts 16:26 the verb ‘shaken’ is used to describe the effect of an earthquake.
4. Joel’s prophecy describes it as follows: “The sun and moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” (Joel 3:15-16)

B. The Son Descending at the Coming (Vs. 26)

1. “And then shall they see the Son of man” = all of a sudden in them midst of the darkness, heaven will be opened and Christ will

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descend with “great power and glory.” This “means not only that the returning one possesses power and glory but that He comes accompanied by a visible display of great power and glory, exercising divine authority and clothed with heavenly glory.” (Hiebert)

2. Daniel 7:13-14 “I say in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”
3. Rev. 19:11-16 “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

C. The Seraphs Gathering after the Coming (Vs. 27)

1. Upon Christ’s arrival, angels will be sent out to gather in elect Israel from the uttermost parts of the earth. The phrase from the four wings” suggests people alive in all parts of the world.
2. “from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of the heaven” = the phrase are “apparently a reference to the fact that the visible extremes of earth and sky meet at the horizon; it thus seems to denote space in all directions. There will not be a spot on the face of the globe where any of the elect will be overlooked.” (Hiebert)
3. Pentecost: “Since this whole discourse has been devoted to the prophetic program for Israel, the reference to “his elect” (Matt. 24:31) cannot refer to the church. During the tribulation Israel will be scattered out of the land by military invasions. The Israelites will flee and find refuge among the Gentile nations. God will supernaturally bring the people of Israel back to the land through the instrumentality of angels.”

Conclusion: Are you saved? If so, are you living for Christ?

The Olivet Discourse Part 4

Text: Mark 13:28-37

Introduction:

1. In our previous lesson we looked at the great tribulation (second half of tribulation) and the second coming. We will now study the concluding exhortations of the Olivet Discourse.
2. Review of outline so far:
 - I. The setting of the discourse (Vs. 1-4).
 - II. The present age (Vs. 5-7).
 - III. The beginning of sorrows (birth pangs) (Vs. 8-13).
 - IV. The abomination of desolation (mid-point of the tribulation) (Vs. 14-18).
 - V. The great tribulation (2nd half of the tribulation) (Vs. 19-23; matt. 24:21)
 - VI. The second coming of Christ (Vs. 24-27)

VII. THE CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS (VS. 28-37)

A. The Exhortation to Discern (Vs. 28-29)

1. The Picture of the Fig Tree (Vs. 28) The sprouting of the fig tree is a sign of the impending summer. Luke adds “and all the trees” (Lk. 21:29) so the reference appears to be to the literal tree and not to the fig tree as a symbol of Israel (See Hos. 9:10; Nah. 3:12 & Zech. 3:10). The fig tree is seasonal (unlike the evergreen Olive) and so conveys the lesson Christ intended to teach.
2. The Point of the Fig Tree (Vs. 29)
 - a. The fulfilling of “these things” (the events described in Vs. 14-23) is a sign of the impending return. The phrase “at the doors” is “a common figure to denote nearness. The word ‘at’ is the word ‘epi’ meaning ‘upon’. It pictures the subject so near as in fact already located on the doorstep.” (Hiebert)
 - b. “In the same way that one can predict the coming of summer based on the arrival of tree leaves in spring, so believers at the end of the age will be able to anticipate Christ’s return when they witness “these things” – namely, the catastrophic events Jesus had just predicted would mark the future tribulation.” (MacArthur)

B. The Exhortation to Believe (Vs. 30-31)

Christ now impresses upon his hearers the certainty of His predictions. There are two statements Christ makes to that end. He speaks of...

1. The certainty of the prophetic events (Vs. 30) Question: What ‘generation’ is referred to in Vs. 30? Clearly it cannot refer to the generation of the disciples as all the things Christ predicted were

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not fulfilled in their lifetime. It must therefore refer to the generation living at that future time of the tribulation.

2. The certainty of the prophetic words (Vs. 31)
 - a. Heaven and Earth will pass away (Vs. 31a) The same word translated “pass away” is also found in the following two verses:
 - i. 2 Peter 3:10 “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall **pass away** with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”
 - ii. Revelation 21:1 “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were **passed away**; and there was no more sea.”
 - b. God’s Word will not pass away (Vs. 31b)
 - i. This is true of the Word of God generally. Psalm 119:89 “LAMED. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” Psalm 12:6-7 “The words of the LORD *are* pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.”
 - ii. This is true of the Olivet Discourse specifically. Remember the context of this statement. Christ’s words concerning the future WILL be fulfilled in every detail just as He said. He will come just as He said He would!
 - iii. There is nothing more sure, certain and permanent in the entire universe than the Word of God. The Bible is God’s indestructible Book.

C. The Exhortation to Watch (Vs. 32-37)

1. The Imminence requiring Watchfulness (Vs. 32-33)
 - a. Only the Father knows the timing of Christ’s coming. This verse clearly forbids the practice of date setting for the return of Christ! (e.g. The date setting of the JW’s – 1914, 1918, 1925, 1975)
 - b. Historical snapshot: The imagery is based on the Eastern marriage customs of Christ’s day.
 - c. Question: Does this statement diminish the deity of Christ? Notice the emphasis on “no man”. This statement must be understood in the context of Christ’s humanity. Christ is equal with the Father (Phil. 2:6) but he voluntarily laid aside some of His Divine prerogatives when He took on human flesh and lived as perfect man in total dependence on the Father. We do not read another statement like this after Christ’s resurrection and glorification. David Sorenson writes, “Jesus denial of knowing the time does not preclude His Deity. Rather, it reveals His humanity and His voluntary limiting of some of His prerogatives

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(e.g., Omniscience) in His earthly tenure. That, however, has been fully restored in His glorification.”

- d. “Take ye heed, watch and pray” = the required attitude for the believers in light of the fact Christ could return at any time. The word ‘watch’ means “to be spiritually awake, alert and on the lookout for danger.” (Hiebert)
2. The Illustration regarding Watchfulness (Vs. 34-36)
 - a. The picture is of the master of a household taking a long journey. He delegates responsibilities to his servants and commands the porter (warden of the door, door keeper) to keep watch for his return.
 - b. The master’s servants are to faithfully fulfil their duties in their master’s absence, being always ready for his return.
 - c. “The Roman twelve-hour watch from 6pm to 6am consisted of four three-hour periods. Those intervals were generally identified by when they ended: the evening at 9pm, midnight at 12am, the time when the rooster crows at 3am (dawn) and morning at 6am. Jesus point was that His return could occur at any time, even in the middle of the night.” (Macarthur)
 3. The Instruction reiterating Watchfulness (Vs. 37)
 - a. The principle of watchfulness is clearly not only for the future tribulation saints. It is to be the spirit that is to characterize believers in every age.
 - b. We need to interpret these verses accurately in their context and see how they apply directly to the tribulation saints of the future but let us not miss the challenge that is there for us. This spirit of watchfulness is also to characterize the church age saints (you and me) as the following Scriptures demonstrate:
 - i. Romans 13:11-14 “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time **to awake out of sleep**: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”
 - ii. 1 Thess. 5:6-9 “Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us **watch** and be **sober**. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be **sober**, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the

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- hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- iii. Titus 2:13 “**Looking** for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;”
 - iv. 1 Peter 4:7 “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and **watch** unto prayer.”
 - v. 1 Cor. 16:13 “**Watch** ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”
 - vi. Col. 4:2 “Continue in prayer, and **watch** in the same with thanksgiving;”
- c. Challenge/application: As we wait for the rapture of the church, we are to serve as Christ has commanded, ever watchful and waiting for His imminent return. When Christ comes, will He find you sleeping or watching? Would you want to be raptured now in the state you are in spiritually? Would you want Christ to come for you whilst you are watching your favourite show on T.V.? Would you want Christ to come for you while you are at that compromised function?

Conclusion: The challenge of this message is to watch, pray and serve, motivated by that spirit of expectancy for the imminent return of Christ.

Extravagant Love for Christ

Text: Mark 14:1-9 (See also Matt. 26:6-13; John 12:1-8)

Introduction:

1. Context: Just prior to the Passover and the crucifixion (Vs. 1-2). Mary's act of devotion is sandwiched between the evil plotting of the religious leaders (Vs. 1-2) and the betrayal of Judas (Vs. 10-11). William Macdonald puts it this way, "As a jeweller places a diamond against black velvet, the Holy Spirit and his human writer Mark skilfully highlight the radiance of a woman's love for our Lord between the dark plotting of the religious hierarchy and that of Judas." Between the dark hatred of the religious leaders and that of Judas, shines the light of Mary's love and devotion for her Christ.
2. Location: Christ is at Bethany, a village close to Jerusalem, behind the Mount of Olives. From John's account it appears Christ is again at the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus as it is noted that Lazarus is seated at the table and Martha is serving.
3. Mary is noted in Scripture for her spirit of devotion to Christ (Luke 10:39) and this touching account reveals her deep love for her Saviour and the depth of her faith.
4. How much do we really love our Saviour? Mary's example will serve as a challenge to us.

I. The Demonstration of Her Love (Vs. 3)

A. The Preciousness of her Gift (Vs. 3a)

1. The container – Alabaster box
 - a. "So named from the town of Alabastron, in Middle Egypt, where there were quarries of this fine-grained, pink-coloured gypsum. It was made into containers for holding perfumes and other precious articles." (D. Cloud)
 - b. "A vessel or vial made of semitransparent stone which was so arranged and sealed up that the neck of the vial had to be broken to get at the contents." (Lenski)
 - c. "The cruse was a long-necked flask with no handles used for preserving precious perfumes or fragrant oils." (Hiebert)
2. The contents – ointment of spikenard
 - a. Its Volume – John notes it was "a pound of ointment" which equates to around 12 ounces or 354 ml.
 - b. Its Value – 'spikenard' was a fragrant ointment/perfume made from a plant in India. This plant grows in the Himalaya Mountains at a great elevation. (D. Cloud)
 - i. Described by Mark as "very precious" and by Matthew as "very costly".

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- ii. In monetary terms it was worth over 300 pence. One penny represented a day's wage (Matt. 20:2) so this was almost a year's wages.
- iii. Illustration: David's words to Araunah the Jebusite –
*"...Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: **neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing.** So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver."* (2. Sam. 24:24)
- iv. Challenge: The sad reality today is that most of us want a convenient, cheap Christianity that involves little to no sacrifice of our time or treasure.
- v. Ann Judson: "A little while and we are in eternity; before we find ourselves there, let us do much for Christ."

B. The Pouring out of her Gift (Vs. 3b)

- 1. The consecration of the vessel. The precious fragrance could not be enjoyed without the breaking of the vessel. The broken vessel reminds us of two truths:
 - a. The forthcoming death of Christ where His body would be broken and His sinless blood poured out as a fragrant sacrifice to the Father for our sins. From his bleeding wounds, streamed forth the pure perfume of salvation. Ephesians 5:2 says, "...as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." The Father saw "the travail of his (Christ's) soul" on the cross and was "satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11).
 - b. The principle of brokenness which is essential to our usefulness for Christ. God is in the business of using broken things. When we die to self and are broken, the sweet perfume of the life of Christ can be released through our lives.
- 2. The consecration of the contents. The gift was completely poured out upon the head and feet (Jn. 12:3) of the Saviour.
 - a. The pouring of some oil on the head was a customary treatment of an honoured guest (Ps. 23:5; Lk. 7:46) but the anointing of the feet was unusual and therefore a special act of humility and devotion. John 12:3 "...and anointed the feet of Jesus, and **wiped his feet with her hair...**"
 - b. She gave it all. "The question is not how much have I done or given, but could I have done or given more?" (Maclaren) Have you ever come to a place in your Christian life where you have consciously given all to Christ?

C. The Perfuming from her Gift (John 12:3)

- 1. "...the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." (Jn. 12:3)

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2. While the literal fragrance of Mary's gift has long gone, the spiritual fragrance of her loving act remains to this day. True acts of sacrifice to Christ are like sweet perfume to Him.

II. The Disdain of Her Love (Vs. 4-5)

Opposition came from an unexpected source! Don't be surprised if your sacrifice for the Lord attracts criticism of the most hurtful kind.

A. The Originator of the Criticism (John 12:4-6)

This was opposition from the covetous (Judas). "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." (Jn. 12:4-6)

1. Seems Judas was the source of the opposition. Never underestimate the influence of one tongue to spread a sour and ungodly attitude!
2. Judas was motivated by covetousness. Sometimes arguments are put forward that sound plausible and spiritual on the surface but they simply veil an evil motive.
3. Judas was a false professor (unsaved). Sometimes opposition comes from professing Christians who are actually lost and are viewing things from the perspective of the natural man.

B. The Repeaters of the Criticism (Vs. 4-5)

This was opposition from the carnal. "But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor." (Matt. 26:8-9)

1. Their Carnal Response (4a)
 - a. The inward response of their hearts. The word 'indignation' means "Anger or extreme anger, mingled with contempt, disgust or abhorrence." (Webster) It "means to be indignant, feel a violent irritation." Also translated "much displeased" and "sore displeased". (Strong's) "They bristled with indignation against her." (Wuest)
 - b. The outward response of their lips. The word 'murmured' means to snort with anger, to groan against, to blame. (Strong's) The word was used of the snorting of horses. Their inward anger and displeasure found expression in verbal murmuring.
2. Their Carnal Rebuke (Vs. 4b-5)

Maclaren writes, "The disciples chimed in with the objection, not because they were superior to Mary in wisdom, but because they were inferior in consecration."

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- a. They questioned its purpose – “...*To what **purpose** is this waste?*” (Matt. 26:8) The disciples were deeply loyal to Christ but they still had a lot of maturing to do. Sometimes people criticize your service for God because they don’t understand your motive.
- b. They considered it as a waste – “*Why was this **waste** of the ointment made?*” What a sad commentary on the shallowness of the love of the disciples. Our perspective on giving to the Lord is a spiritual thermometer that reveals much about the temperature of our hearts.
- c. They believed it could be better used (Vs. 5) – Be careful before you take on the role of being a financial advisor over the giving of others! Their argument “gave plausibility to the criticism” (Hiebert). Such criticism often comes hidden under a cloak of fake spirituality.
- d. Some Christians seem to make it their ministry to go around like walking fire extinguishers squirting carnal coldness at every flame of passion and devotion for Christ they see. Sometimes it comes from the most unexpected sources! A parent, a child, a senior saint who should know better, a fellow church member.
- e. The disciples were guilty of the sin of quenching the Spirit – “Quench not the Spirit.” (1 Thess. 5:19)
- f. Challenge: Be a flame fanner rather than a flame extinguisher!

III. The Defence of Her Love (Vs. 6-9)

Christ steps in and defends Mary, commending her sacrificial act of love. He commended:

A. The Quality of her gift (Vs. 6)

1. Christ places His stamp of approval upon Mary’s actions.
2. ‘good’ = “means goodness on the outside as it strikes the eye, a beautiful, pleasing goodness.” (Wuest) “It possessed true moral beauty.” (Swete)
3. What really matters in the Christian life is that we have the approval of Christ; that we are pleasing to Him.
4. Note: Mary did not defend herself. “We learn from her that it is not always necessary to defend ourselves – our good actions speak for themselves, and the only thing essential is that Jesus approves them.” (Lenski)

B. The Opportunity for her gift (Vs. 7)

1. Giving to the poor was a good thing but it did not reflect discernment of the hour.
2. We may be involved in many “good” things but we need to ask ourselves if they are “the best things”.

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C. The Ability of her gift (Vs. 8a)

1. God is not interested in whether you have as great abilities or talents as others. What pleases Him is when we give Him what we have.
2. We need to stop focusing on what we can't do and don't have and rather seek to use what God has already entrusted to us.

D. The Sensitivity of her gift (Vs. 8b)

1. This gives us a window into the depth of Mary's faith. Her anointing of Christ was motivated by an understanding of His impending death. The shadow of the cross hung over His life.
2. Mary had taken time to sit at the feet of Christ and to draw close to His heart. The heart that dwells on Calvary will be a giving heart.

E. The Longevity of her gift (Vs. 9)

1. The giving of our temporary, material things leads to eternal fruit.
2. Mary would be forever remembered for this act; her story being permanently attached to the Gospel record by Christ. "Heaven is interested in many things of which the world gives little notice" (Butler) Alexander Maclaren asks the searching question, "**Jesus Christ has a great many strange things in His treasure house – widows' mites, cups of water, Mary's broken vase – has He anything of yours?**"
3. What will you be remembered for? Will we be remembered for devotion and dedication to Christ? Will you have any treasures in heaven?

Conclusion:

1. How is your love for the Saviour? Does that love find expression in sacrificial giving?
2. How do you respond to the devotion of others? Are you a fanner or extinguisher of the flame of consecration?
3. Are we living for the approval of Christ or the praise of men?

The Last Supper

Text: Mark 14:10-26

Introduction:

1. Judas plots betrayal and approaches the religious leaders (Vs. 10-11). What exactly motivated Judas we are not explicitly told but we do know he was motivated by covetousness (John 12:6) and was possessed by Satan (Luke 22:3). The reason the religious leaders needed Judas was on account of their fear of the multitudes (Vs. 1-2) otherwise they would no doubt have arrested Christ publicly. The dark clouds of betrayal hang over this whole passage.
2. On this night, Christ would institute the Lord's Supper which we still observe over 2,000 years later.
3. We will divide the passage into three parts for our study.

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE LAST SUPPER (VS. 12-16)

A. The Season of the Preparation (Vs. 12)

1. "the first day of unleavened bread" = reference to the Passover. The bread was not to contain any leaven (yeast) on account of it being a type of corruption. The unleavened bread spoke of the hast with which the Israelites departed Egypt (Ex. 12:11; Deut. 16:3) as well as the fact they were called to a separated walk.
2. "when they killed the Passover" = reference to the slaying of the Passover lambs. This Passover season was nearly 1500 years since the first Passover was established by God. Read **Exodus 12:1-13** for details of the first Passover. What significant timing! The Perfect Passover Lamb of God (John 1:29) was about to be offered for the sins of the world. This would mark the end of the O.T. as far as God was concerned. All those Passover lambs down through the centuries pointed to this moment.
3. "that thou mayest eat the Passover" = respectful and deferential treatment of Christ. They would eat with Him but He would be the honoured host of the supper.

B. The Servants of the Preparation (Vs. 13-16)

1. The sign for the disciples (Vs. 13-15)
 - a. The two named servants – Peter and John (Vs. 13a; Luke 22:8). They were to 'prepare' the Passover. Edmond Hiebert explains what this involved, "The work of preparation involved procuring and preparing the lamb, making the necessary room arrangements for the feast, and procuring unleavened cakes, wine, water, bitter herbs, and crushed fruit moistened with vinegar."

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- b. The two unnamed servants (Vs. 13b-15). There is a lesson here that many of God's servants are largely unknown and unnamed so far as this life is concerned but they are known to Christ and they are precious to Him. Peter and John could expect to find:
 - i. A prepared man (Vs. 13-14). Upon entering the city, they would see a man carrying an earthen water pot, an unusual and conspicuous sight in a day when such a task was usually performed by women. They were to follow this man to the house where the Passover feast was to be observed. The 'goodman' (house lord, master) of the house was evidently favourable to Christ and His cause. Merely the mention of "The Master" would be enough for this man to make his home available to Christ and His disciples to use.
 - ii. Note: It is possible that Christ arranged the location in this secretive manner on account of Judas' evil intentions.
 - iii. A prepared place (Vs. 15). The room is described as 'large' so it was obviously adequate for the Lord and His disciples. It is also called an "upper room" which "denotes a room upstairs, probably a roof chamber built on the flat housetop. Such rooms were commonly approached by an outside stairway." (Hiebert) They would find this room 'furnished' likely meaning the setting for the meal was prepared (e.g., the reclining couches).
2. The submission of the disciples (Vs. 16)

II. THE PREDICTION AT THE LAST SUPPER (VS. 17-21)

A. A Startling Declaration (Vs. 18)

1. "One of you which eateth with me" = one of the 12 would be the betrayer of Christ. The fact he was one who was eating with Christ was even more shocking in the culture and customs of the East.
2. Hiebert: "It added to the horror of the betrayal, since for Orientals to eat bread with a man absolutely precludes hostile action against him."
3. Psalm 41:9 "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me." In this Psalm, David is expressing the pain of the betrayal of his advisor Ahithophel who joined Absalom's rebellion against David but it looked forward prophetically to Christ's betrayal.
4. John 13:18 "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me."

B. A Sorrowful Reaction (Vs. 19)

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1. “they began to be sorrowful” = the word means to be distressed, profoundly pained. The disciples were shocked and devastated by Christ’s prediction.
2. They begin “one by one” to ask Christ “Is it I?” We can clearly deduce from this that the disciples had no idea Judas was the betrayer. So far as they were concerned, he was a loyal disciple but in reality dark, murderous betrayal was in Judas’ heart. The outer appearance of things with people are not always what they seem.
3. Shockingly, Luke documents that as the disciples were discussing “which of them it was that should do this thing” there was “a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.” (Luke 22:23-24)

C. A Sober Explanation (Vs. 20-21)

1. The Betrayer’s Identity (Vs. 20)
 - a. “one of the twelve” = Christ again emphasizes that the betrayer would come from their own inner circle.
 - b. “that dipped with me in the dish” = evidently Judas was sharing a dipping bowl with Christ and was therefore in close proximity to Him. “The dish or bowl, apparently denotes the side dish which would be used together by only three or four at a table. It contained the sauce of dried fruits, spices, and vinegar, into which pieces of the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs were dipped.” (Hiebert)
 - c. John 13:21-30 reveal a follow up question was asked by John at Peter’s instigation. Christ then told them that the one he handed the ‘sop’ to was the one. Upon receiving the sop from Christ, Satan entered Judas (Vs. 27). Though he outwardly received Christ’s token of love and friendship, in his heart his intention to betray his Lord and Saviour was set. Satan was waiting for this moment and quickly entered Judas to ensure the evil plot was carried out. We frequently read of people being possessed with devils (demons) in the New Testament but this is the only time we read in the Gospels of one being possessed of Satan himself.
2. The Betrayer’s Destiny (Vs. 21)
 - a. “The Son of man goeth as it is written” = Christ highlights the bigger picture that these events were foreordained and foretold. The cross was no accident of history. Christ had come for this very moment.
 - b. “but woe to that man” = the word ‘woe’ is a solemn pronouncement of judgment. the fact that in the overruling Providence of God Judas would fulfill Scripture did not lessen his guilt. The complimentary truths of Divine Sovereignty and Human responsibility are demonstrated in this verse. Man is

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accountable to God for his sinful choices, but his sinful choices will not thwart the plan of God. Rather, God is able to make even the wrath of man to praise Him (Psalm 76:10).

- c. Judas made a choice of his own free will and would experience eternal damnation as a result. This is why he is called “the son of perdition” (John 17:12).

III. THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD’S SUPPER (VS. 22-26)

A. The Sequence of the Supper (Vs. 22-25)

1. The body of Christ – ‘bread’ (Vs. 22)
 - a. A Sinless body – the bread was unleavened symbolising the sinless character of Christ.
 - b. A Sacrificial body – the bread was broken. Christ’s body was going to be broken for us on the cross. Note: His body was broken, not His bones.
 - i. Notice the sequence – He took the bread, broke the bread and gave the bread. In like manner, Christ took upon Himself human flesh, was broken at the cross so we could be given the bread of life (salvation).
 - ii. John 6:35 “And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life**: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”
 - i. John 6:51 “**I am the living bread which came down from heaven**: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”
 - c. Christ ‘blessed’ the bread meaning He gave thanks. Luke uses the phrase “gave thanks” (Luke 22:19) as does Paul (1 Cor. 11:24).
 - d. Note: The phrase “take eat: this is my body” has been misinterpreted and used to support the blasphemous concept of the Roman Catholic mass. Clearly the Lord’s language here is symbolic and figurative. If we were re-sacrificing Christ every time we observed communion, it would be a denial of the plain truth of the once for all, never to be repeated, sacrifice of Christ.
 - e. Heb. 10:10-12 “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered **one sacrifice** for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;”
2. The blood of Christ – ‘cup’

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- a. The purity of the blood – the cup contained pure grape juice (the fruit of the vine). It would be inconsistent for our Lord to serve unleavened bread with leavened wine!
- b. The New Testament of the blood – Christ introduces the New Covenant. Christ was bringing an entire system (the Old Testament system) to a completion and launching a new one.
- c. The Shedding of the blood – the word ‘shed’ means to gush or pour out. Christ’s blood was poured out for us at the cross.
- d. The Scope of the blood – “for many”. This is not ‘many’ in opposition to ‘all’ but another way of emphasizing the vast scope of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. He died for many because He died for all! 1 John 2:2 “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and **not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world.***” Matthew adds the phrase “for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28).
- e. The forward look of the cup (Vs. 25). In this verse Christ looks beyond the impending agonies of the cross to His coming and Millennial kingdom. When we remember the Lord in His appointed way, we not only look back to what Christ accomplished on the cross, but we also look upwards and forwards to His return. Remember the three looks of the Lord’s Table – the inward look, the rearward look and the forward look (1 Cor. 11:23-28).

B. The Song of the Supper (Vs. 26)

Conclusion:

In Gethsemane's Garden

Text: Mark 14:27-42

Introduction:

1. The Last Supper being over, Christ and His disciples go to the Garden of Gethsemane. This period on the Eve of the crucifixion can be divided into the following segments:
 - Vs. 26-31 – Christ's prediction to the disciples on the way to the garden.
 - Vs. 32-42 – Christ's agony in the garden described.
 - Vs. 43-50 – Christ's betrayal and arrest detailed.
2. What took place in this garden was deeply significant as it was here that Christ wrestled with the reality of the impending cross and submitted Himself to the Father's will. His consecration would stand in contrast to the weakness and frailty of His disciples whose resolves to stand ended in failure.
3. We will divide the text under three headings for our study.

I. CHRIST'S ADMONITION EN ROUTE TO THE GARDEN (VS. 26-31)

A. Christ's Solemn Prediction (Vs. 27-28)

1. The substance of His Prediction (Vs. 27a)
 - a. 'offended' = means "caused to stumble", "caught in a trap". Their offense would not be in Christ personally but the events of the crucifixion would sorely test their faith.
 - b. Note: It appears Christ issued 2 warnings – one in the Upper Room (Luke) and one on the way to the garden (Matthew and Mark). Peter was particularly a focus of these warnings on account of his self-confidence and leadership amongst the other disciples.
2. The Scriptural basis of His Prediction (Vs. 27b)
 - a. "for it is written" = Christ's prediction was grounded in Scripture. The prophecy Christ refers to here is from Zechariah 13:7 "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man *that is* my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: **smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered:** and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones."
 - b. "I will smite the Shepherd" = Christ would be smitten for the sheep. This would be in the Divine will of the Father to provide salvation for mankind – "Yet it **pleased the LORD to bruise him**; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days,

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and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” (Isaiah 53:10)

3. The Solace in the Prediction (Vs. 28)
 - a. “after that I am risen” = Christ again looks beyond the agonies of the cross to the victory of His resurrection. There would be a glorious and victorious end to His sufferings. He would triumph over death!
 - b. “I will go before you into Galilee” = Christ promises a post resurrection appearance. He would not leave His sheep scattered but would re-gather them and commission them to carry out His work.

B. Peter’s Self Assertion (Vs. 29-31)

1. Peter’s Claim (Vs. 29)
 - a. Peter was self-confident – he was trusting of self, believing he was able to face the challenge and succeed. Undoubtedly Peter was absolutely sincere in this claim but sincerity alone does not equal spirituality if not coupled with other principles. Self-reliance will always end in disappointment and failure in the Christian life. God will not bless or honour our self-efforts. The ONLY way to live the Christian life is by reliance upon Christ for EVERYTHING.
 - b. Peter was self-inflated – he claimed that though all the other disciples might desert Christ, he would not. This was shocking pride on the part of Peter to elevate Himself above the other disciples. God in His mercy would allow Peter to experience a real breaking of the self-life in order that he might be a usable vessel. Peter must die to self if Peter would live for Christ.
2. Christ’s Counterclaim (Vs. 30)
 - a. “this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice” = that very night, before dawn would arrive when roosters crow (approx. 3am), Peter would deny Christ 3 times.
 - b. Peter would find out just how weak he actually was. Peter’s strength was actually his weakness. The Christian life works opposite to the way of the world. When you are strong in your natural strength, you are weak spiritually but when you are weak in your natural strength, and dependent upon Christ to live through you, you are strong spiritually (See Gal. 2:20). At this point in time, Peter was really too strong to be used of God in any significant way. Peter would need to be broken.
3. Peter’s Comeback (Vs. 31)
 - a. Christ’s prediction of Peter’s denial, instead of sobering and humbling Peter, made him all the more determined. He now takes his claim a step further, claiming that he was willing to even die for Christ. In just a short time, this strong fisherman

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who had made such a bold claim would melt in fear when questioned by a young maid ('damsel' – John 18:17) of the high priest.

- b. Peter's claim was echoed by the other disciples – "Likewise also said they all."
- c. Note: One of the marks of the authenticity and reliability of Scripture is its plain and honest treatment of the heroes of the faith. Manmade religion tries to air brush the failures of their founders, making them appear almost god-like in perfection. But God's Word reveals both the triumphs and the failures of God's people that we might learn the realities of the Christian walk.

II. CHRIST'S AGONY IN THE GARDEN (VS. 32-36)

A. The Area of the Garden (Vs. 32)

- 1. 'Gethsemane'
 - a. Christ and the disciples leave the upper room and walk out one of the gates of the city, cross the brook Cedron (John 18:1) and walk up the Kidron valley in a North-easterly direction. The time is probably somewhere around midnight; the sun has well and truly set and the blackness of night has come. They come to a garden (John 18:1) located at the foot of the Mount of Olives (Vs. 26; Luke 22:39). This was a favourite place of resort for Christ as John records, "for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples" (John 18:2).
 - b. The word 'Gethsemane' literally means "oil press" as it was here that the olives that grew in this area had been pressed according to the ancient methods. The garden apparently was an olive orchard enclosed with a stone wall and equipped with an oil press. (E. Hiebert)
- 2. Typical significance
 - a. Christ was crushed under the shadow of the cross in Gethsemane to where his sweat was mingled with his blood in great drops and fell to the ground.
 - b. Christ is called the "second Adam". Adam, the first man was defeated by sin and Satan in the first garden and disobeyed His Heavenly Father. Christ, prevailed over sin and Satan in the garden and perfectly submitted Himself to the will of the Heavenly Father. In the first garden paradise was lost, in this garden it was regained for all who will put their faith and trust in Christ.

B. The Anguish in the Garden (Vs. 33-36)

- 1. The Anguish of his heart (Vs. 33-34)

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- a. Described: “sorrowful and very heavy” (Matt. 26:37); “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Vs. 38); “sore amazed and very heavy” (Mark 14:33). His soul was heavy under the crushing weight of our sins. So overwhelming was Christ’s sorrow that it brought him to the brink of death – “My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death” (Vs. 34). “It swept Him to the very limits of His endurance. The whole picture is of an overwhelming agony beyond human comprehension.” (Hiebert)
 - b. Illustrated: “And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, **strengthening him**. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were **great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**” (Luke 22:43-44)
 - c. Medical insight: Of medical significance is that Luke mentions Him as having sweat like blood. This has been seen in patients who have experienced, extreme stress or shock to their systems. (Edwards) The capillaries around the sweat pores become fragile and leak blood into the sweat.
 - d. Hebrews 5:7 “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with **strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death**, and was heard in that he feared;”
 - e. W. Graham Scroggie: “The cause of Jesus sore trouble was not physical fear, but the pressure upon his sinless souls of the sin of the world, together with His knowledge of what bearing it involved.” Christ was about to be made sin for us, would bear God’s wrath and for the first time in all eternity, separated from the Father.
2. The Agony of his prayers (Vs. 35-36)
- a. Christ withdraws himself from the disciples by the space of “a stone’s cast” and falls down in fervent prayer, pleading with the Father, “if it be possible, let his cup pass from me: nevertheless **not as I will, but as thou wilt.**” (Matt. 26:39) Mark adds the word ‘Abba’ to the prayer (Mark 14:36). Christ has three such seasons of prayer interrupted by attempts to awaken the disciples to watch and pray.
 - b. The cup: represented all the sufferings of the cross (Compare Mark 14:35 & 36. The ‘cup’ in Vs. 36 corresponds to “the hour” of Vs. 35.) – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. It is hard for us as sinful creatures to plumb the depths of what it meant for One who was completely sinless and holy to feel the weight of being “made sin for us who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - c. “not what I will, but what thou wilt” = the heart of the prayer. Christ was totally surrendered to the Father’s will.

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- d. Challenge: If Christ was totally and completely submitted to the Father's will, can we offer our God anything less than total surrender?

III. CHRIST'S APPEAL IN THE GARDEN (VS. 37-42)

A. The Specifics of the Appeal (Vs. 37-38)

1. "Simon, sleepest thou? = This is the first time Peter has been called by his old name since chapter 3:16. This should have been an alert to Peter that he was walking according to the old man.
2. "Watch and pray" = Christ seeks to arouse them out of their slumber to be watchful and prayerful. This was a critical moment and they needed to be spiritually awake.
3. "lest ye enter into temptation" = spiritual vigilance and prayerfulness is needed before temptation strikes. Very often we coast along in spiritual lethargy and then when we are in the grip of a temptation, cry out to God. Sadly, it is often too late as the temptation has got us in its grip. The time to prepare is before the temptation comes!
4. "the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak" = Christ puts His finger on the internal struggle they were facing. In spirit, they desired to do what Christ was asking but their bodies were compelling them to do otherwise.
 - a. This conflict is described in Galatians 5:17 "For the flesh **lusteth against** the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." It is like a spiritual tug of war going on in our hearts. The phrase "are contrary the one to the other" according to A.T. Robertson means "lined up in conflict, face to face, a spiritual duel."
 - b. We all need to be aware of the enemy within who will seek to thwart our spiritual progress. If we follow the impulses of the body, we will be very weak, unstable believers – up for the Lord one moment and down the next. The solution is to bring our bodies under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27), deny self (Matt. 16:24), yield to the Spirit rather than the impulses of our sinful flesh (Gal. 5:16), to apply the cross to the self-life (Gal. 2:20; 5:24).

B. The Stubbornness towards the Appeal (Vs. 39-42)

1. "their eyes were heavy" = has the idea of "weighed down". Speaks of the effect of drowsiness upon the eyes.
2. "Sleep on and take your rest: it is enough" = After 3 appeals Christ ceases trying to call them to prayer any longer. One of the most significant opportunities in the lives of the disciples had now expired.

Conclusion: Will it be the Christ life or the self-life for you?

Steps to Backsliding

Text: Mark 14:66-72

Introduction:

1. As we read of Peter's three-fold denial of Christ, we ask ourselves, "how did Peter get to this point in his Christian walk where he would deny his Lord and Saviour? What led to such a terrible failure in Peter's life?" To answer this question, we need to go back and trace Peter's steps from the Upper Room, to the High Priest's palace. We will see that Peter's denial of Christ was the climax of a number of steps he took into a backslidden state.
2. Illustration: Peter's collapse was "like the collapse of a great building. First one part gives way, then another part gives way, and then another and another part gives way until at last the whole building lied in a heap." (John Butler)
3. Peter's example serves as an instructive warning to all of us as we are all prone to the sin of backsliding. We will consider this period in Peter's life in two stages: 1. The Steps to Peter's Backsliding. 2. The Steps to Peter's Rebuilding

I. THE STEPS IN PETER'S BACKSLIDING (VS. 29-31; 37-41; 47-50; 54; 66-71)

We can discern 7 steps in Peter's journey into spiritual catastrophe:

A. Step 1 – Trusting in Self (Vs. 29-31)

1. It appears Christ issued 2 warnings – one in the Upper Room (Luke) and one on the way to the garden (Matthew and Mark). Peter was particularly a focus of these warnings on account of his self-confidence and leadership amongst the other disciples. Peter failed to heed Christ's warnings. Pride has a way of making us deaf to warnings.
2. Peter was self-confident – he was trusting in self, believing he was able to face the challenge and succeed. Undoubtedly Peter was absolutely sincere in this claim but sincerity alone does not equal spirituality if not coupled with other principles.
3. Peter was self-inflated – he claimed that though all the other disciples might desert Christ, he would not. This was shocking pride on the part of Peter to elevate Himself above the other disciples. God in His mercy would allow Peter to experience a real breaking of the self-life in order that he might be a usable vessel. **Peter must learn to die to self if Peter would live for Christ.**
4. Matthew Henry: "There is a proneness in good men to be overconfident of their own strength and stability. We are ready to think ourselves able to grapple with the strongest temptations, to go

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through the hardest and most hazardous services, and to bear the greatest afflictions for Christ; **but it is because we do not know ourselves.**”

5. Self-confidence and self-reliance in our ability to live the Christian life is the first step toward backsliding. The Word of God warns in Proverbs 16:1, “Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”
6. Self-reliance will always end in disappointment and failure in the Christian life. God will not bless or honour our self-efforts. The **ONLY** way to live the Christian life is by reliance upon Christ for **EVERYTHING**. Jesus said in John 15:5, “...for without me ye can do **nothing**.” We need to live by the truth of Gal. 2:20 “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; **yet not I, but Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
7. Butler: “A true recognition of our weakness is our strength, for it will cause us to cast ourselves upon the Lord for help – and that is the only way we will ever stand in trying times.”

B. Step 2 – Sleeping in Complacency (Vs. 37-41)

Self-reliance leads to spiritual apathy and complacency. It produces a false sense of security about my spiritual state to where I don't sense my need of Christ.

1. Christ's Questions (Vs. 37)

Christ asks Peter two searching questions:

 - a. “Simon, sleepest thou? = This is the first time Peter has been called by his old name since chapter 3:16. This should have been an alert to Peter that he was walking according to the old man.
 - b. “couldst not thou watch one hour?” = What a challenging and searching question! In essence Christ was saying “Peter, can't you even give one hour to watchful prayer at this critical moment?” Can you be counted upon to watch and pray?
2. Christ's Exhortations (Vs. 38)
 - a. An exhortation to **watchfulness** (Vs. 38a)
 - i. The word ‘watch’ means to be ‘vigilant’ (1 Peter 5:8), it means to be ‘watchful’ (Rev. 3:2).
 - ii. A lack of spiritual vigilance and soberness is a sure symptom of spiritual sleepiness and apathy in our lives.
 - b. An exhortation to **prayerfulness** (Vs. 38b)
 - i. This was a critical **moment** and they needed to be spiritually awake. The sleepy Christian doesn't know what **hour** it is. He doesn't discern the spiritual battle that is raging around him. Prayerlessness is another symptom of spiritual slumber in our lives.

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- ii. Prayer expresses the opposite attitude to that of self-reliance. Prayer is an expression of God-reliance, an admission of our desperate need of God in all things.
- iii. “lest ye enter into temptation” = spiritual vigilance and prayerfulness is needed before temptation strikes. Very often we coast along in spiritual lethargy and then when we are in the grip of a temptation, cry out to God. Sadly, it is often too late as the temptation has got us in its grip. The time to prepare is before the temptation comes!
- iv. “the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak” = Christ puts His finger on the internal struggle they were facing. In spirit, they desired to do what Christ was asking but their bodies were compelling them to do otherwise.
- v. This conflict is described in Galatians 5:17 “For the flesh **lusteth against** the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” It is like a spiritual tug of war going on in our hearts. The phrase “are contrary the one to the other” according to A.T. Robertson means “lined up in conflict, face to face, a spiritual duel.”
- vi. We all need to be aware of the enemy **within** who will seek to thwart our spiritual progress. If we follow the impulses of the body, we will be very weak, unstable believers – up for the Lord one moment and down the next. The solution is to bring our bodies under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27), deny self (Matt. 16:24), yield to the Spirit rather than the impulses of our sinful flesh (Gal. 5:16), and to apply the cross to the self-life (Gal. 2:20; 5:24).

C. Step 3 – Serving in Carnality (Vs. 47)

1. Self-confidence, self-reliance and self-ambition lead to serving according to one’s own wisdom and strength. Such service only causes damage to Christ’s cause and injures others! Christ had to do a miracle to reverse Peter’s damage.
2. Christ made it clear that his cause would never be advanced at the edge of a sword of steel but rather by the sword of the Spirit (Matt. 26:52-54; Eph. 6:17)
3. Our service can come from one of two sources – the flesh or the Spirit. Peter was serving in the arm of the flesh. He was trying to live up to his prideful claim he had made a little earlier. There was a self-centeredness about all of this. As much as it may have appeared on the surface that this act of Peter was about His Saviour, it was really more about Peter and Peter’s pride.
4. Challenge: The self-life can so easily get mixed up in our service for Christ. Sincere love and motivation for Christ can get confusingly

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mixed in with selfish motives, producing inner turmoil in the life of the believer. May God help us to keep self out of our service!

D. Step 4 – Surrendering in Conflict (Vs. 50)

1. This verse records the sad reality of Peter and the other disciples' unpreparedness to meet the spiritual battle that confronted them in the garden.
2. Spiritual defeats are inevitable when we are walking in the strength of the self-life.

E. Step 5 – Following from a Distance (Vs. 54a)

1. The physical distance between Peter and Christ was representative of the spiritual distance from fellowship with Christ at this point in Peter's life.
2. Why did Peter follow afar off?
 - a. Because of the natural drive of self-preservation. The self-life will never lead you in the direction of death. That is why God in His wisdom and love did the work for us and nailed our old man to the cross when Christ died (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20).
 - b. To follow Christ on the Calvary road would mean a cross for Peter too. It would mean shame, reproach, misunderstanding and pain. It would mean death to his own dreams and aspirations and possibly even literal death as one of Christ's followers.
 - c. Luke 9:23 "And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and **take up his cross daily**, and follow me."
 - d. The attempt to save oneself (self-preservation) only leads to loss. Mark 8:35 "For whosoever will save his life **shall lose it**; but whosoever **shall lose his life** for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."
 - e. Jim Elliot: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."
3. The Christian life is not about an arm's length type of followership. It is about following Christ fully and bearing His reproach. Hebrews 13:13 "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, **bearing his reproach.**"
4. Following Christ afar off is perilous business. You make easy pickings for the devil. Amalek of old attacked those at the 'hindmost' (the rear of all the others) of Israel in their pilgrimage to the promised land (Deut. 25:18). Amalek particularly targeted those who were weak – "even all that were feeble behind thee". Don't be content to stay spiritually weak and drift along behind the Lord at a distance. You are dangerously exposed to the enemy's attacks.

F. Step 6 – Sitting in Compromise (Vs. 54b)

1. In a compromised place – "at the fire". Those who follow Christ from a distance very soon find themselves in compromised places in the world. It gets cold and dark lagging behind Christ on the Calvary road.

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Backslidden Christians begin to seek out warmth in the wrong places such as:

- a. The false warmth of worldliness – e.g., ungodly lifestyle (e.g., drinking, dress, friends), worldly entertainments (e.g., music and movies)
 - b. The false fire of compromised Christianity that uses substitutes to the genuine power that comes with a separated, crucified, Spirit-filled life. E.g., compromised worship, corrupt versions etc...
 - c. There is no substitute to the fire of the Holy Ghost working in our lives. Don't linger afar off by the false fires of compromise. Get into the blazing light and heat of God's Pure Presence!
2. With a compromised people – “and he sat with the servants”
- a. When you follow Christ afar off, you end up hanging around the wrong crowd! Instead of seeking out the fellowship of God's people, you start to make your unsaved friends, family and work colleagues your close companions. “Peter's drifting from Christ eventually led to his drifting from the company of his fellow Christians to be in company with the world. Anytime your fellowship with the Lord and his people begins to wane, you will sooner or later move into the company of the ungodly.” Luke 22:55 “Peter sat down among them.”
 - b. 2 Cor. 6:17-18 “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”
 - c. The Bible warns, 1 Cor. 15:33 “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” Prov. 13:20 “He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”

G. Step 7 – Denying the Saviour (Vs. 66-71)

1. Denial 1 (Vs. 66-68)
 - a. Peter's denials likely occurred over a two-hour period from about 1-3am.
 - b. The maid came and “looked upon him”. The word ‘looked’ means “to look intently, to inspect.” (Phillips)
 - c. “neither understand I what thou sayest” = Peter went so far as to claim ignorance of what she was even saying.
2. Denial 2 (Vs. 68b-70a)
 - a. Peter moves “out into the porch” meaning that he “withdrew from the fire to the forecourt, the covered archway opening onto the street.” (Phillips)
 - b. Mark notes the first crow of the cock – “and the cock crew”. The sound reached Peter's ears but it failed to register a warning in

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his mind and heart. When we are backslidden, we often don't pick up the warning signals God sends our way.

- c. John Phillips: "Peter no longer needed a fire to keep warm; he was sweating enough without it!"
3. Denial 3 (Vs. 70b-71)
 - a. "they that stood by" = "Peter's identity had now become a matter of general discussion." (Hiebert) According to John, a relative of Malchus recalled seeing Peter in the garden – "One of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" (John 18:26)
 - b. "thy speech" = Peter's speech made clear his Galilean origin (Matt. 26:73).
 - c. "curse and swear" = the phrase "to curse" means "to anathematize", to place oneself or another under a curse. Peter was calling down the curse of God upon himself if he were not telling the truth. "To swear" means "to take an oath" (Hiebert), to "make a solemn pledge of truthfulness" (Macarthur).
 - d. The cock crew for the second time right as Peter was denying Christ with oaths. Luke adds, "while he yet spake" (Lk. 22:60).
4. Challenge: At its heart, Peter's failure was a failure to publicly affirm His allegiance to Christ, to publicly identify himself as a follower of Jesus Christ. "On each occasion, Peter was challenged to declare his true relationship to Jesus, but each time, he failed to give brave witness to his Lord and basely denied Him." (Edmond Hiebert) When we are backslidden, we end up denying Christ to one degree or another. Denial comes in many forms. You no longer speak for Christ.

II. THE STEPS TO PETER'S REBUILDING (VS. 72; LUKE 24:34; 1 COR. 15:5; JOHN 21:15-17)

If it was up to us to make an assessment at this point, we would probably conclude that this marked the end for Peter so far as a fruitful life of service for Christ was concerned. We would conclude that Peter would remain on the sidelines of the Christian life from here on. But come with me less than two months later and see the same Peter on the day of Pentecost. Hear the power of his preaching and see the 3,000 souls saved. See his boldness and courage before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 4)! Peter's testimony is a reminder to us that failures in the Christian life don't have to be the end of the story for us. We serve the God of the second chance! As there were certain steps that lead Peter into failure, so there are several key steps that lead to his restoration.

A. Conviction (Vs. 72a; Luke 22:61)

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Peter was convicted by:

1. His Saviour's Word – "Peter called to mind the word the word that Jesus said unto him". The Word of God returned to Peter's mind and convicted him of his error. To recover spiritually, we must yield to the convicting influence of the Word of God when like a sharp sword, it points out the error of our ways.
2. His Saviour's Look – Luke records that at that very moment, Jesus "turned and looked upon Peter" (Lk. 22:61). That one penetrating look from the tender, loving, all knowing eyes of Christ melted Peter. Christ did not have to say anything to Peter. That look was enough. It was a sermon in itself and reached his wayward heart.

B. Contrition (Vs. 72b; Luke 22:62)

There are two parts to Peter's contrition:

1. Reflection – "And when he thought thereon". Peter gave consideration to the error of his ways in light of Christ's Word.
2. Repentance – "he wept". Luke says he "wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62). "Peter fell to weeping with vehemence; with an awaked mind and a broken heart Peter continued to sob for a long time." (Hiebert)
 - a. This was godly sorrow that led to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10). The first step to recovery from backsliding is brokenness. Psalm 51:17 "The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a **broken** and a **contrite** heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."
 - b. Peter's response was that of a genuine believer. Judas felt remorse and committed suicide whereas Peter felt remorse and repented. McGee: "Peter could repent of his sin, and that is a real test of a genuine believer."

C. Commission (John 21:15-17)

1. Christ took the initiative in Peter's restoration. Peter was one of the first to see Christ after His resurrection (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5). Surely this was an act of forgiveness on the part of our Lord.
2. In grace and mercy Christ afforded Peter the opportunity to affirm His love and loyalty to Christ three times – one for each of his three denials.
3. The Lord had a job for Peter to do – "feed my sheep". Restoration in fellowship leads to restoration in service.

Conclusion: Where are you on the backsliding slide? Will you like Peter, turn to Christ in humble repentance for His forgiveness and restoration? Take Peter's advice – "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:" (1 Peter 5:6)

The Mistrial of Jesus Christ (Part 1)

Text: Mark 14:43-65

Introduction:

1. The trial of Christ prior to His crucifixion divides into two phases:
 - The Ecclesiastical Trial before the religious leaders.
 - The Civil Trial before the Roman leaders.
2. Each of these two phases had three episodes:
 - The Ecclesiastical Trial
 - The trial before Annas (John 18:12-14).
 - The trial before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65; John 18:19-24).
 - The Final trial before Sanhedrin in a brief meeting after dawn for formal sentencing (Matt. 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71). Matthew and Mark mention it only very briefly but Luke records the encounter in greater detail.
 - The Civil Trial
 - The first trial before Pilate (Luke 23:1-5).
 - The trial before Herod (Luke 23:6-12).
 - The final trial before Pilate (Matt. 27:11-26; Mark 1:1-15; Luke 23:13-25, John 18:28-40).
3. In this lesson we will study from Christ's arrest in the garden through to His sentencing before the Sanhedrin.

I. **AN ILLEGAL ARREST (VS. 43-52)**

In the arrest of Christ, we note that He was:

A. **Betrayed in the Garden (Vs. 43-52)**

1. The Betrayers Identity (Vs. 43a)
 - a. "Judas, one of the twelve" = all the Gospel accounts mention the fact that Judas was one of the twelve Apostles. It serves to emphasize the shocking reality that the betrayer of Christ came from one of Christ's own inner circle.
 - b. By this stage, Judas is indwelt by Satan himself and is being controlled by His diabolical power and influence (See John 13:27). Think of it. In many ways in the garden that night, Satan and Christ came face to face. The battle of the ages between Lucifer and the Lord of glory was about to erupt. Little did the serpent know that when the meek and mild Son of God went to that cross, He would be dealt a fatal blow from which he would never recover (Gen. 3:15).
2. The Betrayer's Co-conspirators (Vs. 43b)
 - a. The size of the mob – "a great multitude"

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- b. The weaponry of the mob – “swords and staves”. The ‘swords’ were the Roman swords typically carried by the Roman soldiers. John 18:12 reveals that Roman soldiers under a commanding officer were present. The ‘staves’ were wooden clubs and the standard weapon of the Jewish temple guards. John’s Gospel also notes that the mob carried “torches and lanterns” (John 18:3).
 - c. The organisers of the mob – “from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders”. The three groups that made up the Jewish Sanhedrin are mentioned. Luke 22:52 mentions that some of the Sanhedrin members were present.
 - d. Note: The composition of the arresting party was made up of:
 - i. Temple police.
 - ii. Roman soldiers.
 - iii. Religious leaders.
 - iv. Regular people.
3. The Betrayer’s Treachery (Vs. 44-45)
- a. A pre-arranged signal (Vs. 44). The word ‘token’ means “a sign or signal; a sign given according to agreement” (Strongs).
 - b. A feigned friendship (Vs. 45).
 - i. “Master, master” = the word is ‘rabbi’ meaning ‘teacher’. It was the term of respect a disciple would use when addressing his teacher/mentor. The repetition of the term “indicates personal warmth in the greeting of Judas. He acted greatly delighted to find Jesus.” (Edmond Hiebert)
 - ii. “and kissed him” = the word for ‘kiss’ is a compound form of the verb in Greek indicating that the kiss “was given with a decided show of affection (“kissed him fervently”)” (Hiebert). It means to kiss much or kiss tenderly. Imagine how that would have felt for Christ? Imagine the evil, Satanic presence that was with Judas at this time. Luke’s Gospel reveals that as Judas drew near to kiss the Saviour, Christ asked, “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” Jesus then asked a second question straight after Judas had kissed him – “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” (Matt. 26:50).

B. Arrested in the Garden (Vs. 46-49)

- 1. Sinful hands laid hold of Him (Vs. 46)
 - a. Think of it! The Creator in the hands of the creature; the Son of God in the hands of the sons of men; the Sinless in the hands of the sinful. Heaven gasped as sinful, evil men “laid their hands on him, and took him.” It is no wonder that Peter, in his great sermon on the Day of Pentecost declared, “Him (Christ), being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of

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God, ye have taken, and **by wicked hands have crucified and slain.**” Acts 2:23

- b. From this point onwards, the Son of God would be at the mercy of ruthless sinful hands. The crucifixion of Christ would be the crowning point of man’s sinful rebellion against his Creator.
2. Misguided hands defended Him (Vs. 47)
 - a. Peter, in a vain attempt to live up to his claim of loyalty, aimed his sword at one of the high priest’s servants named Malchus (John 18:10).
 - b. Jesus responded to Peter with the words “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt. 26:52). John’s Gospel adds, “Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”
 - c. Peter was actually standing between His Saviour and the Divine will of the Father. Trying to fight the Lord’s battles with the weapons of the flesh will never achieve anything for Christ’s cause.
 - d. Note: Our Lord’s words also have great significance for the church in relation to the church and the use of the sword. Christ made it clear that the literal sword was not to be used by His followers to advance His cause on earth. The church only uses one sword to conquer and that is the spiritual sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Eph. 6:17).
 3. Sinless hands submitted to them (Vs. 48-49)
 - a. Christ challenged his persecutors (Vs. 48). They were approaching Him as if He were some sort of thief. A ‘thief’ “normally referred to an armed bandit or brigand who would violently resist arrest and try to escape” (Macarthur)
 - b. Christ yielded to His Father (Vs. 49). Christ knew that this was all in the Divine plan of God as foretold in the Scriptures. Christ was not helpless and powerless. He said himself, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Matt. 26:53-54) A legion was around 6,000 man so this means approximately 72,000 angels! Just one angel was powerful enough to slay 185,000 of the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19:35)!

C. Deserted in the Garden (Vs. 50-52)

1. Forsaken by the named disciples (Vs. 50). Remember, they had all promised that they would not forsake Him (Vs. 31). Alexander Maclaren writes, “Their flight may teach us to place little reliance on our emotions, however genuine and deep. We keep close to Him, not because our poor fingers grasp His hand – for that grasp is

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always feeble but because His strong and gentle hand holds us with a grasp which nothing can loosen.”

2. Forsaken by an unnamed disciple (Vs. 51-52). Many suggest that this was Mark. That is possible. However, if the identity of the individual was important for us to know, the Holy Spirit would have included it. It seems Mark’s primary purpose for including this incident (only in Mark’s Gospel) was to further demonstrate just how entirely forsake the Lord Jesus was at this point by all those loyal to Him. Christ would suffer alone – alone amidst the angry mob, alone before the religious leaders, alone in Pilate’s hall, alone before Herod, alone under the lash of the Roman scourge, alone in the soldier’s barracks surrounded by cruel mocking and violence, alone on the road to Calvary, alone on Golgotha’s hill and then alone for the final three hours on the cross where God the Father turned His back on the God the Son and Christ’s heart rending cry penetrated the air – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

II. AN ILLEGAL TRIAL (VS. 53-61a)

The trial of Christ from start to finish was a complete miscarriage of justice. Both Jewish and Roman law was broken as evil men would settle for nothing less than the death of God’s Son.

A. The Assembly was Unjust (Vs. 53)

1. Historical background to the Jewish trials.
 - a. The Jewish Sanhedrin
 - i. Many small Sanhedrin’s in each locality typically made up of 23 elders with a “chief ruler” These served as courts to uphold the Jewish law.
 - ii. The Great Sanhedrin was located in Jerusalem consisting of 71 members including the High Priest. This Council was the final court of Appeal, and the highest ruling body of the nation of Israel. It would be similar to a “high court”.
 - b. The Sanhedrin’s Code of Jurisprudence
 - i. In legal terms, the Law demanded three things: publicity of the trial, entire liberty of defence allowed to the accused, and a guarantee against the dangers of testimony.
 - ii. At least two witnesses required (Deut. 17:6; 19:15).
 - iii. Their axiom was “The Sanhedrin is to save, not destroy life.” John Phillips writes, “The well-established precedent in a capital case among the Jews was first to look for evidence that would acquit the accused. Only later was search made for incriminating testimony.”

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- iv. No criminal trial could be carried through the night, nor even in the afternoon.
- v. The simple confession of an individual against himself, or the declaration, however renowned, would not decide a condemnation.
- vi. The Judges who condemned a criminal had to fast all day.
- vii. The condemned was not executed the same day on which the sentence was passed.
- viii. The property of the accused was not confiscated but passed over to his heirs.
- ix. Voting was from junior members to senior so that the lower members might not be influenced by the highest.
- x. If the Sanhedrin voted unanimously for a verdict of guilty, the accused was supposed to be set free since the necessary element of mercy was lacking.

2. This therefore was an illegal assembly of the Sanhedrin.

B. The Predetermination was Unjust (Vs. 55)

1. The Sanhedrin, which was supposed to act as judge and jury in an impartial manner, took the unprecedented and corrupt step of also acting as prosecutor against the accused. In fact, they weren't really acting as judges at all but as prosecutors.
2. Dr. Edershiem: "The Sanhedrin did not and could not originate charges. It only investigated those brought before it." This court originated the charges as well as tried the case. The Court became both the prosecution and the judge of the case.
3. The fact they "sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death" reveals that the outcome of this trial had already been decided before it even started. It was a kangaroo court, a mock trial, to try and give the appearance that justice was being served.
4. Maclaren: "The criminal is condemned before He is tried. The judges have made up their minds before they sit, and the Sanhedrin is not a court of justice, but a slaughter-house, where murder is done under the sanction of law."

C. The Accusations were Unjust (Vs. 56-61a)

1. Many false witnesses testify against Christ "but their witness agreed not together." Finally, the case settles on two witnesses (Matt. 26:60) who misquote and misrepresent a statement of our Lord's concerning destroying the temple and raising it in three days (See John 2:19-22). "But neither so did their witness agree together." The fact they couldn't find any incriminating evidence against Christ is because there was none! Their desperate search for something with which to accuse Christ was a testament itself to the sinlessness of Christ.

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2. “It is harder to agree on a consistent lie than to tell the simple truth.” (R.A. Cole)
3. Christ is silent in the face of false accusation, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7 “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”
4. O.T. law on false witnesses: Deuteronomy 19:15-21 “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; **Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.** And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”

III. AN ILLEGAL SENTENCE (VS. 61B-65)

A. The High Priest’s Question (Vs. 61b)

1. The High Priest intervened as the proceedings of the court were not going in the desired direction. The inability of the Sanhedrin to provide a coherent testimony against Christ meant that Caiaphas had to try and salvage the agenda.
2. The High Priest’s question touched both Christ’s claim to Messiahship and Sonship.
3. Note: When the accusation keeps twisting and changing, it is a sure sign of an unjust trial.

B. The Saviour’s Declaration (Vs. 62)

1. A personal affirmation – “I am” (Vs. 62a) Jesus boldly affirms the truth concerning His Person. He was indeed the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God. “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, **I am.**”
2. A prophetic prediction – “and ye shall see” (Vs. 62b) In language that closely harks back to the imagery of Daniel’s prophecy (7:13-14), Christ declares His future return as Judge and Sovereign. This was a powerful warning to the religious leaders. There is coming a

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day when these evil men will stand trial before the very One they wickedly and unjustly tried, condemned and crucified.

C. The Counsel's Determination (Vs. 63-64)

1. The High Priest breaks the Sanhedrin's legal code and influences the outcome of the trial from the top down. He rends his clothes in a "mock show of grief in the presence of "blasphemy". The truth is, Christ's answer was exactly what he was hoping for." (Hiebert)
Interestingly, according to the law, the high priest was forbidden to rend his clothes (Lev. 21:10). This false high priest rent his clothes and condemned Christ but in just a few hours, Christ, the True and Great High Priest would rend the temple veil in two, signifying the end of Judaism.
2. The High Priest makes no attempt to examine Christ's claims but resorts to a sentence of blasphemy. In reality, the high priest and the council were the blasphemers. Christ has spoken absolute truth concerning the reality of His Person

D. The People's Violent Actions (Vs. 65)

1. They spat on Christ (Vs. 65a). Spitting the greatest form of contempt.
2. They struck Christ (Vs. 65b)
 - a. As blows rained down on Christ at that hour, it seemed He was on trial before men. In reality, sinful man was on trial that day as man's sinful depravity was revealed in all its wretchedness and ugliness before the Lamb of God.
 - b. Maclaren: "His sad, loving eyes, wide open below their bandage, saw and pitied each rude smiter, even as He sees us all. They were and are eyes of infinite tenderness, ready to beam forgiveness; but they were and are the eyes of the Judge, who sees and repays His foes, as those who smite Him will one day find out."
3. They scorned Christ (Vs. 65b)

Conclusion:

1. Are you saved? Can you now see what Christ went through in order to be able to save you from sin?
2. Are you upholding Biblical principles of justice in your life as a Christian in relation to others?

The Mistrrial of Jesus Christ (Part 2)

Text: Mark 15:1-15

Introduction:

1. The trial of Christ prior to His crucifixion divides into two phases:
 - The Ecclesiastical Trial before the religious leaders.
 - The Civil Trial before the Roman leaders.
2. Each of these two phases had three episodes:
 - The Ecclesiastical Trial
 - The trial before Annas (John 18:12-14).
 - The trial before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65; John 18:19-24).
 - The Final trial before Sanhedrin in a brief meeting after dawn for formal sentencing (Matt. 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71). Matthew and Mark mention it only very briefly but Luke records the encounter in greater detail.
 - The Civil Trial
 - The first trial before Pilate (Luke 23:1-5).
 - The trial before Herod (Luke 23:6-12).
 - The final trial before Pilate (Matt. 27:11-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:13-25, John 18:28-40).
3. In this lesson we will study Christ's trial before Pilate as recorded in Mark's Gospel. We will divide the text into three sections for our study:

I. THE SILENCE OF CHRIST (VS.1-5)

A. Silent in the face of Condemnation (Vs. 1)

1. "straightway in the morning" = immediately after daybreak, "as soon as it was day" (Lk. 22:66). This would be between 5 and 6 A.M. (Hiebert)
2. This 3rd and final religious trial. This brief morning assembly of the Sanhedrin was to attempt to give the appearance of legality to the sentence they had pronounced against Christ. In Jewish law, a formal, legal sentence could only be pronounced in the day time. It too was totally unjust as Jewish law also required "that a full day pass between sentencing and execution to allow for new evidence or testimony to surface" (Macarthur).
3. "delivered him to Pilate" = a literal fulfillment of Christ's prediction in Mark 10:33-34 – "Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him,

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and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.”

4. ‘Pilate’ was the procurator appointed by Emperor Tiberias. “He was the fifth in order of these procurators and held office from A.D. 26-36. His usual place of residence was in Caesarea by the sea but he found it necessary to be in Jerusalem during the Passover season.” (Hiebert)

B. Silent in the Face of Accusation (Vs. 2-5)

1. The presenting charge (Luke 23:1-3; John 18:28-32).
 - a. The charge of blasphemy, which was the conclusion of the Sanhedrin, was not presented to Pilate as they knew Christ’s claim to be the Messiah was not a capital crime under Roman law. A new charge of subverting Rome is manufactured. This was totally false! Christ has previously taught that Rome’s taxes were to be paid (Matt. 22:21). The reality is that the chief priests and the crowds were the ones who were trying every scheme to get around paying taxes to Rome. Luke 23:1-2 “And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, **We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.**”
 - b. They wanted Pilate to simply take their word for it without examining any evidence. They wanted him to simply act as executioner and treat Christ as a ‘malefactor’ rather than acting in his capacity as judge. John 18:28-30 “Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, **If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.**”
 - c. Pilate questions Christ directly, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” All four Gospels have the identical question (Matt. 27:11; Mk. 15:2; Lk. 23:3; John 19:33). The pronoun ‘thou’ “is emphatic and carries an obvious tone of disdain or surprise. It seemed ridiculous to Pilate that the dishevelled prisoner before him should claim to be the king of the Jews”.
 - d. Christ responds with the words “Thou sayest it” which was a “regular way of affirming the contents of a question. In Greek it may well be taken as a qualified assent. It may be intended to mean “Yes, but not with your exact meaning.” It implied that His answer was open for further discussion. He was “the king of the Jews” but not in the political sense as Pilate thought.” (Hiebert)

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- e. John 18:33-37 gives a fuller account of this exchange and reveals that Christ did explain to Pilate the true nature of His kingdom.
2. The follow up charges (Vs. 3)
 - a. Mark simply states that they accused Christ of “many things”.
 - b. Luke gives some of the detail – “And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.” (Lk. 23:5)
3. The response of Christ to the charges
 - a. This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7 “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he **opened not his mouth**: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he **openeth not his mouth.**”
 - b. Pilate, expecting the usual protests from a prisoner, marvelled at the silence of Christ. Christ’s silence was the most powerful testament against their lies. So utterly false were the accusations that Christ did not lower Himself to even answer them. “Jesus calmly refused to dignify these false charges by replying to them.” (Hiebert)
 - c. Maclaren: “Contradictions and confutations (rebuttals, arguments) keep slanders and heresies above water, which the law of gravitation would dispose of if they were left alone.”

II. THE SUBSTITUTION OF CHRIST (VS. 6-13)

A. The Custom Explained (Vs. 6, 8)

1. It was a custom of Pilate to release a prisoner of the people’s choice at Passover time.
2. The multitude begin to request that Pilate observe the custom (Vs. 8). Pilate seizes the opportunity, hoping to have Christ released. It is likely he anticipated that this move would pit the common people against the intentions of the religious leaders.

B. The Choice Executed (Vs. 7-13)

The choice was between:

1. A Sinful Criminal (Vs. 7)

Barabbas was:

 - a. An insurrectionist (Vs. 7a). Evidently, he had led a revolt against Rome and was now bound with those who had participated with him in the attempted overthrow.
 - b. A murderer (Vs. 7b). He had committed murder in the process of the uprising.
 - c. A robber (John 18:40).
 - d. Maclaren: “His character and actions present in gross form the sort of Messiah the nation really wanted. He had headed some

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one of the many small riots against Rome which were perpetually sputtering up and being trampled out by an armed heel. There had been bloodshed, in which he had himself taken part ('a murderer,' Acts 3:14). And this coarse, red-handed desperado is the people's favourite, because he embodied their notions and aspirations, and had been bold enough to do what every man of them would have done if he had dared... The popular hero is as a mirror which reflects the popular mind."

2. The Sinless Christ (Vs. 9-13)
 - a. Pilate knew the real motive behind the chief priest's desire to crucify Christ was that of 'envy' (Vs. 10). Prov. 27:4 "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" As John Phillips puts it, "It must have been a novel experience for Pilate to have the Sanhedrin so eager to accuse a Jew of treason against Rome, the nation that they hated."
 - b. The exchange of Christ for Barabbas pictures the doctrine of substitution. By 'substitution' we mean that Christ took the sinner's place – the lawgiver is bound, the lawbreaker released; the innocent is punished, the guilty goes free; the Sinless One is condemned; the sinful one is acquitted.
 - c. Samuel Crossman (1664): "They rise, and needs will have my dear Lord sent away; a murderer they save, the Prince of Life they slay. Yet willing he to suffering goes, that he his foes from thence might free."

III. THE SENTENCING OF CHRIST (Vs. 14-15)

A. Pilate's Declarations of Christ's Innocence (Luke 23:13-25; John 19:4, 6)

1. There were multiple occasions where Pilate declares Christ to be innocent.
2. Luke 23:4 – "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, **I find no fault in this man.**"
3. Luke 23:14 "Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, **have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:**"
4. Luke 23:15 "No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, **nothing worthy of death is done unto him.**"
5. Luke 23:22 "And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? **I have found no cause of death in him:** I will therefore chastise him, and let *him* go."

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6. John 19:4 “Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that **I find no fault in him.**” This was after Christ was scourged.
7. John 19:6 “When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify *him*: **for I find no fault in him.**”

B. The People’s Demand for Christ’s Death (Vs. 13-14)

1. Pilate asked a question of the crowd that day is one that every individual must answer at some point in his/her life. Matt. 27:22 “Pilate saith unto them, **What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?** *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified.”
2. What will you do with Jesus? Will you reject him like the multitude did that day or will you fall at His feet as Lord, Christ and Saviour?

C. Pilates Decision to Crucify Christ (Vs. 15)

1. Pilate was motivated by popular opinion in his decision, not the truth. What was the deciding factor in Pilate’s decision? We find the answer in John’s account
2. John 19:12 “And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, **If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.**”
3. Pilate knew that he was having an innocent man crucified but he would rather do that than lose his own position.

Conclusion: Are you saved? Christ took your sin upon Himself and died in your place, bearing the punishment and wrath of God for you. Will you receive His free offer of salvation?

The Crucified King

Text: Mark 15:15-39

Introduction:

1. Mark's account is given in his characteristic brief, yet vivid and powerful manner. You will observe that a majority of the verses in this section begin with the conjunction 'And' as Mark pictures the sufferings of Christ like successive waves breaking upon His sacred head. "The monotonous repetition of 'and', 'and', 'and', gives the effect of an endless succession of the waves of sorrow, pain and contumely (abuse) which broke over that sacred head." (Alexander Maclaren)
2. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ brings us to the heart and soul of the Gospel which is that "Christ died for our sins...was buried...and rose again." (1 Cor. 15:1-4) As we read and study the account of the crucifixion let us keep truth that "Christ died for our sins" fixed firmly in our minds.
3. In this lesson we follow in the footsteps of Christ from Pilate's hall to Golgotha's hill and view the crucifixion through the pages of God's Holy Word. In our next message, we will consider the burial and resurrection of Christ.
4. We will divide this study of Christ's crucifixion into 5 parts:

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE CRUCIFIXION (VS. 15-20a)

There was...

A. The Scourging by the Soldiers (Vs. 15)

1. "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him" (Jn. 19:1)
2. "The scourge consisted of a handle to which several leather thongs were affixed. These were weighted on the ends with jagged pieces of bone and metal. This would help tear the flesh and make each blow more effective. The victim was stripped, and usually tied to a post with his hands also bound so as not to be able to defend himself. The blows were normally applied to the back and loins, but sometimes to the whole body. According to Jewish law, a man could receive no more than forty stripes (Deut. 24:3). With the Romans, however, no such limitation was observed; it depended entirely upon the commander in charge. The implication of the text is that Jesus Christ received a Roman scourging, and it was by no means limited to 39 stripes." (John W. Lawrence) Isaiah 52:14 "As many were astonished at thee; **his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:**"
3. Let us remember that it was our sin that ultimately drove those bitter whips into Christ's sinless body that day. Isaiah 53:5 "But he was **wounded for our transgressions**, he was **bruised for our iniquities**: the **chastisement** of our peace was upon him; and with his **stripes** we are healed."

B. The Scoffing by the Soldiers (Vs. 16-20a)

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There was...

1. Scornful Accolades (Vs. 16-18, 19b)
Verse 20 says, “And when they had mocked him...” This is the **third time** Christ is mocked before He is crucified. This took place in the “common hall” (Matt. 27:27) called ‘Praetorium’ (Mk. 15:16) which was likely the fortress Antonia (Hiebert). The whole ‘band’ of soldiers gathered. A ‘band’ was normally composed of six hundred men. There was...
 - a. A mocking robe – “they clothed him with purple”.
 - b. A mocking crown – “a crown of thorns”. Thorns are a symbol of the curse – “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; **Thorns also and thistles** shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;” (Gen. 3:17-18) Christ bore the curse of our sin as His crown that day.
 - c. A mocking sceptre – “and a reed in his right hand” (Matt. 27:29; Vs. 19).
 - d. A mocking salute – “Hail, King of the Jews!”
 - e. A mocking bow – “and bowing their knees worshipped him” (Vs. 19).
2. Scornful Abuse (Vs. 19)
 1. Beating
 - a. With the reed – “And they smote him on the head with a reed” (Vs. 19).
 - b. With their hands – “and they smote him with their hands” (John 19:3).
 2. Spitting – “and did spit upon him”
 3. Plucking – Isaiah 50:6 “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”

II. THE PATH TO THE CRUCIFIXION (VS. 20B-21)

A. The Burden of His Cross (Vs. 20b)

1. John 19:17 “And he **bearing his cross** went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:” Christ bears His cross initially as “it was the practice to compel the one to be crucified to bear his own cross to the place of crucifixion.” (Hiebert)
2. There is an estimated distance of about 650 yards (590 meters) from the place of judgment to the place of crucifixion.
3. Evidently our Lord was unable to hold up the weight of the cross for very long as they will soon compel another to bear the cross for Him. The weight of that cross bearing down on Christ’s shoulders and back that day speaks to us of **the awful weight of the sins** of the world that He carried that day.

B. The Bearer of His Cross (Vs. 21)

1. His Identity – ‘Simon’. He is one of the few players actually mentioned by name along with his two sons Alexander and Rufus.

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This is strong evidence that his sons were well known to Mark's audience, indicating Simon and his sons became converts of the early church. It appears Simon was unaware of the events of that day as it simply states that he was one "who passed by". Little did he know as he was walking past that procession that he was going to have an encounter that would change his life forever.

2. His locality – "a Cyrenian". He was from Cyrene in North Africa and was evidently in Jerusalem as a pilgrim for the Passover season. Cyrene had a sizable Jewish community and reference to its synagogue is made in the Book of Acts (Acts 6:9).
3. Simon was compelled "to bear his cross." Simon was compelled to do literally what Christ's followers must do spiritually (Mk. 8:34).

III. THE PLACE OF THE CRUCIFIXION (VS. 22)

A. Its Name (Vs. 22)

1. Called '**Golgotha**' in Mark's Gospel meaning "a skull." Strong's concordance says, "the name of the place outside Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified; so called, apparently because its form resembled a skull." Mark uses a word of Aramaic origin.
2. Called '**Calvary**' in Luke's Gospel. The Greek word is 'kranion' which forms the basis of our word 'cranium'.
3. Scripture indicates the place was outside but near the city (John 19:20; Heb. 13:12).

B. Its Significance

1. The skull is usually associated with death. Death came as a result of man's sin (Rom. 5:12). Christ died that death might be defeated. He died in the place of death that we might have life!
2. Isaiah 53:4 "...with his stripes we are **healed**."

IV. THE PROCEDURE OF THE CRUCIFIXION (VS. 23-24)

Christ was...

A. Offered Narcotics before the Cross (Vs. 23)

1. Christ is offered vinegar, mingled with myrrh/gall to drink. He tastes it but then refuses to drink it (Matt. 27:34). "The addition of myrrh gave it a bitter taste and was intended to deaden the sense of pain." (Hiebert)
2. Rabbinic writings indicate that the drink was provided as a charitable act by rich women in Jerusalem to deaden the sense of pain (like an ancient anaesthetic) in accordance with Prov. 31:6-7.
3. Christ refused it, "determined to meet His suffering and death in the full possession of His faculties. It meant that in His self-giving, there was to be no self-sparing. He was determined to drink the bitter cup of His vicarious sufferings consciously to the very last." (Hiebert) Christ tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9).

B. Nailed to the Cross (Vs. 24a)

1. Four soldiers assigned the task (John 19:23). No doubt the number was in part due to the expected struggle with the victim. But Christ laid down His life willingly. As the soldiers drove in the bitter, 7-inch

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(17cm) spikes into His hands and feet, they heard no cursing or uncontrolled shouts of terror. “It was probably at this moment of inconceivable horror that the voice of the Son of Man was heard uplifted, not in a scream of natural agony at that fearful torture, but calmly praying in Divine compassion for His brutal and pitiless murderers – “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34)”

2. His **Hands** were nailed (Luke 24:39) – those blessed hands that had touched blinded eyes and deafened ears; the hands that took little children tenderly into His embrace; the hands that had never been used in the service of sin were cruelly nailed to the tree for my sin.
3. His **Feet** were nailed (Luke 24:39) – those blessed feet that were never once used in the service of sin; the feet that always walked the path ordained of the Father.
4. The Cross lifted into place: “When the cross was erected upright, there was tremendous strain put on the wrists, arms and shoulders, resulting in a dislocation of the shoulder and elbow joints. (Metherall) The arms, being held up and outward, held the rib cage in a fixed end inspiratory position which made it extremely difficult to exhale, and impossible to take a full breath. The victim would only be able to take very shallow breaths. (This may explain why Jesus made very short statements while on the cross). As time passed, the muscles, from the loss of blood, lack of oxygen and the fixed position of the body, would undergo severe cramps and spasmodic contractions.” (David Terasaka M.D.)¹
5. **Naked upon the Cross (Vs. 24b)**
 1. Our Lord hung on the cross in total shame and humiliation. The soldiers had stripped Him bare and now divided His garments among them as spoil.
 2. John 19:23-24 brings out further detail.
 - a. They tore Christ’s outer garments into four pieces.
 - b. They gambled over Christ’s coat which was a “tunic, a garment worn next to the skin underneath the rest of the garments” (Rogers, Linguistic Key).
 - c. This fulfilled in exact detail the prophecy of Psalm 22:18 “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”
 3. We were naked before God spiritually (Heb. 4:13), clothed in nothing but the filthy rags of our own righteousness (Isaiah 64:6). Christ hung naked for us that we might be clothed in the seamless robe of His perfect righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). What an exchange! My rags for His righteousness; my unrighteousness, ungodliness, filthiness and unrighteousness for His spotless righteousness! My sin for His salvation!

¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/terasaka_david/misc/crucify.cfm

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V. THE PERIODS OF THE CRUCIFIXION (VS. 25-39)

Christ was upon the cross for 6 hours and this is divided into two distinct periods of three hours each:

A. The Period of Light (3 hrs) – 9am to 12pm (Vs. 25-32)

We are informed by the Gospel writer concerning a number facts and incidences in this period of 3 hours:

1. The Time of His Cross (Vs. 25)
 - a. The third hour was approx. 9am in the morning. For the Jews, the first hour of the day was 6am. This precise statement of the time Christ was crucified found only in Mark's Gospel.
 - b. This would be around the same time the morning sacrifice was being offered in the temple. Think of it! While they were offering a lamb in the temple, the perfect Lamb of God was being offered upon the cross.
2. The Title upon His Cross (Vs. 26)
 - a. The letters of the title – “THE KING OF THE JEWS”. A ‘superscription’ was “an inscription in black letters upon a whitened tablet” (Hiebert). “It was the board on which was written the charge on which the one to be crucified had been condemned.” (Wuest) What was intended to be a message of mockery by Pilate was in fact a statement of the truth. Jesus Christ is the King - King of Israel, King of kings, King of glory and King everlasting. And while Christ was rejected as King by Israel at His first coming, when He comes the second time He will rule and reign from David's throne for a thousand years (Luke 1:32; Rev. 20:4).
 - b. The languages of the title – “letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew” (Luke 23:38. Also John 19:20).
 - c. The location of the title – “over his head” (Matt. 27:37). Indicated that Jesus' cross was the familiar Latin cross.
3. The Thieves either side of His Cross (Vs. 27-28)
 - a. Prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled – “and he was **numbered** with the transgressors” (Is. 53:12). “The ‘friend of publicans and sinners’ died in the company of those whom he had come to seek and to save.” (John Phillips)
 - b. Both thieves mocked Christ initially (Vs. 32b) but praise God one repented and received Christ's forgiveness (Luke 23:43). Christ was a loving soul-winner until the very end!
4. The Taunts towards His Cross (Vs. 29-32)
 - a. Christ subjected to a fourth round of mockery. Christ had already been:
 - i. Mocked before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin (Mk. 14:65).
 - ii. Mocked before Herod and his soldiers (Luke 23:11).
 - iii. Mocked before the soldiers of Pilate (Matt. 27:29).

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- b. We note several groups engaged in this fourth burst of mockery:
 - i. Passers-by (Vs. 29-30)
 - ii. Religious leaders (Vs. 31-32a). Their claim that they would accept Christ if they saw a miracle proven false when the greatest of all miracles occurred at the resurrection of Christ.
 - iii. The two thieves (Vs. 32b)
 - iv. The soldiers – “And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,” (Luke 23:36).
 - v. Scroggie: “Had he been a self-saviour He could never have been the world’s Saviour. Sacrifice is at the heart of all salvation, and to live one must die.”

B. The Period of Night (3 hrs) – 12pm to 3pm (Vs. 33-37)

- 1. The Silence of this period (Vs. 33)
 - a. This period started at the 6th hour (Vs. 45) which was midday (12pm) when the sun is at its zenith. There was much activity around the cross in the first three hours but now a sacred hush falls over the scene.
 - b. “It was nature divinely draped in mourning over the sin of sins, the most tragic of deaths. It was a symbol of the eclipse of the Light of the world; but ere He died it passed, and the sun shone on His expiring head, in token that His death scattered our darkness and poured day on our sad night.” (Maclaren)
- 2. The Shouts at the end of this period (Vs. 34-37)
 - a. The cry of torment (Vs. 34-35)
 - i. “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?** that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46; Psalm 22:1) Sin’s punishment is eternal separation from God (2. Thess. 1:9). Christ endured the wrath of God on our behalf and was forsaken by the Father at the cross. From all eternity past, the Father, Son and Spirit had enjoyed close and intimate communion (John 17:24) but now Christ is left alone.
 - ii. The mocking response of those standing by is truly staggering. “Savage laughter was man’s response to the most pitiful prayer ever uttered.” (Maclaren)
 - b. The cry of thirst (Vs. 36) Prompted by Jesus words “I thirst” (John 19:28), vinegar is given to Christ in fulfillment of Psalm 69:21.
 - c. The cry of triumph (Vs. 37; John 19:30)
 - i. Christ, in a loud voice, shouts “FINISHED” (Vs. 37a, John 19:30)

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- ii. “It is finished” = (τετέλεσται) “Word was used in Greek commercial life. The term signified the completion of a transaction by the full payment of a price or the discharge of a debt by a completed payment.” (Pentecost)
 - iii. Christ paid my sin debt in full! We can add NOTHING to His perfect, complete sacrifice. (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7). “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.”
 - iv. Immediately following Christ’s shout of triumph, He commits His spirit into the hands of God the Father. Luke 23:46 “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” Christ’s final words before he died. Rom. 5:8 & 1 Cor. 15:3 – Christ died for our sins!
3. The Signs following this period (Vs. 38)
- Several miracles occurred the moment Jesus died:
- a. There was a rending of the temple veil (Vs. 38). The time was 3pm in the afternoon right when the priests in the temple would have been busy with their activities for the evening sacrifice. The rent vail preaches a message that the way into God’s immediate presence is now available through Christ (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19).
 - b. There was a mighty earthquake. Matt. 27:51 “And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; **and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;**”
 - c. There was a resurrection of O.T. saints. Matt. 27:52-53 “And the graves were opened; and **many bodies of the saints which slept arose**, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”
4. The Statement after this period (Vs. 39)
- a. A ‘centurion’ was a commander of 100 soldiers (Hiebert). He was the one in charge of the crucifixion and directly accountable to Pilate (See Vs. 45).
 - b. He was standing “over against him”, meaning he was standing opposite Christ in full view of all that happened.

Conclusion:

1. Will you repent and receive Christ as your Saviour today? Christ has paid it all. Your job is to receive the free gift of salvation He offers.
2. As believers, we have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20). How can we live for self in light of the cross? Will you say with Count Zinzendorf, “If thou didst that for me, what can I do for thee?” Personal illustration (March 16, 1995)

Christ Jesus Lives!

Text: Mark 15:15-37-16:14

Introduction:

1. In our last message we looked at the death of Christ upon the cross which is the first part of the Gospel message (“Christ died for our sins”). In today’s message our primary focus will be upon the burial and resurrection of Christ.
2. The truth of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ has the power to totally transform your life. We will look at the sequence of events under three headings: 1. His Death 2. His Burial 3. His Resurrection.

I. CHRIST’S DEATH (VS. 37-41)

A. The Will causing His Death (Vs. 37)

1. Christ’s death was no ordinary death. He Himself determined the moment of His death.
2. John 10:17-18 “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. **No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.** This commandment have I received of my Father.”
3. Romans 6:23 reveals that the “wages of sin is death”. In order for Christ to provide the payment for sin’s wages, He had to die a real death.

B. The Wonders accompanying His Death (Vs. 38; Matt. 27:51-53)

Several miracles occurred the moment Jesus died:

1. There was a rending of the temple veil (Vs. 38). The time was 3pm in the afternoon right when the priests in the temple would have been busy with their activities for the evening sacrifice. The rent veil preaches a message that the way into God’s immediate presence is now available through Christ (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19).
2. There was the shaking of the earth. Matt. 27:51 “And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; **and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;**”
3. There was the rising of the saints. Matt. 27:52-53 “And the graves were opened; and **many bodies of the saints which slept arose,** And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”

C. The Witnesses viewing His Death (Vs. 39-41)

1. The Centurion (Vs. 39)
 - a. A ‘centurion’ was a commander of 100 soldiers (Hiebert). He was the one in charge of the crucifixion and directly accountable to Pilate (See Vs. 45).
 - b. He was standing “over against him”, meaning he was standing opposite Christ in full view of all that happened.

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- c. Whether his confession was a saving one or not we are not told but we do know that a confession of Christ from the heart is what God requires for salvation (Romans 10:9-10, 13).
2. The Women (Vs. 40-41)
 - a. Saved followers (Vs. 40) What all these women had in common was that their lives had been transformed by Christ.
 - i. Mary Magdalene – before she met Christ she was a demon possessed woman. Mark 16:9 “...Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.” (See also Luke 8:2)
 - ii. Mary –noted as the mother of “James the less and of Joses”. John’s Gospel mentions that she was the wife of Cleophas (Jn. 19:25). Cleopas appears to have been one of the two disciples who met Christ on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:18).
 - iii. Salome – the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John.
 - b. Serving followers (Vs. 41)
 - i. This verse specifically notes that these women had ministered to Christ during his great Galilean ministry.
 - ii. Luke 8:2-3 “And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which **ministered unto him of their substance.**”
 - iii. Challenge: There is a great need for servants who will have a ministry of helps behind the scenes. As you follow the record of Christ’s public ministry, these dear ladies are hardly mentioned and yet the Bible reveals they were there in the background as a part of Christ’s ministry team, ministering to the practical needs of the Gospel ministry.
 - iv. Challenge: Is your ‘substance’ available for the service of the Master?

II. CHRIST’S BURIAL (VS. 42-47)

Observe 4 truths about the burial of Christ revealed in these verses:

A. The Period of the Burial (When?) (Vs. 42)

1. The hour of the burial (Vs. 42a) It says “when the even was come”. This was the “first evening, from mid-afternoon to sunset. It was probably around 4pm when Joseph secured permission to remove the body.” (Hiebert)
2. The day of the burial (Vs. 42b) There are two specific statements that pinpoint the day Christ died and was buried:
 - a. “the preparation” – this was a technical name for Friday, the day of the preparation for the Sabbath. No work was allowed to take place on the Sabbath so Friday served as a day to prepare for it.
 - b. “that is, the day before the sabbath” = Mark explains very clearly what “the preparation” refers to. The day before the sabbath is

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Friday. Therefore, the concept of Easter Friday is NOT a pagan idea. The alleged difficulty in relation to 3 days and 3 nights can be explained by understanding the Jewish way of counting the days.

- c. Excerpt from article by Jonathan Sarfati: “In Jewish counting, a part of a day was counted as a whole day (a figure of speech known as *synecdoche*). So, while X days and X nights *can* mean what it means in English, this was only a *subset* of its semantic range in Jewish idiom. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* explains (as cited in the Tektonics Apologetics article on this topic): ‘In Jewish communal life part of a day is at times reckoned as one day; e.g., the day of the funeral, even when the latter takes place late in the afternoon, is counted as the first of the seven days of mourning; a short time in the morning of the seventh day is counted as the seventh day; circumcision takes place on the eighth day, even though of the first day only a few minutes remained after the birth of the child, these being counted as one day.’¹

B. The Person organising the Burial (Who?) (Vs. 43-45)

1. Joseph’s Person (Vs. 43a)
He was...
 - a. An honourable man. Luke describes him as a “good man, and a just” (Luke 23:50).
 - b. A spiritual man – “which also waited for the kingdom of God”. John 19:38 reveals he was “a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews,”
 - c. A “rich man” (Matt. 27:57) This was significant prophetically. Isaiah 53:9 “And he made his grave with the wicked, and **with the rich in his death;**”
 - d. A member of the Sanhedrin who had “not consented to the counsel and deed of them” (Lk. 23:51)
 - e. A secret disciple due to fear of the Jews (John 19:38). Up until this point Joseph had been a timid and fearful follower of Christ. But now something changes! He goes in **‘boldly’** to Pilate (Vs. 43) to request the privilege of burying Christ’s body.
 - f. Scroggie: “Through these momentous months his love had been subjected to his fear, but now, in this hour of crisis, love rises triumphant over fear.”
2. Joseph’s Partner (John 19:39)
 - a. “And there came also **Nicodemus**, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*.”
 - b. He was also a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin (John 7:50).
3. Joseph’s Plea (Vs. 43b) The word ‘craved’ means to ask or beg. If it weren’t for Joseph’s heart to see Christ receive a proper burial, His body would likely have been dumped in a common grave along with the other criminals.
4. Pilate’s Permission (Vs. 44-45)

¹ <https://creation.com/easter-and-good-friday-questions-and-answers>? Viewed 4/4/21

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- a. Pilate surprised to hear that Christ already dead and verifies the fact by speaking to the centurion.
- b. John 19:31-37 – Steps taken to make sure of Christ’s death.
- c. Note: These facts refute the foolish idea promoted by some that Christ didn’t really die but that he only appeared to die.

C. The Process of the Burial (How?) (Vs. 46a)

1. Fine linen – “And he bought fine linen”. The word ‘bought’ means “to buy, purchase.” Joseph used his financial means to serve His Christ.
2. Spices – John 19:40 “Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.”

D. The Place of the Burial (Where?) (Vs. 46b-47)

1. “hewn out of a rock” = Edmond Hiebert explains the tomb “had been cut out horizontally into the side of a rock cliff. Such carefully hewn tombs were common around Jerusalem and generally belonged to well-to-do families.”
2. “rolled a stone” = this would have been “a large, circular, flat stone, fitted with a groove, which could be rolled back to open the tomb when necessary.” (Hiebert) The circular stone “fitted into a slopping groove, so arranged that it ran down an incline.” (John Phillips)
3. John’s Gospel reveals the sepulchre was close to the site of the crucifixion. John 19:41-42 “Now in the place where he was crucified there was **a garden**; and in the garden **a new sepulchre**, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation *day*; for **the sepulchre was nigh at hand.**”
Note: Consider the significant gardens in the Bible (e.g., the garden of Eden, Gethsemane & the garden of the burial & resurrection).
4. Verse 47 records that two of the women witnessed where Christ was buried.

III. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST (VS. 1-14)

Observe 3 truths about the resurrection in these verses:

A. The Arrival of the Women (Vs. 1-5)

In all four Gospels this is the first incident on resurrection morning. Luke adds the name of Joanna and “other women with them” (Lk. 24:10).

1. Their coming to the tomb (Vs. 1-2)
 - a. The time of their coming
 - i. After the Sabbath had passed.
 - ii. Very early in the morning.
 - iii. The first day of the week.
 - iv. At the rising of the sun.
 - b. The purpose for their coming
 - i. They had purchased sweet spices to anoint Christ’s body as an act of devotion and love.
 - ii. This was not the same as embalming. “The purpose apparently was to add externally their fragrant ointments as an expression of their love.” (Hiebert)

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- iii. Clearly these dear ladies had forgotten Christ's promise concerning His resurrection and were coming in the full expectation that He was still dead in the tomb. Luke 24:5-6 "And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: **remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,**"
2. Their problem at the tomb (Vs. 3)
 - a. The major point of discussion between these women was how they were going to roll away the stone from the door.
 - b. Evidently there were not aware of the sealing of the tomb and of the guards that were stationed there (Matt. 27:62-66).
3. Their entry into the tomb (Vs. 4-5)
 - a. They found the stone already rolled away! Matthew's Gospel explains how the stone was removed.
 - b. Matthew 28:1-4 "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. **And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.** His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*."

B. The Announcement of the Angel (Vs. 6-8)

1. His Declaration (Vs. 6)
 - a. "he is risen; he is not here" = what glorious words of victory! Luke's account expresses it this way, "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and **found not the body of the Lord Jesus.** And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, **Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen...**" (Lk. 24:1-6)
 - b. "behold the place where they laid him" = the place where Christ was laid was on the right side of the tomb (Vs. 5). All that was left was the graveclothes and the napkin lying there as a silent witness to the truth that Christ had risen (John 20:5-7).
2. His Instruction (Vs. 7-8)
 - a. The instruction was to "go" and "tell".
 - b. Our mission is the same. We are to testify to the truth of the resurrection of Christ.
 - c. The preaching of the resurrection was a central theme in the preaching of the early church (refer Book of Acts).

C. The Appearances of the Lord (Vs. 9-14)

Three of the post resurrection appearances are documented here. Acts 1:3 says, "To whom also he shewed himself **alive** after his passion by

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many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” A key theme is the initial response of unbelief on the part of the disciples.

1. Christ’s appearance to Mary Magdalene (Vs. 9-11)
 - a. A woman was the first in to sin but it is of interest to note that women were the first to see the empty tomb and that Mary Magdalene was the first to see the risen Christ.
 - b. Mary goes to the disciples who were “mourning and weeping” and told them she had seen Christ but they “believed not”. Luke 24:9-11 “And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women that were* with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them **as idle tales, and they believed them not.**”
 - c. Unbelief was the first heart response of the disciples to the truth of the resurrection. This is the natural tendency of the human heart. Thankfully, for the disciples their issue was one of doubt, not a stubborn, unrepentant unbelief like the unsaved. They would soon be convinced of the truth of the resurrection and would proclaim it with great power to others.
 - d. The truth of the resurrection is essential for salvation (Rom. 4:25; 10:9-10). The Apostle Paul confronts the Paul faces the implications of no resurrection head on in 1 Corinthians 15:12-20
 - i. No resurrection means Christ is dead! (Vs. 13, 16).
 - ii. No resurrection means Apostolic preaching empty (Vs. 14a).
 - iii. No resurrection means our faith is empty (14b).
 - iv. No resurrection makes the Apostle’s liars (Vs. 15).
 - v. No resurrection means we are still in our sins (Vs. 16-17).
 - vi. No resurrection means departed Christians have perished (Vs. 18).
 - vii. No resurrection means a life of misery and hopelessness (Vs. 19).
 - viii. Paul forces us to stare this dreadful idea in the face that we might see it in all its blackness. Then he deals it a fateful blow with a powerful assertion of the truth. (Vs. 20)
2. Christ’s appearance to the two disciples (Vs. 12-13)
 - a. This appearance of Christ is documented at length in Luke’s Gospel (Lk. 24:13-35).
 - b. Sadly, the disciple’s response to these two witnesses was also one of unbelief.
3. Christ’s appearance to the eleven (Vs. 14) Christ rebukes the disciples sternly for not believing the eye witness accounts. The eye witness accounts simply verified what Christ promised He would do all along.

Conclusion: Will you repent and receive Christ as your Saviour today? He is alive and able to save you from your sin.

Go with the Gospel!

Text: Mark 16:15-20

Introduction:

1. We come now to the conclusion to the Gospel of Mark. In this concluding section, we have the risen Lord Jesus' final instructions to His fledgling church. This has often been referred to as the Great Commission.
2. Each Gospel writer (particularly the 3 synoptic Gospels) contain the Great Commission. The Great Commission IS the task for the church and great efforts must be taken to keep it centre stage in the local church.
3. For today's study, we will divide the text into three parts:

I. THE COMMISSION TO THE DISCIPLES (VS. 15-16)

Christ speaks of:

A. The Responsibility to the Gospel (Vs. 15)

Observe 2 key features of this command. We need to have:

1. Gospel Feet – 'go'
 - a. Romans 10:15 "...as it is written, **How beautiful are the feet** of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"
 - b. Song 7:1 "**How beautiful are thy feet with shoes**, O prince's daughter!"
 - c. The word 'go' is a small word, just two letters and yet it is one of the most disobeyed commands in God's Word.
 - d. Even with all the technological advancements we have, when it's all said and done, someone has to go to where the unsaved are and share Christ with them.
 - i. Politicians know the power of door-to-door work and personal contact!
 - ii. Cults know the power of door-to-door work and follow up!
 - iii. Christian lobby groups know the power of grass roots campaigning such as door knocking, leaflet distribution and one on one contact!
 - iv. Why on earth then do most Christians today sneer at door knocking for the Gospel or tract distribution as "outdated".
 - v. Illustration: Someone with no method says "I don't like your method".
 - e. Someone put it like this, "With all our education, our fine buildings, our image of the church, we are doing less to win people to Christ than our unschooled forefathers did. We're no

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longer fishers of men, but keepers of the aquarium, and we spend most of our time swiping fish from each other's bowl."

- f. Illustration: William Booth was invited to visit King Edward VII at Buckingham Palace in 1904. When asked by the king to write in his autograph album, the old man – now seventy-five – bent forward, took the pen, and summed up his life's work:

Your Majesty,

Some men's ambition is art,
Some men's ambition is fame,
Some men's ambition is gold,

My ambition is the souls of men.

- g. We are to bring sinners into God's House – Luke 14:23 "And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and **compel them to come in**, that my house may be filled." But we are also to go to sinners **outside** of God's House!
2. Gospel Speech – 'preach'
- a. The word 'preach' means "to herald". While this includes the formal proclamation of the Gospel (e.g., by a God-called man of God), it is not limited to this. At its heart, the command requires a verbal presentation of the Gospel and this can also be done on one on one.
1. The example of Christ. He preached to the masses publicly but He was also the Master Personal Evangelist/Soul-winner (e.g., Nicodemus; Samaritan woman).
 2. The example of the early church: Acts 5:42 "And daily **in the temple, and in every house**, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."
 3. The excuse of lifestyle evangelism: "I just witness by my life". Don't use one truth as an excuse to disobey another equally important truth! Of course, we are to be a testimony for Christ by the way we live and conduct ourselves (Matt. 5:13-14; Phil. 2:15). But that does not excuse us from opening our mouths for the Gospel! The two go hand in hand – the life and the lips.

B. The Reach of the Gospel (Vs. 15)

1. It is for every place – "into all the world"
 - a. God loves the world. "For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16).
 - b. Christ died for the world. "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2).
 - c. Note: This includes the so called "closed countries". God owns this world and He has authorized the preaching of the Gospel for the whole globe.

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2. It is for every person – “to every creature”
 - a. 2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**”
 - b. 1 Tim. 2:4 “Who will have **all men to be saved**, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”
 - c. Rev. 22:17 “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever will**, let him take the water of life freely.”

C. The Response to the Gospel (Vs. 16)

When the Gospel is presented, the sinner has a choice to make; a choice that will determine their eternal destiny. There will be those who...

1. Receive the Gospel – ‘saved’ (Vs. 16a)
 - a. Belief – the essential requirement for salvation. You must “repent...and believe the Gospel” (Mk. 1:15)
 - b. Baptism – the outward symbol of inner faith. The fact baptism is not required for salvation is made plain in the second half of the verse. Unbelief is what damns a person, not whether they were baptised or not.
 1. 1 Cor. 1:17 “For Christ sent me **not to baptize**, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.”
 2. Acts 8:36-37 “And as they went on *their way*, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is water*; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, **If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest**. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”
 3. Illustration: The repentant thief (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).
 4. William Macdonald: “Baptism is not a condition of salvation, but an outward proclamation that the person has been saved.”
2. Reject the Gospel – ‘damned’ (Vs. 16b)
 - a. Unbelief is a sinful choice that results in damnation for all eternity.
 - b. Rev. 21:8 “But the fearful, and **unbelieving**, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

II. THE PREDICTION TO THE DISCIPLES (VS. 17-18)

A. The Preliminary Considerations RE the Signs

1. If you are going to use this passage to claim that tongues are a gift for believers today, then to be consistent in your interpretation, you need to also include the other three – snake handling, poison drinking and healing. You cannot pick and choose the ones you like. Why is it that tongues are so aggressively promoted as being for today on the basis of this passage but not taking up serpents or drinking something deadly?
2. The signs are said to “follow” saving faith. They do not save an individual. The passage makes it clear that it is faith in the Gospel message that saves the sinner. Many today are putting faith in a “sign” rather than in the substance which is the message of salvation.

B. The Particulars of the Signs (Vs. 17-18)

Christ spoke of five sign gifts that would accompany the witness of the early church.

1. Casting out devils.
2. Speaking with new tongues. Note that tongues in the Bible equals real languages, not unintelligible gibberish. They are languages not before known to the speakers. (Refer two-part sermon series on tongues for more details).
3. Taking up serpents.
4. Drinking anything deadly. Both this and the previous (serpents) have to do with God’s servants being protected from harm.
5. Healing the sick.
6. Note: They would be accomplished “in my name”. “This qualifying phrase stands emphatically at the head of this list of signs. The power will not be their own, nor is it to be exercised for their own aggrandizement.” (Hiebert)

C. The Purpose of the Signs (Vs. 20b)

1. To authenticate Apostolic Preaching.
 - a. ‘confirming’ = to make firm, establish, make sure.
 - b. Remember, in the early church period, the N.T. was still being completed. The sign gifts temporary by their very nature and purpose.
 - c. Eph. 2:20 “And are built upon **the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*.”
 - d. 2 Cor. 12:12 “Truly **the signs of an apostle** were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”
 - e. Heb. 2:3-4 “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and

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was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; **God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"**

- f. Hiebert: "These signs were the authenticating credentials of the apostolic message, exhibiting the presence of the living Christ working with and through his messengers. They served to accredit not the faith of the individual but the validity of the faith he represented."
2. We can see four out of the 5 signs mentioned fulfilled literally in the Apostolic era as recorded in the Book of acts.
 - a. Casting out devils – Acts 8:7; 16:18; 19:11-12.
 - b. Speaking in tongues – Acts 2:4-11; 10:46; 19:6.
 - c. Protection from serpents – Acts 28:5 (only recorded instance).
 - d. Healing the sick – Acts 3:7; 19:11; 28:8-9.
 - e. Drinking something deadly – not recorded in Scripture but attributed to John and Barnabas Eusebius, the early church historian.
3. J.C. Ryle: "Let us never forget, that Christ's believing Church in the world is of itself a standing miracle. The conversion and perseverance in grace of every member of that Church, is a sign and wonder, as great as the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The renewal of every saint is as great a marvel as the casting out of a devil, or the healing of a sick man, or the speaking with a new tongue. Let us thank God for this and take courage. The age of spiritual miracles is not yet past. Happy are they who have learned this by experience, and can say, "I was dead, but am alive again: I was blind, but I see."

III. THE ASCENSION BEFORE THE DISCIPLES (VS. 19-20)

A. The Position of the Ascended Christ (Vs. 19)

1. Exalted – "received up into heaven".
 - a. The ascension is described in Luke's Gospel: "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen." (Lk. 24:50-53)
 - b. The ascension is described in Acts: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." (Acts 1:9)
 - a. The ascension is a truth of great victory: "And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought

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in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, **Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:** And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph. 1:19-23)

b. John Phillips: “From the brow of Olivet, Jesus stepped straight into glory. He found His way through the cheering ranks of the angels to the Great White Throne of God. He took His place on the right hand of God, a Man in a human body, seated on the throne of the universe, with every right to be there because He is God over all, blessed forevermore! There He sits “from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool” (Heb. 10:13).

2. Seated – “sat on the right hand of God”. This truth is of great comfort to believers:

a. He is our Intercessor – Romans 8:34 “Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, **who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.**” (Also Heb. 7:25)

b. He is our Advocate – 1 John 2:1 “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:”

3. We preach Christ crucified, risen, ascended and coming again!

B. The Presence of the Ascended Christ (Vs. 20)

1. His Presence with His Workers (Vs. 20a)

a. What a wonderful truth! The risen, ascended Christ is present with His people as they labour for Him. “Their activity was empowered by Him; He did through them that which they could not do themselves.” (Hiebert) The glorious truth is that the Ascended Christ is still at work in this world.

b. Christ promised, “...lo, **I am with you always**, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

c. We are “labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9).

2. His Presence with His Word (Vs. 20b)

a. The proclamation of the Word, the Gospel message, was the primary activity of these men. They “preached everywhere” not worked miracles everywhere! Preaching was primary, miracles secondary and subject to the sovereign will of God.

Conclusion:

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1. What are you doing to help advance the cause of the Gospel? Are you a soul-winning Christian?
2. Are you saved? We have had Christ so wonderfully revealed to us through Mark's Gospel. Will you receive Him today as Lord and Saviour?
3. J.C. Ryle's exhortation at the conclusion of his commentary of Mark's Gospel is fitting for the conclusion of our series:

“And now let us close the pages of St. Mark's Gospel with self-inquiry and self-examination. Let us not content us to have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, the things here written for our learning about Jesus Christ. Let us ask ourselves whether we know any thing of Christ “dwelling in our hearts by faith?” Does the Spirit “witness with our spirit” that Christ is ours and we are His? Can we really say that we are “living the life of faith in the son of God,” and that we have found by experience that Christ is “precious” to our own souls? These are solemn questions. They demand serious consideration. May we never rest till we can give them satisfactory answers! “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (1 John 5:12)